

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2021



Dear Parents and Friends

Well we started this academic year with high hopes for normality and a return to a more typical Horton Grange experience. By October half term, we were advised by the local authority to put in place restrictions which we shared with you and have implemented over Autumn 2. Whilst cases at Horton Grange have remained low in comparison to many schools, we have seen a rise in cases in recent weeks, including myself! The current restrictions in school will remain when we return for the Spring term.

COVID-19: Plan B and looking ahead to January

Following the government's announcement to implement Plan B - for school this means:

- Face to face education remains a priority. All pupils should continue to attend school unless they have symptoms of COVID-19 and/or a positive PCR test result.
- From Tuesday 14 December, a new national approach to daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 was introduced (including until the end of this term). All adults who are fully vaccinated and children aged 5 to 18 years and 6 months, identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 – whether Omicron or not – should take a lateral flow device (LFD) test every day for 7 days instead of self-isolating. Daily testing by close contacts will help to slow the spread of COVID-19. If they test positive, they should self-isolate and [order a PCR test](#) to confirm the result. If the PCR is positive, they must self-isolate for 10 days. If the PCR test is negative, they no longer need to self-isolate but should continue to carry out the remainder of the daily tests, and only need to isolate if it is positive.
- Face coverings. Primary age pupils do not need to wear a face covering. Staff and adults in school continue to wear a face covering in communal areas.
- Breakfast club continues. These activities provide necessary childcare for working parents and promote the well-being of pupils.
- Clubs. These activities enrich our curriculum and give extra opportunities for our pupils. We are looking at ways to run these in a more covid secure way.
- Other agencies - wider children's services professionals continue to work with us but are asked to take a lateral flow test before entering school.

Looking ahead to January and beyond, the government has told us to review our contingency arrangements. Face to face education in school remains the priority with a full offer (as above) to our pupils. There is uncertainty about the impact of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. We appreciate parents' understanding and flexibility if arrangements change rapidly. We will only switch to remote education for individual classes, age groups, as a result of government or public health instruction; this would be for the shortest period of time possible.

Christmas 2021

Whilst not being able to run our usual Christmas events, the children have enjoyed a Christmas craft day once again and are looking forward to the virtual panto on the last day of term. During the day the children have produced a special Christmas message for you which we will be sharing before the end of term.



DEVELOPING RESPONSIBILITY

We are delighted to announce that **Head Prefect** roles have been awarded to Aimee Patmore and Aiden Humble in 6AMCK. **Deputy Head Prefect** roles have been awarded to Jack George in 6AMCK and Niamh Silver in 6CW. Sports Captains are Nathan Rutherford and Eva Knox while Deputy Sports Captains are Amy Mowbray and Oliver Beck.



HORTON SPORTS UPDATE

This half term, children in key stage two have taken part in a virtual multi skills competition where they had to complete a range of different activities focussed around agility, balance and coordination. The children will now eagerly await the results to see if their respective classes have made it through to the county finals.

Children across school took part in the National Santa Dash event where they were required to run, jog or walk around the yard in their Christmas themed attire. It was lovely to see the children so enthusiastic despite it being very cold!



SHARING OUR LEARNING FROM ACROSS SCHOOL

Two Year Olds

The two year olds have had a very exciting half term, accessing lots of messy play and taking home lots of tasty things they have helped to bake. They have enjoyed more role-play activities, whether it be looking after the dolls or their friends with the doctor's accessories. The children made clear links to their own experiences, showing care and concern for each other and taking on the role of the adult.



They have made the most of the changing weather, exploring the frost and the leaves, talking about how they feel, what they look like and the noise underfoot.



Opportunities have also been given to develop their pre-writing skills by taking part in fine motor activities, threading and using tweezers. As always, they have had a focus around books, ensuring they are shared with the children as a group and on a one to one basis, this is fundamental in developing their language. They have thoroughly enjoyed spending time looking at



the new books. These are stories which are familiar to them and have enjoyed at group time, having previously been read by an adult. These books are now accessible to the children within the environment. It has been a pleasure to see the children pointing out familiar characters, looking at these with their friends and being able to tell an adult what is happening or what will happen next.

