



# Newsletter

No. 15. 24th May 2024

Website: [www.ourladys.devon.sch.uk](http://www.ourladys.devon.sch.uk)

Telephone: 01271 345164

In Our Lady's Catholic Primary School we learn about God and try to follow his footsteps by showing care and respect for one another.

Dear Parents and Carers

We hope you have all been enjoying the glorious weather, fingers crossed it stays for the half-term holiday. As always, on hot days, please ensure your child has their water bottle, a sun-hat and they have sun cream applied before they come into school.

It is always a pleasure to send the newsletters out as we celebrate the wonderful things that have happened in school. This newsletter is no exception and we hope you enjoy reading about the recent events.

We have been very impressed with how hard the children have been working over the past few weeks, especially those children in Year 6 who have been taking their Key Stage 2 SATS. We are very proud of you.

We were so proud of the Key Stage 2 and Year 1 children this week, their behaviour and how they represented the school on recent trips to the North Devon Show and Multi-Skills were a credit to the school. Thank you to all of the adults responsible for organising and running these events and for our wonderful parent helpers too!

Thank you to Fr Peter and Mrs Cohen for their hard work in organising a Votive Service for Mary this week.

A big thank you to those of you who completed the parents survey. Your feedback, both positive and constructive, is really valued and helps us to reflect on ways we can improve the school for all children. In the parent survey responses we have had so far, one aspect of school life raised was the appropriateness of homework. In order for us to

unpick this a little further, we have sent out a short survey for you to answer (see link below too). Over the course of the next few weeks we will continue to respond to issues raised. [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1q0xpH\\_RM6Jgbv2Lch4c-Jc2bAW-oV1wO\\_EIWK1-f\\_oQ/viewform?edit\\_requested=true](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1q0xpH_RM6Jgbv2Lch4c-Jc2bAW-oV1wO_EIWK1-f_oQ/viewform?edit_requested=true)

As you will read in the remainder of this newsletter, there are lots of events happening when we return from the half-term break. We look forward to seeing you at these.

We would like to wish parents, children and staff a relaxing half term break and we look forward to welcoming you back on Tuesday 4th June for what promises to be a wonderful end to the school year.

God Bless

**Mr Meech, Executive Headteacher and Miss Wilby,  
Head of School**

## Heart of Gold Awards

Well done to all the children who have achieved our Heart of Gold Award for displaying our school rules:



Arthur T	Darcie
Eliza	Brody
Albie	Natalie
Olivia P	Luke
Daisy	Ebony
Oliver W	Liam
Williams	Edwin

**We are so proud of you.**

## Our Amazing Heron Class

Heron class have had a really exciting week. We attended a multi-skills event at Pilton Community college. We displayed excellent determination and team work skills. We then enjoyed welcoming all of our parents into our classroom for an open morning. We shared our writing with our families. Our parents wrote us notes and we felt so proud. Thank you for sharing this with us.



**PUNCTUALITY MATTERS!**


Being frequently late for school adds up to lost learning:

- Arriving 5 minutes late every day adds up to over 3 days lost each year.
- Arriving 15 minutes late every day is the same as being absent for 2 weeks a year.
- Arriving 30 minutes late every day is the same as being absent for 19 days a year.



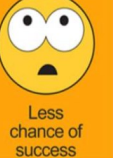


19 days lost a year through being late means 90% attendance.

missed minutes = missed learning = missed opportunities!

**EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS**



Each academic school year is 38 weeks (Sept-July) or 190 days. The following chart shows how missed days affects overall attendance.

<p><b>190 DAYS</b> 100%</p>  <p>Very best chance of success</p>	<p><b>183 DAYS</b> 96%</p>  <p>Off to a flying start</p>	<p><b>179 DAYS</b> 94%</p>  <p>Less chance of success</p>	<p><b>175 DAYS</b> 92%</p>  <p>Harder to make progress</p>	<p>More than <b>18 days</b> absence less than 90%</p>  <p>Persistent Absentee (Not fair on your child)</p>
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### Whole School Attendance

[Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)



### Headteacher's Awards

Well done to the following children who have recently received Headteacher's awards:-



**Heron**  
Kara-Lou

**Owl**  
Faith

**Kingfisher**

Lexi

Kya

Sam

Charlie

**Puffin**

Oliver

Anya

Cruze

Marty

**Eagle**

Issac-Ryan

Suki-Blue

Ezra

Violet-Rose

Bradley

Tyler

**Swallow**

Lucy

The next newsletter will go home on:

Friday 14th June 2024

Our Lady's School takes incidents of bullying, including on-line safety seriously. For further information the school's policy is available on our website or please see your child's class teacher if you have any concerns. [www.safer.internet.org.uk](http://www.safer.internet.org.uk)

## PTFA News



Hello to the Our Lady's Catholic School community. We would like to express so much thanks to you all for supporting our latest events.

