GREYTHORN PRIMARY

"Engaging hearts, equipping minds, opening doors"

Autumn Term | Weekly Newsletter | 18th September 2026

DATES FOR THE DIARY

SATURDAY 19th SEPTEMBER
10am - 12 Noon Open Morning for Sept 27 parents

MONDAY 21st SEPTEMBER
REMINDER
Fun Run

WEDNESDAY 23rd SEPTEMBER
6-7PM FOGSA AGM

THURSDAY 24th SEPTEMBER
Individual Photos
EYFS & Phonics Evening for parents

FRIDAY 25th SEPTEMBER
Toddler Stay & Play

WEDNESDAY 30th SEPTEMBER
9.30am - 11.30am Open Morning for Sept 27 parents

2026/27 TERM DATES

Autumn Term
1 September - 16 October 2026
2 November - 18 December 2026

Spring Term
4 January - 12 February 2027
22 February - 25 March 2027

Summer Term
12 April - 28 May 2027
7 June - 28 July 2027

INSET: 1 Sept, 2 Sept, 16 Oct, 22 Feb, 7 June



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR HEADTEACHER

Dear Parents and Carers,

Another fantastic week of learning, achievement and enjoyment at Greythorn!

It has been wonderful to hear the sound of music echoing throughout the school this week. From guitars to drums and recorders, our talented musicians have started practising with great enthusiasm, dedication and skill. A huge well done to everyone involved.

We are also looking forward to our Fun Run on Monday and hope that parents, carers and family members are ready to join in the excitement! Whether you choose to run, walk, push a pram, cheer from the sidelines or simply enjoy the atmosphere, your support will help make the event a great success. Every step taken will help raise funds for both the school and Macmillan Cancer Support, making it a fun and worthwhile occasion for everyone.

Thank you in advance for your support. I look forward to seeing many of you there and sharing what promises to be a fantastic community event.

Kind regards,

Mrs Carpenter

HOME - SCHOOL AGREEMENT

Greythorn Home - School Agreement
At Greythorn Primary School, we know that children achieve their very best when school, home and pupils work together. Our new Home-School Agreement sets out how we can work in partnership to ensure every child feels happy, safe, supported and successful.

We would be grateful if you could take a few moments to read the agreement and support the shared commitments within it. By working together, we can provide the very best opportunities for all children to flourish and reach their full potential.

Please 'like' the post on your child's class dojo to confirm that you have read, understood and are committed to the agreement. If you would prefer a hard copy, please speak to your child's class teacher.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support and partnership.

GREYTHORN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Engaging hearts, equipping minds, opening doors

HOME–SCHOOL AGREEMENT



2026 – 2028

PUPIL AGREEMENT

I will

- Follow our school rules of Be Safe, Be Ready and Be Respectful
- Be aspirational and resilient by always trying my best and working hard to learn
- Be responsible by attending school regularly and arriving on time
- Behave well and be polite and helpful showing kindness to all
- Be friendly and show respect to other children and adults
- Be confident, imaginative and creative in my thinking and learning
- Take responsibility for myself and my actions
- Complete my homework regularly and return it on time to a high standard
- Be responsible by bringing all the equipment I need to school when needed, including my PE kit, school bag and reading books
- Take pride in representing Greythorn by wearing the correct, smart school uniform and being Greythorn Smart
- Show respect by taking good care of the school equipment and school environment

SCHOOL AGREEMENT

We will

- Provide a safe, secure and caring learning environment
- Teach and encourage children to do their best at all times and achieve their full potential
- Develop positive values and a caring attitude towards the school community and the environment
- Provide a balanced curriculum of the highest quality and meet the individual needs of every child
- Promote high standards of behaviour to ensure a safe and caring environment
- Keep parents/carers informed about school activities through newsletters, notices, the website and other communications
- Monitor the progress of children and provide advice and guidance to support their work
- Set appropriate homework and provide feedback where appropriate
- Be welcoming and offer opportunities for parents/carers to become involved in the daily life of the school
- Help children develop a sense of responsibility, be considerate of others and make positive choices
- Promote and encourage good attendance and punctuality
- Invite parents/carers to attend events that celebrate children's success and achievements

PARENTS/CARERS' AGREEMENT

We will

- Ensure my child attends school regularly, is punctual, properly equipped to learn and provide an explanation if my child is absent
- Support the school to make sure that my child maintains good behaviour
- Ensure that my child wears the correct school uniform and brings their PE kit to school when required
- Encourage my child to always do their best
- Ensure that my child's homework is completed and returned on time
- Attend achievement assemblies, parent workshops and parents' meetings to discuss my child's progress
- Support the school in upholding its high standards and policies
- Treat all members of the school community with respect and politeness
- Work in partnership with the school

Pupil's name: _____

Pupil's class: _____ Date: _____

Pupil's signature: _____

Signed (on behalf of the school): _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signed (parent/carer): _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

TO DO

SUPPORT

LIKE

SCHOOL UNIFORM



School Uniform
We are Greythorn smart!

