

Birchwood Avenue Primary School's News



Issue 5, February 2025



Dates for your diary

Dates for 2025	
4 th March	Y5 STEM Challenge in school
6 th March	Year 1 and Year 6 trip to RAF Hendon
7 th March	World Book Day celebrated in school
11 th March	Y4-Y6 Show Racism the Red Card workshops
4 th April	End of term- school closes 1:30pm
7 th -18 th April	Easter break
21 st April	Easter Monday- Bank holiday, school closed
22 nd April	Children return to school
30 th April	BMX Academy display & workshops Y5 & Y6
21 st July 2025	INSET
22 nd July 2025	INSET
23 rd July 2025	INSET

Lost Property



Message from Miss Hall

Dear families,

The children have settled back in to their class routines very well following the half-term break. As always, we endeavour to provide activities and events to enrich your children's learning experiences. These moments support personal development, the understanding of British Values and create cultural capital.

This half-term, our Year 5 pupils will be attending Onslow St Audrey's school on a Friday morning for computing sessions. On Friday 7th March, we will be celebrating World Book Day. This decision was made as Year 1 and Year 6 are out of school on the 'actual day' for this international event.

A few weeks ago, Tony Fitzpatrick, Hertfordshire's Director of Education, visited our school. I invited Tony to our school to put us 'on the map' with the local authority. We discussed our successes and challenges- these are mostly due to funding. Tony had a tour of the school and spoke to many children. He noted what an inclusive school we are and you're children were an absolute credit to you. They were engaged in learning activities and keen to share (absolutely anything and everything) with Tony. I will continue to be an advocate for our school and ensure that we receive the support from the local authority that we need.

School Diary

Please check the school diary on our website for updates for school events. This calendar can be synced to your phone.

[Calendar | Birchwood Avenue Primary School](#)

February's Highlights

New Playground Markings

You will have noticed that we've spruced up the playground. It needed a facelift! The children are enjoying trying out the different activities and challenges which are now there. I may have even seen a few parents having a go too!

Some of our Year 1 children have shared some of their drawings of the playground with you.

In school, there is already a growing collection of uniform with no names on. Please write your child's name or initials on the label of their uniform. This is costly and 'lost' uniform can be avoided.

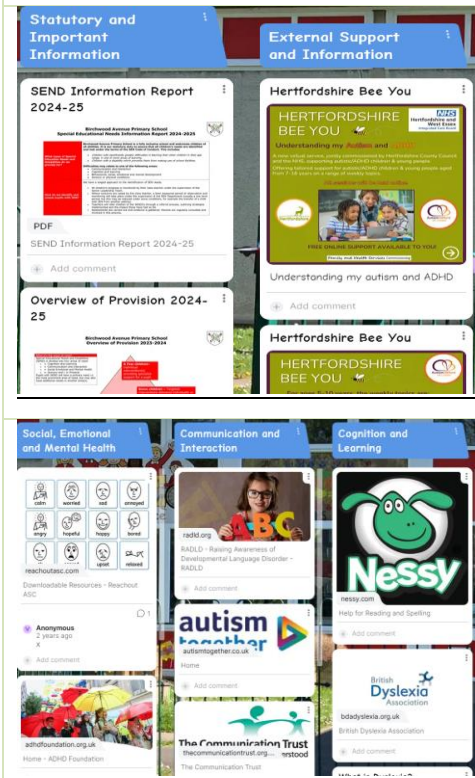
SEND at Birchwood

Miss James has been updating the page providing support to parents of children with SEND needs.

[Birchwood Avenue Primary School](#) [SEND](#)

Please follow the link above and find all our SEND info in one place.

A couple of screen shots are below to give you a taste of what you can access.



Messages from our school office.



Please check that you are receiving emails from Arbor. Some people have not been receiving these due to changes in contact email addresses.

Please check that you log-in to Arbor and SchoolGrid are working. Please let the



school office know if you need support with accessing either of these platforms.

Hatfield Foodbank

If you are struggling at the moment with the cost of living and buying essentials, please speak to Miss Hall or Miss James and we will support you with getting a code to access the Foodbank.

Andrew Lewin MP meets our Year 5 and Year 6 pupils

On Friday 7th February, Andrew Lewin, the Welwyn Hatfield Labour MP, visited our school and had a tour of the site and our provision.

Our Year 5 and Year 6 children met with Andrew and held an MP 'Question Time' in the hall. They heard a little about elections and what happens at the Houses of Parliament. I was so proud of all of them; they were an absolute credit to you.

Devon: 'I enjoyed the MP visiting because I found out interesting facts about our day-to-day lives and how it impacts us. I found out how mould impacts children in their houses.'

Lily-Rose: 'I enjoyed his visit because he answered questions and respected our opinions.'

Year R have been busy planting potatoes and strawberries.



STEM visit

Reception Class, Year 1, Year 2 & eco-council

We are very lucky to have made links with a local STEM (Science, technology, engineering and mathematics) ambassador. Lisa has been in and worked with some of classes and the eco-council. They have started to explore the effects of climate change, sustainability and how we can look after our planet.

Lisa will be returning this half-term to work with our KS2 classes and meet with the eco-council as a follow-up session.