This academic term we are supporting the school's Forest School project with events to raise money. The school has been blessed with free turf, a slide and chippings which has been sought by one of the PTFA members. We are still looking for wellies, puddle suits for the Barn a b's and Robins classes to allow us to play no matter the weather. Any donations gratefully received. The PTFA chair has managed to source seeds which the students are going to start planting soon.

Mrs Tucker has entered the school in the Duracell's big battery hunt competition. If you have any used batteries please donate to school stating how many you have. The winning school win's money towards school resources. The event helps towards raising knowledge around small environmental challenges make a big difference for our KS2 students. This ends on 12th of June 2024.

Bingo night on 22nd March was a great success and those who attended had loads of fun. The event raised an incredible £566. We have heard from parents saying they are looking forward to the next event. We are already thinking about another event soon!

The Raisin Box Challenge raised an amazing £207.18. Thank you to everyone who filled the boxes with loose change.

We have some great events planned for the students for this term. There is a non-school uniform day to raise money for the PE department on the 24th of May, a cake sale on 28th June and of course the end of term Disco which will be Friday 19th of July. Christmas planning has begun!

We are always happy to welcome new members. We meet each month on a Thursday 3:30-4:30/5pm. Please email school if you are interested in joining us. Many thanks

Charlotte, Ashley, Jo, Lydia, Sam, Sarah, Miss Knill, Mrs Jeffery, Mrs Welland, Mrs Tucker, Mrs Cohen

## Parenting Smart

Place 2 Be offer a wide range of short 5 minute videos on over 50 topics with practical tips to support children's well being and behaviour. Take a look at some of these via the link below:-



<https://parentingsmart.place2be.org.uk/>

## Dates

Fri 24th May	Non Uniform Day—PTFA—wear sportswear—£1
<b>Mon 27th May</b>	<b>Half Term Holiday</b>
Mon 3rd Jun	Non Pupil Day—School closed
<b>Tue 4th Jun</b>	<b>Pupil's Return to School</b>
Tue 4th Jun	Y6 Residential Meeting for Parents
<b>Wed 5th Jun</b>	<b>Top Up Swimming—Invitation only</b>
Thu 6th Jun	Change of Dinner Menu to Picnic Party
<b>Wed 12th Jun</b>	<b>Last day for Used Battery Competition</b>
We 12th Jun	Top Up Swimming—Invitation only
Thu 13th Jun	Olympic Legacy
<b>Thu 13th Jun</b>	<b>PTFA Meeting 3.30pm</b>
Mon 17th Jun	Y6 Residential all week
<b>Wed 20th Jun</b>	<b>Top Up Swimming—Invitation only</b>
Fri 21st Jun	St Aloysius Non Uniform Day—wear blue, white or yellow—£1
<b>Fri 28th Jun</b>	<b>PTFA Cake Sale and open morning 8.45-9.15am</b>
Mon 1st Jul	Pilton Community College Transition Day —Y6
<b>Mon 1st Jul</b>	<b>Y5 Cricket Festival</b>
Tue 2nd Jul	Pilton Community College Transition Day —Y6
<b>Fri 5th Jul</b>	<b>Year 5 Taster Day—Pilton Community College</b>
Tue 9th Jul	Y6 Performance to Parents 6.15pm
<b>Thu 11th Jul</b>	<b>The Park School Transition Day—Y6</b>
Thu 11th Jul	Meet the Tutor Eve 5-7pm at Pilton Community College—Y6
<b>Fri 12th Jul</b>	<b>The Park School Transition Day—Y6</b>
<b>Wed 17th Jul</b>	<b>Sports Day—Cricket Club</b>
Fri 19th Jul	End of Year Mass
<b>Fri 19th Jul</b>	<b>End of Term Disco—PTFA</b>
Wed 24th Jul	Last day of Summer Term
<b>Wed 4th Sep</b>	<b>Pupils Return to School</b>
Thu 5th Sep	New Reception Children Start

## Autism and Us' Parent Programme (Summer Term 2024) from Devon County Council

Support from the Communication and Interaction Team - Education and Families ([devon.gov.uk](http://devon.gov.uk))

Support for parents/carers of Devon primary and secondary children who are either on the autism assessment waiting list or who have received a diagnosis of autism.