Greythorn Smart! -School Uniform
Children should return to school in smart school uniform which is a red school sweatshirt/jumper/cardigan (no hoodies), a red polo shirt (white polo shirts are no longer part of the uniform), dark grey trousers, dark grey skirt, dark grey shorts, plain black shoes or trainers (no coloured logos or coloured soles allowed), grey or white socks, grey or red tights.

Please be reminded that all school uniform should be clearly labelled, including PE kit.

Children should not wear nail varnish to school. Haircuts should not be extreme- no shave lines, fades, dyed hair or large decorative hair accessories. All hair accessories should be small, discreet plain dark colours or school colours. Only small stud earrings are allowed and your child must be able to remove them for PE lessons. No smart watches to be worn.

PE Kits
Please ensure that all children have their PE kits in school. Your child's class teacher will advise which days their PE lessons are. A reminder that children should have black plimsolls/trainers for PE with a plain white t-shirt (round- neck) and plain black shorts/skorts/joggers. No logos (except the school logo) or writing on kit please.

SCHOOL LUNCHES/SNACKS











School Dinners/Packed Lunches/Snacks/Water Bottles

FS and Key Stage 1 (Year 1 - 2) children are entitled to a universal free school meal. They may bring a packed lunch if they choose.

Key Stage 2 (Year 3 - 6) children can order a school dinner or bring a packed lunch. School dinner menus are available on the school website. School meals are currently £3.40 paid on ParentPay in advance.

If children choose to bring a packed lunch, please make sure that it contains a healthy school lunch - no sweets or chocolate bars are allowed.

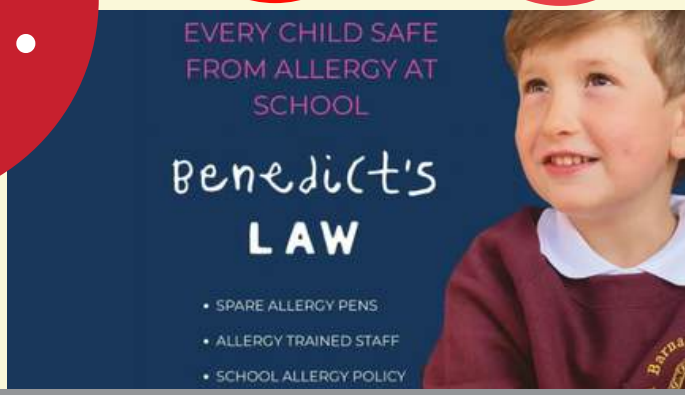
Children in EYFS and Key Stage 1 are provided with a fruit snack and milk each morning. Children in Key Stage 2 may bring a healthy fruit snack for morning break. Please note that sweets, chocolate bars, and other confectionery items are not permitted.

All children should bring a clearly labelled water bottle to school. This should contain water only.

We are a nut-free school, please ensure that all items in lunchboxes are free from nuts.

All staff have received allergy awareness training, including training relating to Benedict's Law and we take every precaution to ensure a safe environment for all pupils.





ARRIVING/LEAVING SCHOOL

Coming into and leaving the school site

- The school gate closes promptly at 9:00am. We kindly ask parents and carers to avoid using mobile phones on site so that full attention can be given to your children during drop-off and collection times.
- Please ensure children remain close to their accompanying adult when arriving at or leaving school and that they walk calmly at all times. If you need to speak with a teacher, please arrange an appointment or contact them via ClassDojo, rather than approaching them at the classroom door during the busy start of the school day.
- For everyone's safety, pupils should walk into school and must not be carried, ride on shoulders, or use bikes or scooters on the school site. Bikes and scooters should be walked to and from the school gate.
- Younger children should remain with their accompanying adult at all times and should not run ahead when entering or leaving the premises.
- Year 5 and Year 6 pupils may walk home independently with parental permission. Parents must inform the school in advance if this arrangement is to be in place. All other pupils must be collected by a responsible adult. Pupils in Year 4 may walk home with an older sibling in Year 5 or Year 6, provided parental permission has been given.

Please remember that **at all times, vehicles must not be driven down the school drive.** The drive is shared with pedestrians and must remain accessible for essential services and deliveries. **This also applies to Breakfast and Afterschool Club.**
Thank you for your cooperation and for helping us keep the school site safe for everyone.



Parking

Please do not use **Hyde Park Close** to park on or for dropping off. The road does not have a pavement and it is not safe to be manoeuvring around pedestrians in such a small space.
The same applies to **Uppingham Crescent** and **Regents Park Close**. Please do not park on this road or on the pavement. Pavement parking leaves very little space for school pedestrians, making it unsafe, and parked cars are also causing difficulties for vehicles trying to pass along the road.



MESSAGES TO SCHOOL

Parent - School Communication
When communicating with staff via ClassDojo or email, please be mindful that messages sent outside of school hours (school hours - 8am to 5pm) may not be responded to until the next working day. Any messages sent during the day will be checked at a time convenient to the staff member as they will ultimately be teaching or supporting your children in class.

If your message is urgent or requires immediate attention, please contact the school office rather than sending a ClassDojo message. This helps to ensure that enquiries are received promptly and directed to the appropriate member of staff.

For communication with the school office or the Headteacher, please use office@greythorn.notts.sch.uk rather than ClassDojo.

