



Abbey Court **MATTERS**

Autumn Term 3 2026 Issue 394 Circulation 1120



MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNORS



Claire Richards —
Staff Governor

Governors value the importance of preparing pupils for life beyond school, and this is embedded throughout Abbey Court School. From Early Years through to Further Education, pupils are provided with meaningful work experience and community inclusion opportunities that support their development and preparation for adulthood.

In Primary, pupils begin developing fundamental life and work related skills through engaging, exploratory activities such as role play, dressing up, exploring different job roles and learning early independence skills. These experiences build confidence, curiosity and resilience, laying strong foundations for future learning.

As pupils progress into Key Stage 4 and Further Education, opportunities become increasingly purposeful and rooted in real life experiences. Pupils engage with local organisations including Medway Foodbank, Shorne Country Park Café, All Saints Parish Hall, Broomhill Park and Parkwood Youth Club. These experiences support communication, social understanding, independence and employability skills, while enabling pupils to contribute meaningfully to their community.

Being a Staff Governor at Abbey Court School offers a valuable opportunity to represent the voice of staff while maintaining a strategic focus on pupils' outcomes and wellbeing. The role bridges day to day practice with governance and supports informed decision making that aligns with the school's vision and values.

This work is strengthened through positive partnerships between pupils, families, staff and the wider community. We welcome further community links and opportunities that enrich pupils' learning and life experiences and encourage interested partners to contact the school.



Trust Lottery Draw

We are delighted to announce the **first Abbey Court Trust Lottery Draw of 2026 took place on Friday 30th January 2026**. Thank you to everyone who supports the lottery — your contributions help fund valuable resources, activities, and opportunities for our pupils.



Winners

- **1st Prize £40** Marilyn Pawley
- **2nd Prize £20** Sarah Hickford
- **3rd Prize £10** Sue Williams

Congratulations to all of the lucky winners!



If you are not already part of the school's monthly draw, now is your chance to join in!

Everything raised goes to support our pupils and to expand the great facilities we have here at Abbey Court and Larkin Farm. The lottery runs January to December each year (except July & August).

The cost is just £10 per ball for entry into all 10 draws

There are cash prizes of **£40, £20 and £10** each month as well as an extra bonus ball drawn in December worth **£100!**

If you would like to sign up for the first time or would like to increase your chances of a win by signing up for more balls, please contact the school office for an application form on 01634338220 or office@abbeycourt.medway.sch.uk

Nursery

Welcoming our new friends into Nursery has been a joyful start to the term, with children quickly beginning to form meaningful relationships as they settle into their new environment. Through exploration and play—whether playing in the Sensory Room, sharing resources, or investigating sensory materials—our pupils are developing vital early skills such as communication, confidence, problem solving, and cooperation. We are incredibly proud of how our new starters and existing children are coming together building strong, positive relationships.



Making a Splash with Discovery Ducklings!

P1 and P2 have been working hard towards their Discovery Ducklings Awards, and what an exciting journey it has been! With plenty of adult support and encouragement, our young swimmers are learning essential water skills in a fun and safe environment.

From practising safe entries into the water to exploring the sensation of bobbing up and down in an upright position, every session brings new confidence. The children have also been moving through the water with growing independence and experiencing the feeling of water being poured on the back of their heads—a big step in building water confidence.

It's wonderful to see everyone having so much fun while developing these important skills. Well done, P1 and P2—you are making a real splash!





P3 Pounds and Pence in Practice!

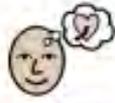
This term, P3 have been busy developing their understanding of money. We began in the classroom by role-playing buying our snack, using a large coin to practise the idea of exchanging money to purchase an item. This helped us become familiar with the concept in a safe and supportive environment and sparked some very enthusiastic shoppers! We took our learning a step further with an Educational Visits to the FE site shop. We enjoyed browsing the shelves, making choices about what we wanted to buy and how many items to select, helping us with our one-to-one interactions. We used real money to pay for the items, which made the experience meaningful and purposeful, and using a real till was, unsurprisingly, a definite highlight. We then visited Morrisons where we paid for our items and enjoyed a snack in the Café.

This practical approach supported not only mathematical learning, but also independence, communication and decision-making skills. P3 showed great focus and enthusiasm throughout. It has been lots of fun!