Attending the 'Autism & Us' parent programme gives you an opportunity to develop your understanding of autism and look at practical solutions to managing and supporting your child's presenting needs, whilst also connecting with other parents/carers.

Full programme details and application process below:

### Autism & Us programmes:

4 weekly 'live online' sessions (approx. 2hrs each) related to the following topic/themes:

weekly 'live online' sessions (approx. 2hrs each) related to the following topic/themes:

Apply direct by email to: [educationlearnersupport@devon.gov.uk](mailto:educationlearnersupport@devon.gov.uk)

Topic	Programme
Autism overview	Thurs 13 Jun - 4.30 – 6.30pm
Sensory	Thurs 20 Jun - 4.30 – 6.30pm
Communication	Thurs 27 Jun - 4.30 – 6.30pm
Understanding and supporting behaviour	Thurs 4 Jul - 4.30 – 6.30pm

We will confirm your booking request, and provide you with a direct link to the event. They will be delivered on line 'live' via the Microsoft TEAMS platform.

Additionally we will also be offering the following very popular themed/topic based workshops, which lead on from the above programmes for themes/topics that may be a priority area for you against your child's presenting needs :-

Wed 5th June 9.30am—12noon	Autism and Girls
Thu 13th June 10am-12noon	Autism—Demand avoidance and PDA
Wed 19th June 10am-12noon	Autism—Vulnerability and online safety
Thu 27th June 10am-12noon	Autism—Communication (non/limited speaking children—support strategies)
Mon 1st July 10am-12noon	Autism— Communication (Speaking children—support strategies)
Wed 10th July 1pm-3pm	Autism—Managing stress and anxiety

Apply direct by email to: [educationlearnersupport@devon.gov.uk](mailto:educationlearnersupport@devon.gov.uk)

To secure a place on any of the above topic based workshops. We will confirm your booking request, and provide you with a direct link to the event. They will be delivered on line 'live' via the Microsoft TEAMS platform.

## PE at Our Lady's



We have had a great half term in PE. The children have completed 6 weeks of cricket lessons. KS2 have learnt the countdown cricket rules and played some fantastic cricket matches in PE. A big thank you to the PTFA for supplying the school with some more tennis balls for the Cricket lessons.

Year 1 completed a multi skills event at Pilton Community College completing lots of different multi skill stations. All children worked really hard and showed great attitude and determination.

Year 2 went to Tarka Tennis Centre and completed a tennis festival learning lots of different skills. Each child worked really hard and had a fantastic morning at Tarka Tennis.

Next half term we have lots of sporting events to attend. Selected children will be attending a Rounders event at Pilton. Year 5's will be taking part in a cricket festival at North Devon Cricket Club. A group of selected year 6's will compete in the Mixed North Devon cricket competition at Instow Cricket Club. Also the Olympic Legacy will be taking place at Park school.

Lots of exciting events coming up, please keep your eyes peeled on how they get on.

To keep updated on how Our Lady's get on in the up and coming events please follow Primary sports and education-North Devon on Facebook.

Holy Mary, mother fair,  
Filled with love for God,  
Pray for us in all our  
needs.  
Pray for us today



## Barn-a-b's at Our Lady's



The children who will be starting school in September should have received your welcome pack for starting Robins class this week. Please complete and return to us or the office. More details will follow shortly.

For those children that will be staying in Barn-a-b's we will be sending out forms for you to complete for the hours that you would like next term.

Please remember to send your child wearing sturdy footwear for our forest garden. Some work will be done in our garden in half term. Look out for more information about the PTFA cake sale coming soon...

We return to school on Tuesday 4th June. Have a fabulous holiday.