SCHOOL COUNCIL APPLICATIONS

For all children Year 1 - Year 6

GREYTHORN SCHOOL COUNCIL

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

- Do you speak up for others?
- Do you care about your school?
- Are you ambitious and full of ideas?
- Are you responsible and trustworthy?
- Are you brave enough to share your views?
- Are you a good listener?
- Do you want to make Greythorn even better?
- **WE WANT YOU!**
- Become a School Councillor and help make a difference to our school community.
- **Be a leader. Be a role model. Be the voice of your class.**
- **Apply Today!**

Candidate application process- personal statement

Make a poster or write a speech.

Think about the following questions...

- Why do you want to be a school councillor
- What qualities do you have
- How will you help improve the school
- What ideas would like to bring to the council

Bring to your class teacher by Monday 21st September

OPAL PLAY



OPAL Play is Coming to Greythorn!

I am delighted to share some exciting news. This year, we will be beginning our **OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning)** journey and we cannot wait to see the difference it will make for our children!

OPAL is an award-winning approach that transforms playtimes by making them more engaging, enjoyable and purposeful for every child. It is based on the simple belief that children learn an enormous amount through play. By providing a wider range of opportunities, resources and experiences at breaktimes and lunchtimes, children can develop valuable life skills such as creativity, resilience, problem-solving, teamwork and communication.

Over the coming term, we will gradually introduce OPAL across Greythorn. As we develop our play provision, we will be looking to our wonderful parents and carers for support through donations of resources and equipment. We are also incredibly grateful to FOGSA, who are helping to fund this exciting development.

As our OPAL journey progresses, we will keep you updated every step of the way, sharing our plans, developments and successes. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to get involved and help us create an even richer play experience for all of our children.

This is a truly exciting step forward for Greythorn and has the potential to revolutionise the way our children play, learn and interact with one another.

Research shows that high-quality play can have a positive impact on:

Physical health and wellbeing
Social skills and friendships
Emotional resilience
Confidence and independence
Behaviour and engagement in learning

Children who have meaningful opportunities to play often return to the classroom happier, calmer and more ready to learn.

Watch this space... exciting OPAL Play is coming to Greythorn! 🎉

MEET YOUR GREYTHORN TEAM

Mrs Carpenter







About Me

Hi, I'm Mrs Carpenter and I am proud to be the Headteacher here at Greythorn. I'm also Senior Designated Leader for Safeguarding.

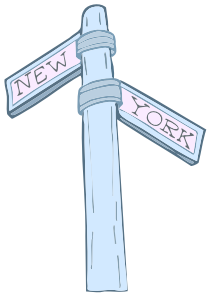
The thing I love most about Greythorn is the kindness and compassion of everyone here. I love connecting with our wonderful community and discovering amazing things about our pupils, families and staff.













THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Foundation

This week in Foundation, the children have continued to settle into their new learning environment and have thoroughly enjoyed exploring both our indoor and outdoor classroom spaces. It has been wonderful to see friendships blossom as the children play, learn, and share new experiences together.

The children have enjoyed a wide range of engaging experiences throughout the week. These have included fine motor activities imaginative play in the mud kitchen and our popular team bean bag toss game, which encouraged cooperation, turn-taking, and teamwork.

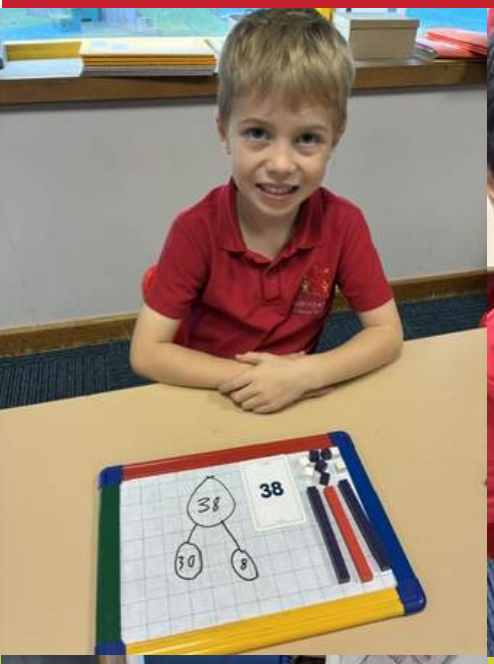
We have also spent plenty of time exploring, creating, and discovering through play, all while developing important social and communication skills.