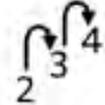




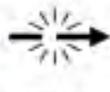
Brighten it with Flowers Campaign



KS3 pupils are hoping to brighten some outside areas of the school



with flowers and increase the sensory experience for all pupils at Abbey



Court School However we would very much like your help



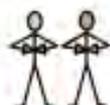
When completing your garden spring clean or rooting through your



seed packets or if you have some spare compost could we



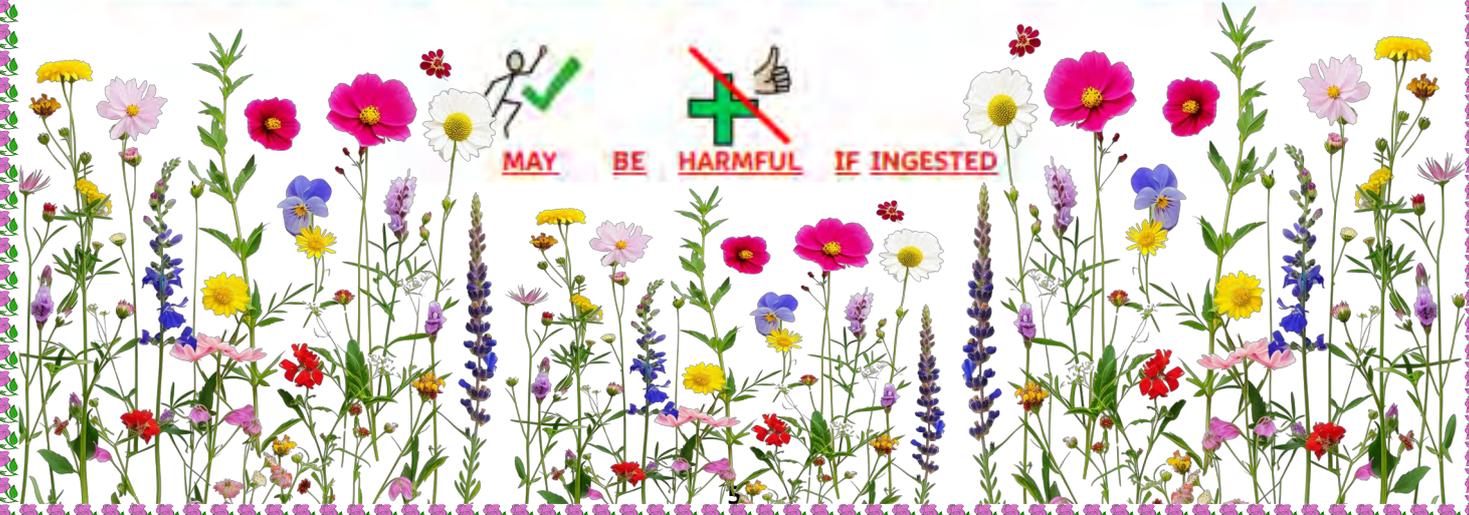
ask you to donate it to our campaign please



UNFORTUNATELY WE CANNOT ACCEPT BULBS AS MOST ARE TOXIC AND



MAY BE HARMFUL IF INGESTED



Exploring the KS2 Curriculum: Building upon Strong Foundations



When the pupils move from Key Stage 1 into Key Stage 2, they enter a chapter of their learning journey that builds upon those early foundations built with within Key Stage 1.

They begin to embed, consolidate and learn new skills that will stand them in good stead for when they do eventually move into Key Stage 3, which is then the beginning of their secondary school journey.



What does Key Stage 2 include?

Our curriculum in Key Stage 2 is based upon the National Curriculum, covering a wide range of topics that cover all aspects of the curriculum, such as History, Science, Design and Technology, as well as continuing to focus on key life skills such as communication, Physical Development and Personal, Social & Health Education. Pupils have off-site opportunities, such as competing in sports competitions with other local schools, which fosters our ethos of inclusion. This is also the first opportunity that pupils have to experience an overnight stay at school, which paves the way for future residential experiences further afield.



Why is Key Stage 2 important?