Visit to Wembley- Thursday 27th February

Miss James managed to secure some free tickets to watch England's Lionesses play Spain's ladies at Wembley. Several of our families attended this match and the Lionesses defeated the world champions with a final score of 1-0.



MOMENTS MATTER, ATTENDANCE COUNTS.

The data below shows attendance for this term so far.

	Year 6	96.91%
	Year 5	95.62%
	Year 2	95.02%
	Year 3	94.57%
	Year 4	94.43%
	Year 1	92.92%
	Reception	91.08%

Our whole school attendance figure for the school year so far is at **94.2%**. The national average to date is 94.5%. Thank you for ensuring your child attends school daily and is punctual.

Unfortunately, we already have 16.1% of our children who are 'persistent absentees'. This means their attendance is below 90%. This is an ongoing concern.

Term Time Holidays

Families are reminded that Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations, which came into effect on 1st September 2013, removed all references to *family holidays and extended leave for holidays in term time*. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may **not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Contact us...

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What Parents Need to Know About WhatsApp



WHAT ARE THE RISKS?
With more than two billion active users, WhatsApp is the world's most popular messaging service. Its end-to-end encryption only allows messages to be viewed by the sender and any recipients: not even WhatsApp itself can read them. The UK's Online Safety Bill proposes to end such encryption on private messaging, but for the time being, this controversial feature remains.

AGE RESTRICTION 13+

EVOLVING SCAMS
WhatsApp's popularity makes it a lucrative hunting ground for scammers. Recent examples include posing as the target's child, requesting a money transfer because of a spurious 'emergency' - plus a scam where fraudsters trigger a verification message by attempting to log in to your account, then (posing as WhatsApp) call or text to ask you to repeat the code back to them, giving them access.

CHAT LOCK AND SECRET CODES
In 2020, WhatsApp introduced a feature that lets users keep their chats in a separate 'locked chats' folder, saved behind their phone's passcode, fingerprint or face ID. There is an additional feature - 'Secret Codes' - where users set a unique password for locked chats. Unfortunately, this creates the potential for young people to hide conversations and content they suspect their parents wouldn't approve of.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS
To start a chat, someone only needs the mobile number of the WhatsApp user they want to message. Therefore, if a child has ever given their number out to someone they don't know, that person could then contact them via WhatsApp. It's also possible that the child might be added to a group chat or community (by one of their friends, for example) containing other people they don't know.

VIEW ONCE CONTENT
The ability to send images or messages that can only be viewed once has led to some WhatsApp users sharing inappropriate material or abusive texts, knowing that the recipient can't reopen them later to use as evidence of misconduct. People need to be able to screenshot this disappearing content - but a recently added WhatsApp feature now blocks this, citing protection of privacy.

FAKE NEWS
WhatsApp's connectivity and ease of use allow news to be shared rapidly - whether it's true or not. To combat the spread of misinformation, messages forwarded more than five times on the app now display a "forwarded many times" label and a double arrow icon. This makes users aware that the message they've just received is far from an original - and might not be entirely factual, either.

VISIBLE LOCATION
WhatsApp's Live Location feature lets users share their current whereabouts, which can be helpful for friends meeting up or parents checking that their child is safe while out, for example. However, anyone in a user's contacts list or in a mutual group chat can also track their location - potentially letting strangers identify a child's home address or journeys that they make regularly.

Advice for Parents & Educators

EMPHASISE CAUTION
Encourage children to treat unexpected messages with caution: get them to consider whether it sounds like something a friend or relative would really send them. Make sure they know never to share personal details over WhatsApp, and to be wary of clicking on any links in messages. Setting up two-step verification adds a further layer of protection to their WhatsApp account.

ADJUST THE SETTINGS
It's wise to change a child's WhatsApp settings to specify which of their contacts can add them to group chats without needing approval. You can give permission to My Contacts or My Contacts Except... Additionally, if a child needs to use Live Location, emphasises that they should enable this function for only as long as they need - and then turn it off.

CHAT ABOUT PRIVACY
Check in with the child about how they're using WhatsApp, making sure they know you only have their safety at heart. If you spot a locked Chats folder, you might want to talk about the sort of content they've stored in there, who they're talking to, and why they want to keep these chats hidden. Also, if children send any View Once content, it could be helpful to ask them why.

DISCUSS GROUP CHATS
Make children aware that there could be members of a group that they don't know well and that words can be misinterpreted. Encourage them to leave a good impression, to avoid joining in if conversations turn towards bullying, and to respond to such situations in an appropriate way. Make sure they know that it's OK to leave a group chat if it makes them uncomfortable - or for any reason, in fact.

THINK BEFORE SHARING
Help children understand why it's important to stop and think before posting or forwarding something on WhatsApp. It's easy - and all too common - for content that a user wants to be shared more widely, even publicly on social media. Encourage children to consider how an impulsive message or forwarding might damage their reputation or upset a friend who sent something to them in confidence.

Safeguarding

If you specifically have a safeguarding concern, please contact Miss Hall, Miss James or Ms Swash.

Alternatively, you can still contact Children's Services directly on 0300 123 4043.



Educating Hearts and Minds