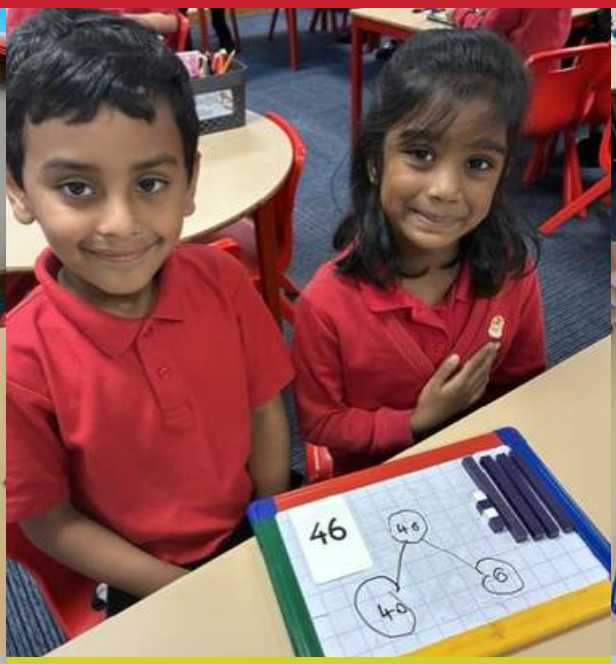


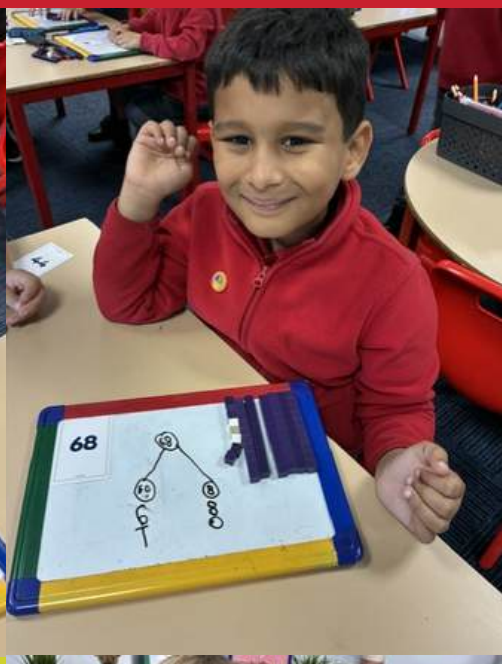




THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS



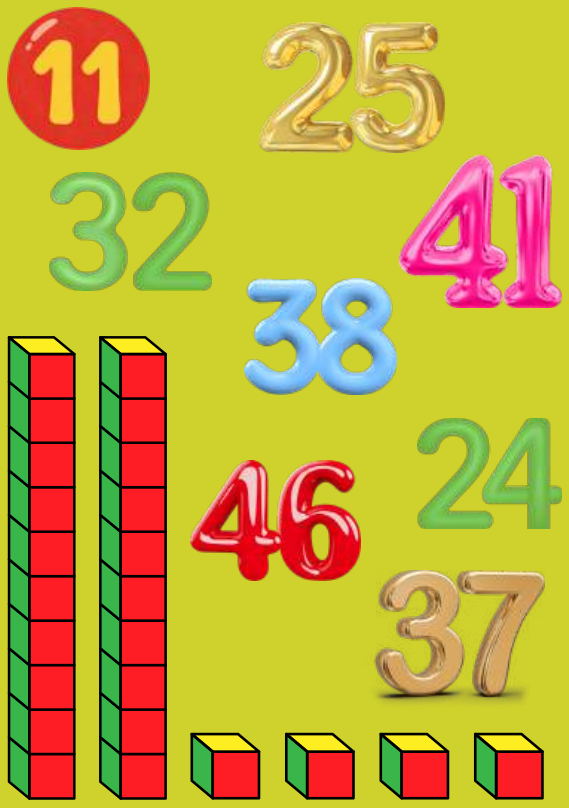






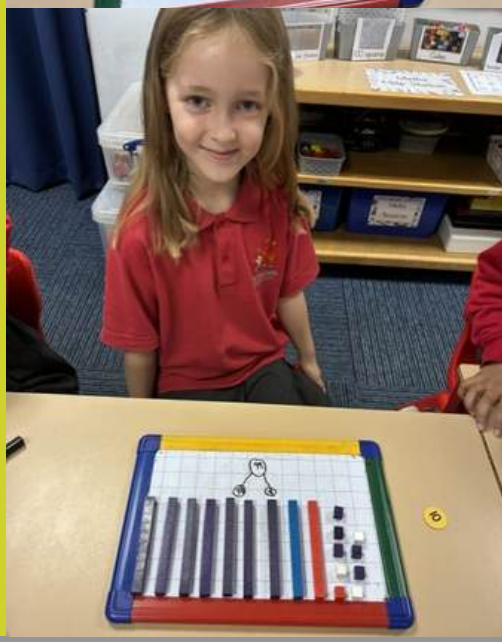
Year 1/2

The Year 1/2 children have been learning all about place value in their maths lessons. They have been looking at 2 digit numbers and partitioning them into tens and ones. They have represented their learning in different ways including using part-part-whole models, bead strings, numicon and base 10. Well done Year 1/2!