Some of the two year olds are leaving to join Nursery in January; they will be missed but are more than ready for the next step and the new challenges ahead.

In January the two year olds will be given lots of sensory activities to explore, using language of texture. There will be more cooking activities to develop their control of utensils and encourage them to understand and follow simple instructions. The lending library will continue each week and there will be a book to choose and keep for each child after every five posts on Tapestry to show them enjoying sharing their lending library books at home.

Children will also get to choose an activity bag to take home. These will differ each week and contain small activities to enjoy; there are some ideas of how to use these resources and some key vocabulary that goes with them. Again, it would be great to see the children using these at home so any photos of the children can be shared on Tapestry.

The following texts are used continuously in two year olds. They inform a lot of the planning with links across the whole EYFS, and most importantly, repeating these texts impacts hugely on language development. You may want to read them at home too!

Pip and Posy series - Axel Scheffler

The Tiger Who Came to Tea - Judith Kerr

Whatever Next - Jill Murphy

Peace at Last - Jill Murphy

The Very Hungry Caterpillar - Eric Carle

Nursery

As the seasons began to change, the Nursery children started to observe the natural environment as we moved into Autumn. The children enjoyed exploring the topic by investigating the natural world around them with many Autumn walks around forest school! They were brilliant at spotting how the leaves changed colour and identifying some of the autumnal natural objects they found. The children focused very hard on vocabulary and learned lots of new and interesting words relating to their topic.



Before they knew it, Christmas was here! The children had a very exciting visitor – Tinker the Elf! She came to share lots of songs and stories and the children were able to help her save Christmas. While it is always exciting to get festive, the children also began to learn the reason we celebrate Christmas. They learned that the story began a long time ago and all because a special baby was born and performed in their first nativity.



Next half term, keeping a close eye on the natural environment, the Nursery children will begin to explore their next topic of Wonderful Winter. They will continue to observe the changes and begin to investigate how to use these changes creatively, such as ice painting!

The children in Nursery will also be welcoming some new friends into their groups in January where they will continue to focus on how to be kind to others. They are always very caring and considerate so we are confident they will embrace the new starters with open arms!



Reception

This half term, the children have been learning all about different celebrations across the world. Birthdays, Christmas, Diwali and Hanukkah are some of the celebrations they have focused on. They have learned to discuss that people celebrate events in different ways. They enjoyed dressing up for the Nativity and singing some Christmas songs that they had been learning.



The local area provided a great learning opportunity with walks to the River Blyth giving them the chance to experience a different environment. Looking after the local area and making environmentally friendly choices have been key discussion points during circle time. They have continued to talk about the importance of road safety and making safe choices both in and out of the home. Firefighters from West Hartford Fire Station visited Reception to teach the children all about how they keep us safe and what to do if their smoke detector went off in order to stay as safe as possible.



In circle time they have also been learning to name the parts of their bodies correctly.

In Fred group, the children have been blending the sounds that they know together to read words. They have made fantastic progress and many of the children can now read three letter words independently, well done everyone!

Next half term the children will be diving into the past through their topic of **A look back in time**. The children will be learning all about themselves and how they have changed over time as well as how toys, clothes, music and other familiar objects have changed through the years.

They will continue to learn about different authors, becoming familiar with their books and style of writing and discussing which are their favourite. Alongside this, to continue to develop their love of reading, they will be independently reading words, captions and sentences, which is very exciting!

The children will continue to develop their knowledge of number through delving deeper into numerals 6 to 10, learning about their composition and sequence and then applying this in their play.

The class text will be **Peepo - Janet and Allen Ahlberg**. The text will be a hook into historical enquiry focusing on toys, clothes and other objects that are old and new.

Year 1

During this half term, Year 1 liked being beside the seaside reading the themed stories, The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch and Sally and the Limpet, and used them to inspire their own writing in literacy. They loved finding out all about Mr Grinling's mustard sandwiches and the limpet that got stuck! The children have been continuing to develop their basic sentence writing and have enjoyed composing their own sentences using pictures. They have also loved reading and writing their own winter themed poetry. They are brilliant at reciting Great Big Snowman with actions!