**Cathy Jeffery, Nursery Manager and the Barn a B's Team**

## Free School Meals (FSM)/Pupil Premium

Despite the fact that all KS1 children receive a free school lunch, we request that all parents go on line to the Devon County Council website and apply for free school meals. You can do this by entering the following link:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/school-information/school-meals>

By following the link you can see whether your child is eligible for Means Tested Free School Meals, which attracts Pupil Premium funding, which is worth £1,320 a year per pupil for our school, which makes a significant difference to our provision for children. The funding is used to support children's achievement as well as to subsidise after-school clubs, music tuition or various sporting activities. Parents only pay half price for these activities if you are entitled to Free School Meals. Eligibility for Pupil Premium can be accepted on either parent, children do not need to be living full-time with the parent.

### Smartphone Free Childhood

Smartphone Free Childhood is a parent-led movement whose mission is to protect children from the dangers of using smartphones too young.

The premise behind this movement is that all parents/carers of a class all agree not to give their children smartphones (therefore the level of peer pressure is reduced) for a set time or until a specific age. Are you ready to join? Find out more here: <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk>

You may feel your child does need a phone, particularly if they are walking home by themselves but there are alternatives to the smartphone, including a watch, which are listed here: <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/alternatives>

If your child already has a smartphone then Internet Matters have a section on their website with advice on smartphone safety: <https://www.internetmatters.org/set-upsafe/>



## Is being online affecting our child's mental health?

There are many positives to being online, but we do need to be aware of the negative aspects including those that may impact our child's mental health and wellbeing, for example:

- **Social media** (spending too much time on social media, comparing ourselves to others, filtered images and desire to achieve likes).
- **Cyberbullying**
- **Seeing inappropriate content**
- **Constantly connected/information overload**
- **Excessive screentime**
- **Negative impact on our sleep**



#### Further information

- Childnet discusses digital wellbeing in more detail and includes top tips and conversation starters: <https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/digital-wellbeing/>
- The NSPCC provides further information about mental health including signs to look out for and how to get further support: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/depression-anxiety-mental-health/>

### WhatsApp Group warning

Whilst WhatsApp has an age rating of 13+ (recently lowered from 16), a BBC investigation has found that children as young as nine have been added to WhatsApp groups and seen inappropriate content. If your child is using WhatsApp, check their group settings as by default, group privacy settings are set to 'everyone,' which means anybody can add your child to a group without their approval. You can change this setting to 'My Contacts' so only contacts can add them to groups without their approval and if somebody who is not a contact wants to add them to a group then they will need to send them an invite.

You should talk to your child about the risks of joining groups and show them how to use the reporting/blocking tools. You can find out more about the BBC investigation here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cy0l4z8n1p9o>

## Digital Addiction

Are you worried that your child is addicted to being online/on their device? Recent research from Ofcom reported that "34% of parents of children aged 3-4 said it was hard to control it, rising to half (49%) of parents of children aged 16-17."\* Bark have produced a blog which discusses what addiction is, how to recognise the signs and examples of what digital addiction can look like. You can find the blog here:

<https://www.bark.us/blog/digital-addictions/>

[\*source:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/childrens/children-and-parents-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2024> accessed 24.4.24]



## Online Gaming Safety Tips: For parents/carers of neurodivergent young people

Internet Matters have published guidance outlining the benefits and risks of online gaming and how you can support your neurodivergent child. You can read the guide here:

<https://www.flipsnack.com/internetmattersorg/guidance-for-parents-of-neurodivergent-gamers-internet-matters/full-view.html>

## Misinformation online

There is a lot of information online that is incorrect/fake or misleading and it can sometimes be difficult for adults to distinguish between what is true and what is fake, never mind for younger people. We need to develop digital literacy skills in our children by encouraging them to think critically about what they read online and to fact check. Both the BBC and Channel 4 have fact checking areas on their websites:

- [https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/reality\\_check](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/reality_check)
- <https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/>

One way to start the conversation would be to play a game such as 'Can you spot the signs of fake news?' from the BBC:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zwfm8hv>

### Further information

- <https://saferinternet.org.uk/online-issue/misinformation>



## Encountering violent online content starts at primary school.

New research commissioned by Ofcom reported that "all children who took part in the research came across violent content online, mostly via social media, video-sharing and messaging sites and apps. Many tell us this is before they have reached the minimum age requirement to use these services."