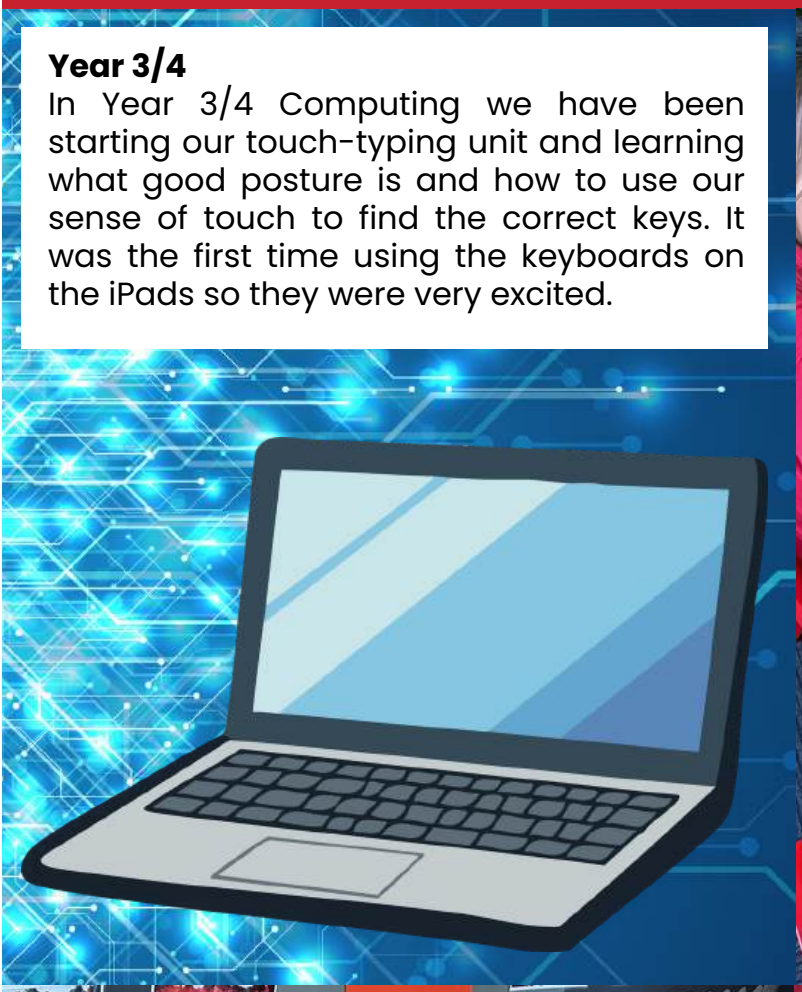




THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Year 3/4

In Year 3/4 Computing we have been starting our touch-typing unit and learning what good posture is and how to use our sense of touch to find the correct keys. It was the first time using the keyboards on the iPads so they were very excited.