In maths the children have been marvellous mathematicians adding and subtracting numbers up to 10. The children have been using part-whole models to find fact families. It has been great to see the children accessing Numbots at home. It would be great for the children to continue to practise logging on at home independently as this is what we have been working hard on in school.



In science Year 1 enjoyed learning all about materials. The children investigated which material is best to make a roof for a house. They discovered that the material would need to be waterproof in case it rains.

In history the children travelled back in time to 1834 to learn all about Grace Darling's brave rescue. The children have looked at the timeline of their lives to see how they have changed since they were babies. In DT the children designed and created their own rescue boats using their knowledge of materials to help them.



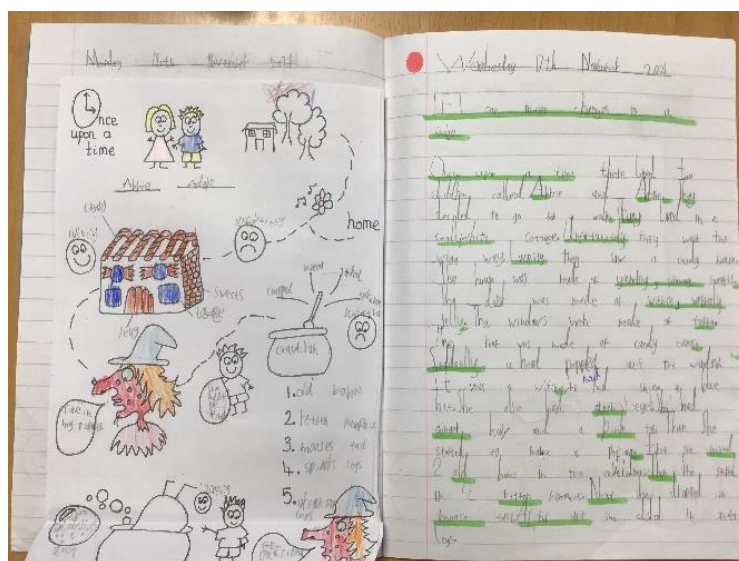
During the first half of the Spring term, in maths the children will be learning about 2-D and 3-D shapes. Ask your child which shapes they can recognise around the house. They will also be applying what they have learnt about place value to explore numbers up to 20.

In science the children will be learning all about reptiles and amphibians and in history the children will be travelling back in time to the past to find out how toys have changed over time.

Please continue to read with your child at home. Remember, if your child reads 4 times in a week they will receive a sticker on their bookmark and once full they can choose a special prize! Your child will be bringing their knowledge organisers home for science and history so the children can share their new learning with you. Thank you for your support.

Year 2

What a wonderful term it has been in Year 2. The focus on basic skills has continued in literacy and maths. In literacy the children have worked on letter formation, capital letters, sitting letters correctly on the line, using appropriate finger spaces and the continuous improvement to presentation and handwriting. The children have read the text *The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark*. They have written a simple retell, used adjectives to improve descriptions and have begun to use "and" and "because" to extend their sentences. They have also practised using speech punctuation for character speech. The children had fun making simple changes to the story of Hansel and Gretel. They also wrote their own spells and potions, turning their teachers into worms.



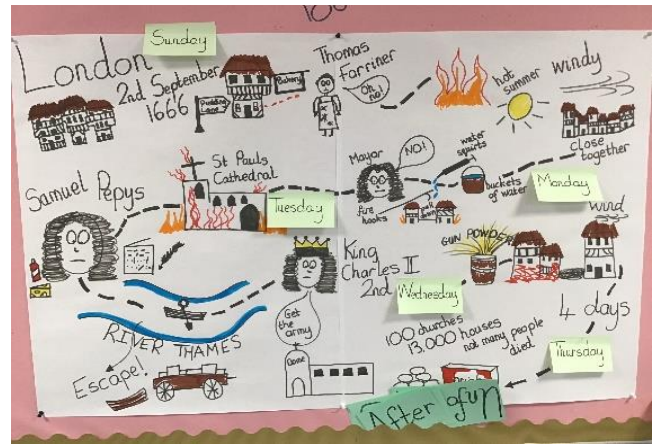
In maths children continued to work on number bonds and facts to 10 and 20 and have continued to develop their knowledge of the 2, 5 and 10 times tables. The children have completed the unit on Place Value and have moved on to addition and subtraction. They have used whole part models and bar models to support their calculations and problem solving.