You can read more about Ofcom's findings here:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/news-centre/2024/encountering-violent-online-content-starts-at-primary-school>

## Talking about online toxicity

Vodafone have published an article highlighting research which shows that "69% of preadolescent boys have encountered misogynistic content online". This article discusses how to approach this issue with your child and what to do if they start repeating negative views seen online.

<https://www.vodafone.co.uk/newscentre/smart-living/digital-parenting/how-to-talk-to-your-teenage-sons-about-online-toxicity/>

# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

Emotionally Based School Avoidance is a term used to refer to reduced attendance or non-attendance at school by a child or young person. It's often rooted in emotional, mental health or wellbeing issues. The rate of children who miss school more than 10% of the time in England has more than doubled since before the pandemic: rising from 10.9% in 2018-19, to 22.3% in 2022-23.

## UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

## IMPACT OF SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

### REASONS FOR ABSENCE

School avoidance is sometimes underpinned by several factors rather than one single cause. This could include something going on for the child or young person within the family or at school. A child may have caring responsibilities at home, for instance, or a change in family dynamics; bullying and friendship difficulties at school; pressure to achieve in schoolwork and exams; or moving from primary school to secondary school.

### LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

School refusal can negatively impact a young person's learning and development. Attending school on a regular basis not only supports academic attainment but is also important for the development of key life skills and the growth of children and young people as citizens.

### PATTERNS OF ABSENCE

You may notice patterns in regular absences or children regularly expressing that they don't want to attend school (particularly being reluctant to leave home on school days). If a child or young person is neurodiverse, there is some evidence to suggest there are more aspects of school life which can cause distress – such as changes in the environment, changes of routine and sensory stimuli.

### LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

The difficulties associated with school non-attendance can be far reaching and may have a negative impact on long-term outcomes. It may, for example, lead to reduced future aspirations, poor emotional regulation, mental health difficulties, limited academic progress and restricted employment opportunities.

### COMPLAINTS ABOUT PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

There may be an increase in a child or young person's complaints about physical symptoms, particularly on school days or the evening before school. These could include complaining of a tummy ache, headache, or saying they feel ill when there doesn't appear to be a medical cause. Always check with the GP first to rule out medical causes or illness.

### CYCLE OF ABSENCE

Consistent absences may contribute to sustained school avoidance over time. Further to this, the longer a pupil is out of education, the more likely it is that there is a rise in their ongoing need to avoid the activity which is making them anxious – increasing their desire to stay at home.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### WORK TOGETHER

If there's a concern about a child's absence and emotional wellbeing, it's important that there is clear communication and a consistent approach between the child's parents and the school, so you can take a child-centred approach together towards a plan of support or reintegration. This ensures a consistency of approach from both home and school, creating better outcomes for the child.

### MANAGING OVERWHELMING FEELINGS

While there may be times you feel frustrated or angry, try to stay calm; acknowledge the child's worries, listen and discuss a range of coping strategies together to help them face the discomfort and overwhelming feelings. These could include mindfulness, deep breathing or going for a walk and practice the strategies in less overwhelming situations first.

### FOLLOW REGULAR ROUTINES

Children can benefit from a regular and consistent routine. This could be a morning routine, from waking up and having breakfast through to getting dressed, packing their bag and leaving the house. A consistent evening routine which is calm and limited time on screens can also give children much needed predictability and familiarity. Schools can help create a timetabled routine for the child's school day, if required.

### REDUCE STIMULATING ACTIVITIES AT HOME

If a child is avoiding school, reduce their access to more stimulating activities (such as watching television, playing games and spending time with friends) during school hours, where possible. This reduces the potential for the child having rewarding experiences at home, which could be interpreted as a positive aspect of avoiding school.

### Meet Our Expert

With 30 years' experience as a teacher, trainer, consultant and interim executive board member, Anna Bateman has a superb understanding of what works in pedagogy, school improvement and leadership. She has also advised the Department for Education on their mental health green paper.



Source: See full reference list on guide page at: [nationalcollege.com/guides/school-avoidance](https://nationalcollege.com/guides/school-avoidance)

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