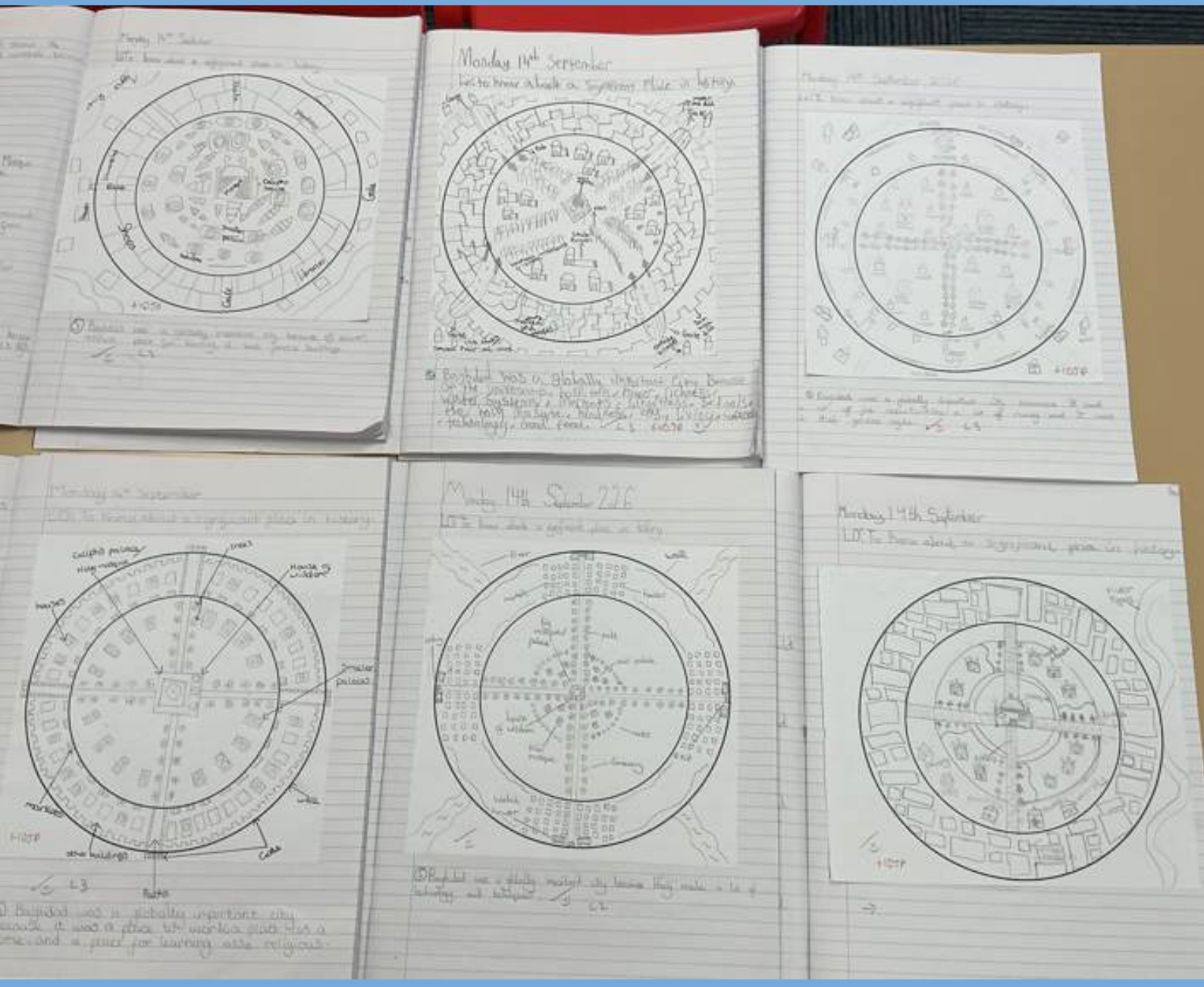




THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Year 5/6

Year 5/6 have been studying the city of Baghdad. The ancient city was famous for being circular and home to more than 1 million people a millennia ago. We looked at how the city was structured and how it was able to sustain itself. Here you can see the children's diagrams of the city complete with labels.



THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

ATTENTION

IMPORTANT



Year 6 parents Secondary School applications

Please be aware that the secondary transfer form needs completing online by **31st October**. It is really important that you complete all 4 school choices on your application form. In the past we have had children placed at Hall Park in Eastwood and Chilwell School because their parents didn't put 4 local choices. If you need any help or advice, please contact Mrs Parkin or Mrs Cox.

Secondary school open evenings

The West Bridgford School 28th September 2026

The South Wolds Academy 17th September 2026

The Nottingham Emmanuel School 24th September 2026

East Leake Academy 24th September 2026

Rushcliffe Spencer Academy 17th September 2026

Farnborough Spencer Academy 16th September 2026

The West Bridgford School

RUSHCLIFFE SPENCER ACADEMY

The South Wolds Academy

FARNBOROUGH SPENCER ACADEMY

The Nottingham Emmanuel School
A CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY

EAST LEAKE ACADEMY



SCHOOL MENU



WEEK COMMENCING

AUTUMN-WINTER MENU 2026/27

WEEK 1

31st August
21st September
12th October
2nd November
23rd November
14th December
4th January
25th January

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Red Option	Spiral pizza (v) Gluten Milk with diced potatoes (ve) & peas	Chicken, broccoli & sweetcorn pasta Gluten Eggs Mustard Soya OR Super veg pasta (ve) Gluten Eggs Mustard Soya with garlic bread (ve) Gluten Milk Soya	Nottinghamshire sausage Gluten Sulphur dioxide OR Planet friendly Sausage (ve) Gluten Soya Sulphur Dioxide with Yorkshire pudding (v) Gluten Egg Milk mashed potatoes, (ve) carrots, green cabbage	Rock 'n' Sausage roll Gluten Milk Soya Sulphur Dioxide OR Mighty veg roll (ve) Gluten Soya Milk with diced potatoes, (ve) garden peas & tomato ketchup	Fin-tastic breaded fish Gluten Fish OR Crunchy seaside fingers (ve) Gluten with oven chips, (ve) peas & sweetcorn
	Bread & spread (ve) Gluten Soya, Fresh fruit				
Pudding	Gooey blondie (v) Gluten Milk Soya	Sweet cinnamon cookie (ve) Gluten	Wobbly jelly (ve) & shortbread cookie (ve) Gluten	Fruity yoghurt Milk (v)	Swirly whirly muffin (v) Eggs Milk Gluten

Contains Allergen
May Contain Allergen
(v) Vegetarian
(ve) Vegan

vertas
Making the difference

Nottinghamshire County Council

Greythorn Primary School

FUN RUN

Monday 21st September 2026



Parents can join in with their children.

FOGSA NEWS


WELCOME
Friends of
GREYTHORN
SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
FOGSA AGM
SEPTEMBER 23RD 6-7 PM
MEET AT SCHOOL RECEPTION
EVERYONE IS WELCOME
CELEBRATE ALL WE HAVE ACHIEVED IN 25/26!
FIND OUT MORE ABOUT FOGSA
GET INVOLVED OR EVEN JOIN THE COMMITTEE!
PLEASE JOIN US FOR A DRINK AFTER AT THE DORSET*
*NOT FUNDED BY FOGSA

GREYTHORN
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Flying High Partnership

A VERY WARM WELCOME

AWAITS YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN



WE TAKE GREAT PRIDE IN DEVELOPING HAPPY CHILDREN WHO BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES.