It was brilliant to see so many children taking part in the TTRockstars Day and making such a big effort dressing up for the non-uniform day. Well done to everyone that took part. Many of the children have become regular users of Numbots this half term. During our Numbots celebration assembly we were very proud of the amount of certificates that were given out.



In history, the children developed their understanding of chronology through their study of The Great Fire of London. They looked at a range of sources and created a timeline of events. The children were particularly interested to find out about Samuel Pepys through the diaries that he wrote. They explored the similarities and differences between life in 1666 and present day. Please ask the children to talk to you about the differences. We have some very knowledgeable historians in Year 2.



In science, children have studied different materials. Like all good scientists, the children began their topic by sharing all of the information that they already knew. Then, they developed their understanding of material properties and then went on to investigate different types of plastic, to see if all plastic is the same. The children then investigated transparency of materials.



During Spring 1 in English, the children will be reading the text *The Day the Rains Fell* by Anne Faundez. They will develop their understanding of verbs and adjectives and will make simple changes to the story. They will write information texts about African animals and will create their own African themed acrostic poems.

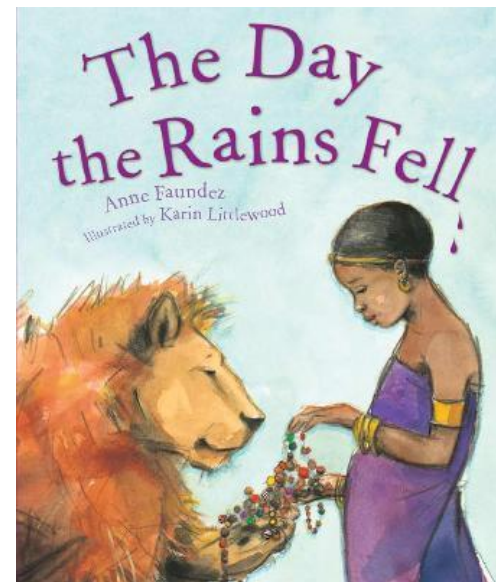
In maths there will continue to be a strong focus on basic skills. Children should by now be confident in finding number bonds and facts to 10 and 20. Children can practice this at home using the following websites:

NUMBOTS (*Children have password*) <https://play.numbots.com/#/intro>
 TT Rockstars <https://trockstars.com/>
 HIT THE BUTTON (*No password needed*)
<https://www.topmarks.co.uk/maths-games/hit-the-button>

Children will continue to develop addition and subtraction skills, applying this to reasoning and problem solving. They will then move on to multiplication, division and fractions.

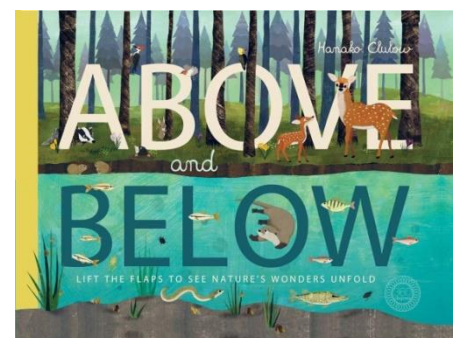
Year 2 will also begin their Amazing Africa topic in geography. They will look at similarities and differences between their own locality and the African town of Nairobi. They will compare the climate, food, homes and travel and transport. They will also compare the human and physical features of each location.

In science, children will investigate and explore animal habitats and food chains through the text *Above and Below* by the author Hanako Clulow.



All children will be given new personalised spellings and they will continue to work on these in school each week. Please continue to support children at home with home/school reading, weekly spellings and the relentless teaching of the 2, 5 and 10 times tables. Please encourage the children to access TTRockstars and Numbots each week. All children have been given passwords to access these websites.

The class text in Year 2 for Spring 1 will be *Giraffe, Pelly and Me* by Roald Dahl.