COME AND SEE OUR **WONDERFUL SCHOOL**

OPEN DAYS

SATURDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 10AM - 12 NOON
WEDNESDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER 9.30AM -11.30AM
WEDNESDAY 4TH NOVEMBER 9.30AM - 11.30AM
SATURDAY 21ST NOVEMBER 10AM - 12 NOON
SATURDAY 9TH JANUARY 10AM - 12 NOON

office@greythorn.notts.sch.uk 0115 914 9779 www.greythornschool.co.uk
Greythorn Drive | West Bridgford | Nottingham | NG2 7GH

GREYTHORN
PRIMARY SCHOOL

TODDLER
STAY AND PLAY

A VERY WARM WELCOME

AWAITS YOU

AND YOUR CHILDREN

For Parents/Carers with Children (age 0 - 4 yrs) living in the local community

Come and join us for playtime, chat and refreshments



Free of Charge

Friday

9.15AM - 10.15AM

25th September

9th October

6th November

20th November

4th December





office@greythorn.notts.sch.uk 0115 914 9779 www.greythornschool.co.uk

Greythorn Drive | West Bridgford | Nottingham | NG2 7GH

COMMUNITY NEWS

RUSHCLIFFE ARENA





KARATEZONE.COM

Dear Parents/ Legal Guardians

We would like to invite your child to a **free** session with us at **Rushcliffe Arena,** we will also provide everything needed to get your child started should they want to continue after this free session **(Uniforms, Licence and Insurance)**

Choosing **our academy** will give **you** the following piece of mind

- Your child will learn how to **protect themselves** and learn **street safety**
- We aim for the children to **enjoy** each lesson whilst at the same time maintaining class discipline
- Your child will benefit from increased **concentration and focus** which in turn will help them with their academic studies
- Each class has up to **4** fully qualified, first aid trained, insured, DBS checked **male and female Black Belt instructors**
- Fees are charged on a month-to-month basis with **no joining fee or cancellation fee/period** (£34 for individuals or £54 for siblings)
- Everything else is **free** to get the children started (insurance, uniforms, license etc)

AVAILABLE SESSIONS

RUSHCLIFFE ARENA (Rugby Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7HY)

- **SUNDAYS 2.45- 3.30PM OR 3.30- 4.15PM**
- **MONDAYS 3.55- 4.40PM OR 4.40- 5.25PM**

To book a **free lesson** for your child please send a **text message** to **07530 542965** with your child's name, date of birth and chosen session time **or** if the above time/day is not suitable please visit our website **(www.karatezone.com)** for alternative options.

Loughborough Schools Foundation
Nursery • Fairfield • Grammar • High

The Bursary, 3 Burton Walks, Loughborough LE11 2DU
01509 283700 bursary.office@lsf.org
www.lsf.org

10 September 2026

Loughborough Music Makers

Loughborough Music Makers

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We would like to make you aware of a new musical opportunity for Years 1-6 that begins this term. Loughborough Music Makers sessions will be taking place on Saturdays from 9.00-12.00 (with the option of a half morning for Y1-2), starting on 19 September at the Loughborough Schools Foundation Music School.

These will be fun, practical sessions based around musicianship, composition and ensemble skills. All children staying for the full morning will have the opportunity to sing in a choir, then those who play an instrument already will play in the orchestra while beginners will be offered a group keyboard lesson.

All levels of musical experience are welcome!

Please visit our website if you would like further details: https://lborofairfield.org/co-curricular/music/loughborough-music-makers/

To book, click here: https://lsm.schoolactivity.co.uk/booking?venue_id=52&activity_category_id=69

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at music.makers@lsf.org.

Best wishes,

Lucy Phillips
Music Lead
Loughborough Music Makers

THE LOUGHBOROUGH SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

New
Saturday Music School

Loughborough Music Makers

Loughborough Music Makers is designed to develop children's musical understanding beyond the school curriculum in a fun, supportive and ambitious environment. Suitable for children in Years 1-6 and led by experienced music educators, these sessions help children build strong musical foundations. Children of all abilities are welcome, whether they are new to music or already enjoy singing and playing.

lborofairfield.org/music-makers

Use discount code **COMMUNITY10**

09:00-12:00
Saturdays during term time
Loughborough Schools Foundation Music School

Book your place!
Places available for 2026/27

COMMUNITY NEWS

FREE!

St Paul's
BOUNDARY ROAD

Messy Church





Arts and crafts

Bible stories

Singing together

Meal included!

Lots of fun for children of all ages and their parents and carers. Come along and get creative!

Saturday 19th September
3:45pm - 5:30pm

Scan to book your FREE place >>>
or visit *stpaulsboundaryroad.churchsuite.com/events/rf6moyz0*

St Paul's Church, Boundary Road, NG2 7DB

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE YOUTH SERVICE
Safe, trusted, engaging

Free Entry on 1st Night!

Providing safe spaces.

trusted youth workers.

fun and engaging things to do

West Bridgford Young People's Centre

Junior Youth Club Night

Starts Monday
7th September 2026

50p per night

Mondays 6-8:15pm

For Young People in School Year 6!

Free Wifi!	Competitions!	Arts and Crafts!	Sports!
Tuck Shop!	Table Tennis!	Pool Table!	Play Station!
Cooking!	Baking!	Free Food!	Trips!
Team Games!	Recording Studio!	Dance Studio!	Activities!

Somewhere to Chill and Meet Friends!