Year 3

During this half term, Year 3 have ventured into the dystopian world of The Iron Man. Focusing on the introduction to a mystery story the children intrigued the readers through the use of powerful verbs, conjunctions and up levelled vocabulary ending with an intriguing cliff-hanger.

Becoming inquisitive scientists, Year 3 loved learning about rocks and fossils through looking at the book The Street Beneath my Feet, and were lucky enough to have a virtual visit from the author, Charlotte Guillain. They investigated types of rocks and grouped them depending on their properties. The children then planned an investigation to explore the density of rocks and how permeable they were ensuring it was a fair test.

In geography Year 3 learned all about settlements and land use. They looked at our local area to see where the hamlets, villages, towns and local cities were. Children got to test their field work skills, around our own school environment by completing a sketch map of our school and identifying human and physical features within it.



Year 3 had a focussed DT day where they started with a clear design brief to create a bookmark. They planned, made a prototype and made their bookmark using various sewing skills. The children had to evaluate and edit their bookmarks as they went along to ensure they were sticking to the brief. We loved seeing the concentration on their faces!

Year 3 had a fantastic Christmas craft day, where they made seasonal calendars, Christmas cards using stencils and paint and putting their sewing skills to practise by



sewing felt owls. One child even said it was the best day of their life!

In Spring 1, Year 3 will be venturing back in time to the Ancient Egyptians where they will look at the key achievements and developments of this era and how it impacts life today. The children will hopefully be visiting the Great North Museum to further their historical enquiry - more information to follow (restrictions dependant).

In science the children will be investigating light and shadows. This will include getting outside to carry out practical experiments about how shadows are formed and different light sources.

In maths the children will be learning about multiplication and division methods using both concrete and written methods. The focus times table for Spring 1 is the 4 x table.

Literacy will link to the Egyptian topic through the class text Marcy and the Riddle of the Sphinx by Joe Todd Stanton, using this to write their own adventure stories then moving on to historical fiction with the Egyptian Cinderella. In non-fiction Year 3 will create non-chronological reports on mythical creatures.

The end of the day class text will be – Flat Stanley and the Great Egyptian Grave Robbery and The Twits by Roald Dahl - for a bit of humour at the end of the day.

Year 4

In maths this half term, the children have applied their previously taught knowledge of place value to help them with the formal written method in both addition and subtraction. In addition to this, the children have also consolidated their knowledge of length using different units of measurement and applied it to solve perimeter related problems. In history, the children have explored the Ancient Greek era and found out about important events from the time period such as the Olympics. The children used artefacts to find out what life was like for children in Ancient Greece and read a variety of Greek myths. In literacy, the children produced their own myth based on the events in Theseus and the Minotaur. In science, the children have completed various scientific enquiries linked to their topic, States of Matter. The children investigated how solids change to liquids by melting chocolate and they also found out how quickly water evaporates in different locations. Furthermore, the children wrote an explanation text to give a detailed account of how states of matter work. This was linked to the children's work in DT, where they created healthy ice lolly products. The children enjoyed evaluating the lollies and were able to understand how the making process linked to their learning about solids and liquids.



Year 4 also took part in a virtual multi skills event where they were required to complete six different tasks linked to agility, balance and coordination. The children thoroughly enjoyed this and are waiting eagerly to find out if they have made it through to the county finals, taking place later in the year.

Next half term, in history, Year 4 will learn about the Romans in Britain. They will find out about what life was like in Roman Britain and explore what happened during Boudicca's rebellion. In science, the children will study the topic of Sound and complete a variety of scientific enquires to investigate how sound travels.

Year 4's class text will be Romans on the Rampage by Jeremy Strong. This will link to the children's history topic of The Romans in Britain.

Year 5

During Autumn 2 in literacy, the children have written a non-chronological report based on their knowledge of their history topic; The Anglo Saxons and Vikings. Later, they enjoyed reading about the adventure of Beowulf and they were inspired to write their own myth featuring the brave and intrepid hero.

Year 5 also put their historian hats on as they travelled back in time to the 5th century to find out about life in the Anglo Saxon era. They discussed primary sources of evidence to make inferences about what life was like and learned all about the vicious Vikings and their gory raids on the British Isles. They were amazed at the bravery and resilience of Alfred the Great as he cleverly outwitted the Vikings and protected his kingdom from invasion. Finally, the children learned about the fall of the Anglo Saxon era, examined the evidence and judged who should have been crowned king.

In science, Year 5 started their Chemistry unit on the properties of materials. They planned and set up their own fair tests to answer questions using their scientific understanding. Later in the half term, the children learned about controlling variables to set up fair experiments and started investigating solubility of materials.

In Art, the children learned about Lowry and thought about how to use colour to express emotions. They have developed skills in colour mixing and created their own Lowry style compositions, which reflect the artist's naïve style of painting.



In Spring 1, the children will revisit the genre of fairy tales through the classic story, The Shoemaker and the Elves. The children will continue to build their reading skills through reciprocal reading sessions and reading plus. The children are very proud of how far they have come on reading plus so far and hope to keep it up this term. Please continue to encourage your child to read as much as possible at home to ensure they continue to make progress.

In history, the children will be focusing on Women who made History in the Victorian era. They will debate and learn about Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale and discuss the impact they had on our lives today. They will also link their art learning to the Victorians as they study the work of William Morris and create their own prints.

In science, the children will continue to build on their learning in Chemistry as they continue to explore the properties of materials through lots of exciting enquiries.

Year 5 will continue to read Street Child by Berlie Doherty. This gripping adventure is based on the true story of Dr Barnardo and the children are enjoying Jim's adventures on the streets of London.

Year 6

Autumn 1 term ended with the fun-filled, action-packed residential stay at Dukeshouse Wood where the children enjoyed a range of new experiences and challenged themselves to achieve new heights (literally in some cases). All the members of staff from Horton Grange and Dukeshouse wood were impressed with the children's very respectful behaviour and their resilience and determination when facing new challenges.



Following this, it was a busy half term for Year 6 in Autumn 2 as the children continued catching up on missed learning due to Covid 19 and a very big well done to the children, who showed resilience and dedication. In the afternoons, Year 6 children thoroughly enjoyed learning about 20th century warfare and its impact on Blyth. They were fascinated to learn about the history of their home town as well, placing events on a timeline and learning about evacuation and rationing. At the end of the day, the children listened to a radio broadcast of The Machine Gunners by Robert Westall which is set locally and this reinforced their learning in history. In English lessons, they learnt more about war, specifically the Christmas Truce of 1914. They went on to write, as journalists, newspaper reports about the Truce and how it affected those men involved.



In science, the children have been learning about evolution and how living things have adapted to their environment due to small changes over time. The children created comic strips to detail the stages involved in evolution and carefully planned and carried out an experiment into the finches Darwin observed on the Galapagos islands.

In PE, the children have developed their netball skills looking at accurate passing, shooting and defending. They thoroughly enjoyed these lessons and were involved in some very close matches.

Next term, Year 6 shall be learning about the ancient civilisation and culture of the Aztecs; this will also be the inspiration for artwork where the children will be experimenting with different media to improve their mastery of printing and design of pattern. In science, the children will be completing work on light and revising their sound learning from Year 4.

Year 6's text for next term will be Sky Song by Abi Elphinstone, a fantasy adventure novel which will transport the children to the icy tundra of Erkenwald where whales glide between icebergs and polar bears roam the glaciers.

E-Safety

With Christmas coming we know many children will have asked Santa for latest game or access to the most popular apps through a tablet or smartphone. Please have a look at www.common sense media.org to see why certain games and apps are age-restricted and what real parents have to say about them.

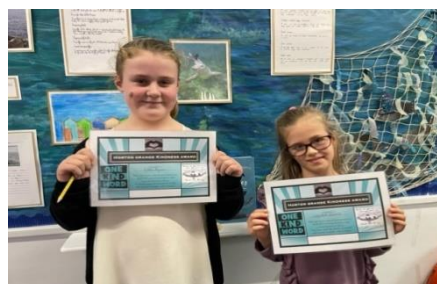
We know that the online landscape is constantly changing, and new issues arise every day that can challenge or affect children. One of the most challenging aspects is that adults are often the last to know what the new latest thing is. If you or your children have any concerns then please let Mr Fields know so we can look into it and offer support.