For more information, please contact Nikki Loydall on 07789371176 or via email

nikola.loydall@nottscc.gov.uk

West Bridgford Young People's Centre
Bridgford Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6AT

www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/youthservice

Nottinghamshire County Council

ROCKLEY MUSIC

TASTER DRUM LESSSONS

A LIMITED NUMBER OF SPACES WILL BE AVALIABLE FOR GROUP DRUM TUITION FOR YEAR 1 AND UPWARDS

LESSONS ARE 20-25 MINUTES AND ARE HELD WEEKLY DURING SCHOOL HOURS.

LEARN HOW TO PLAY THE DRUMS ALONG TO YOUR FAVOURITE SONGS

DRUMMING IS FANTASTIC FOR:

- COORDINATION
- REGULATION
- BRAIN DEVELOPMENT
- CONFIDENCE

PRICING IS £56 PER HALF TERM FOR 6 LESSONS

contact info@rockleymusic.co.uk or call 01949 829285 to book, or visit rockleymusic.co.uk for more info.



TLA Academy

NEW BEGINNER DANCE CLASSES



STREET/FUN | 4.30PM - 5.15PM
AGES 4-12 YEARS



FREESTYLE | 5.15PM - 6PM
AGES 4-12 YEARS

ALL ABILITIES WELCOME

LOCATION: EDWALTON CHURCH HALL

CONTACT
TARA LYN
tlacademynotts@gmail.com

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about TOXIC GAMING

Gaming should be a way for children to have safe fun with their friends. But anonymity and a lack of consequences can mean that corners of online multiplayer gaming are riddled with toxicity that makes them unpleasant at best, and damaging to children at worst.

A 2019 study found 74% of players had experienced harassment in online games, and such behaviour has become increasingly normalised.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

GAMING WITHOUT THE FUN

Toxic gaming takes many forms. In live, multiplayer games, players can be targeted by strangers bullying them over voice and text, or deliberately sabotaging their game. It can also be present in spaces outside of the game such as Discord and Reddit, with players gatekeeping their community and making it deliberately unwelcoming to newcomers. In extreme circumstances, it can lead to physical threats, stalking and doxing.

WIDESPREAD TOXICITY

The Anti-Defamation League's 2019 study numbers are stark. At that point, 74% of players had experienced some form of abuse, with 65% receiving physical threats, stalking or sustained harassment. Nearly a third of players surveyed found themselves doxed while playing online, which means private or personal information was shared against their will in an attempt to intimidate or silence.

BIGOTED TRASH TALK

Such toxic tactics are especially prevalent against girls, LGBTQ+ players and players from minority ethnic backgrounds. In all, 53% of respondents reported being targeted based on their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. Another survey revealed that 88% of openly LGBTQ+ players have been harassed by their communities, while over half of women report using a non-gendered or male username while playing to avoid harassment.

EXTREMIST IDEOLOGIES

Extremist groups have been known to target gaming communities and streaming platforms as a way of spreading propaganda and recruiting young players to their cause. Even in 2019, the ADL's research found that 23% of players had been exposed to white supremacist ideology, with a further 8% exposed to positive views about Islamic State. Disinformation is also a problem, with 13% hearing conspiracy theories about 9/11 and 9% exposed to Holocaust denial.

A SAFE SPACE MADE UNSAFE

This toxic environment can lead to the same feelings of fear, isolation and depression that offline bullying can. Children exposed to toxic gaming can become withdrawn, anxious or irritable. They can struggle with sleep and find it difficult to focus on schoolwork and other pursuits, even after the game has been switched off and they're no longer playing.

COPYING HARMFUL BEHAVIOUR

At the other end of the spectrum, children can mimic the toxic behaviour and language they've seen online in offline settings. If bullying or bigoted chat is normalised as a legitimate part of online gaming, children may end up emulating it offline with classmates, seeing it as harmless banter. This could make other children's lives miserable or leave them feeling isolated at school.

Advice for Parents & Educators

PLAY WITH FRIENDS

While some games rely on playing with strangers to make up the numbers, there are plenty of titles that can be played on a private server with vetted, trusted friends, sidestepping the toxic elements of the wider gaming community. If a child encounters toxic behaviour in others while playing larger games, encourage them to block and report the players responsible.

TALK TO CHILDREN

Most importantly, if children are gaming online or want to start, talk to them about the risks and how to deal with toxic behaviour. Explain the kinds of behaviour they may encounter, encourage them to report and block, and let them know they can talk to you about any concerns. Where appropriate, you may even want to play alongside them to get a feel for the community yourself.

USE THE GAME'S TOOLS

Many online games provide ways to limit interaction with strangers, either through the global settings on PlayStation or Xbox, or within the game itself. Look at the options, and make it so children can only communicate with their friends. If you can't see this level of control, you can consider disabling chat completely and, where age-appropriate, using a suitable separate service for communication with friends.

FIND THE RIGHT COMMUNITY

If your child is at an age where social media is permitted, friendly communities exist. There are online groups for LGBTQ+ players, players from minority backgrounds and girls, where they can chat and find people to play with in more welcoming environments. Not everyone is who they claim to be online, so be sure to discuss the risks of online friendships, and maintain an open dialogue with children to ensure their ongoing safety.

Meet Our Expert

Alan Martin is a technology journalist who has written for publications including Wired, TechRadar, The Telegraph, The Evening Standard, The Guardian and The New Statesman.



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