Reading

As you know reading is a big focus for us and our motto is "Learning to read and reading to learn". Please remember key stage 2 children have access to Reading Plus from home. The programme is going from strength to strength and is having a huge impact on the children's reading fluency. All children have a login and they can access the programme on a PC or tablet and there is a huge range of fiction and non-fiction texts that the children can choose from. All the texts can be read in around 15 minutes and questions test the children's understanding. Each month children who have made great progress are chosen and rewarded with a new book. Using Reading Plus at home is a great way of getting in reading in an easy, accessible and fun way. We have also purchased a whole new reading scheme for key stage 2 and we are looking forward to introducing these to the children after Christmas.

Always Club

Always Club has taken on a variety of forms during the half term from Mrs Brownrigg visiting classrooms with boxes of treats to meeting up for hot chocolate and brownies. It's been lovely to see so many children being rewarded for ALWAYS doing the right thing. We had a special Always Club during anti bullying week when the always person was nominated by the school councillor for their year group for always being kind. They not only received a treat but also a kindness award which they were all very proud of.



School council

School council continues to work hard to represent their school and class. This half term they became kindness ambassadors during anti bullying week. The theme for the week was One Kind Word. The School Council set about a secret mission to spread kindness around their class. They did a great job and reported back that the mission had gone well!

Attendance

Attendance as ever is a key focus for us at Horton Grange. It is easy for days of absence to mount up. This table, which is part of our attendance policy, shows how your child's attendance is judged and how many days this equates to. We know that the last 2 years have been very challenging in terms of health, in addition to all the usual bugs and viruses. COVID absences are not counted against overall attendance. Please also be mindful that medical appointments, where possible, should take place outside school hours, or close to the end of the day. Holidays should not be taken during school time and will not be authorised. These made up 45% of all absences this term, leading to a lot of lost learning.

Attendance	Description	Approx. days lost per year	Sessions Each day has 2, a.m. and p.m.	Approx. weeks lost per year
100 - 99%	Exceptional	0 to 3	0-8	Less than 1
96-98.9%	Good	4 to 9	10-18	1 to 2
95.9-90.1%	At Risk	10 to 18	20-37	2 to 4
90% and less	Persistent Absence	19 or more	38 and more	4 or more

Attendance Awards

There were 239 children with good or exceptional attendance in the Autumn term, which is a brilliant achievement. Those with 99-100% have received a certificate and badge.

The Asda draw is also made at the end of each term. 3 categories are awarded:

£25 voucher awarded for the most improved attendance

£50 voucher drawn for everyone with good attendance (96%-98.9%)

£75 voucher drawn for everyone with exceptional attendance (99%-100%)

The winners are announced termly on Facebook

New Attendance Officer

Jemma Brown is our new attendance officer and will work with families to improve attendance and ensure that children have the best possible chances to achieve and absenteeism is not a barrier to this. She will be a familiar face to some of you having been a family worker in her previous role. Please say hello if you see her at the gate in the morning.



Updates and communication

Please remember current updates will be communicated via our texting system or our school facebook page. There will also be further information regarding curriculum on our school website, including curriculum knowledge organisers, which share key knowledge and vocabulary to be learned and understood during the term.

Finally, thank you again for your on-going support. We are always looking at how we are doing in school and we often have people into school to check how we are doing. However, if there are things we can do better then please let us know via Mrs Hewes. Of course, if there are things that are going particularly well then we are always happy to hear this too!

So that just leaves me to say from us to you, have a lovely Christmas, stay safe and we will see you all in the New Year.

Merry Christmas everyone

Best wishes

Mrs Nichola Irving



KEY DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

(Other dates, which you will be notified about by letter, may be added at a later date)

Tuesday 4 January	School Re-opens
Monday 24 January	Year 6 Trial SATs week
Tuesday 8 February	Safer Internet Day
Thursday 17 February	School closes for half-term
Friday 18 February	Staff Training Day
Monday 28 February	School Re-opens