- Consolidates pupils' communication methods and promotes effective and purposeful communication with others.
- Focuses on developing meaningful relationships, not only with adults, but also with their peers.
- Builds upon independence skills and applying these to real life contexts, such as preparing themselves a snack.
- Develops their understanding of subject specific areas of learning, whilst still using the approach of a topic-based curriculum to broaden and deepen their knowledge.
- Encourages pupils to have a 'voice' and to express their likes and dislikes, which in turn helps to shape the curriculum offer for the individual pupil.

What can parents and carers to do support?

- Share the reading book that is sent home weekly with your child.
- Engage in any homework that is sent home.
- Continue to use their chosen communication method at home, to build upon the consistency set out in school.
- Encourage your child to help at home, perhaps by giving them small manageable tasks to complete, such as putting rubbish in the bin, or putting washing into the washing machine.
- Communicate aspirations or targets that are worked on at home, to further enable joint working.

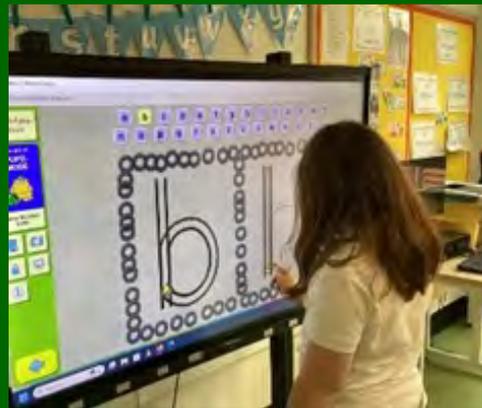
Key Stage 2 is a time to build upon prior learning, consolidate skills and develop preferences. By working together – school, parents/carers and pupils, we can ensure every child makes leaps of progress and is prepared for secondary transition.



An Inclusive Approach to Writing Development in S1

Writing at Abbey Court School naturally looks different from mainstream settings and varies across classes because of our pupils' individual needs. In S1, we show this every day through a wide range of activities. Pupils write using iPads, plasma screens, paper, whiteboards, and outdoor chalks. We also use widget symbols with text to support communication, choices and responses. Every image captured reflects pupils actively engaging in learning, building confidence and increasing their desire to take part.

Writing for our pupils is about valuing every step—whether it's tracing their name, holding a writing tool, realising they can make marks, improving movement or posture, keeping balance, or developing fine motor skills. These early achievements are the foundations of future writing success.



S5: Building Skills and Confidence

S5 have been working with real determination and focus this term as they continue to work towards their own individual targets. It has been wonderful to see the effort and pride they are taking in their learning and personal development.

We have enjoyed a wide range of physical activities designed to improve dexterity, coordination, and fitness. These sessions have been energetic, motivating, and a lot of fun, helping pupils to build confidence while staying active. Alongside this, S5 have been developing their communication skills, learning how to make their voices heard across all areas of school life.

Pupils are practising expressing their needs, preferences, and ideas in different situations, helping them to feel confident and empowered.

We have also been focusing on personal safety, exploring what is safe and unsafe and learning how to ask trusted adults for help when needed. These important life skills are supporting pupils to become more independent and secure within their school environment.

S5 should be very proud of all they have achieved this term — we are excited to see their progress continue!



S8 Educational Visits: Developing Skills Within the Community

This term, S8 have taken part in a series of educational visits within the local community, including Costa, Dobbies, and Pets at Home. These experiences support the development of key social and life skills, such as communicating with members of the public, following routines, and demonstrating appropriate behaviour in busy environments.



The visits also provide valuable opportunities for pupils to apply classroom learning in real-life contexts, including handling money, making choices, and learning about animals and plants.

We are very proud of how well S8 have represented Abbey Court School. Their excellent behaviour, curiosity, and positive attitudes have been a credit to the group.



S10: Exploring Animal Care Up Close

S10 have been building their confidence and knowledge of farm animals through regular visits down at the farm.

As part of this learning, we were also lucky enough to have the guinea pigs brought up to the classroom for some hands on experiences.

During these sessions, pupils have practised holding and brushing the guinea pigs, learning how to care for them safely and confidently. They have also enjoyed identifying the different guinea pigs and discussing their features. These engaging activities have been thoroughly enjoyed by everyone and have helped to develop both practical skills and a deeper understanding of animal care.





ABBHEY COURT TRUST



Registered Charity Number: 1160511

Abbey Court School Charitable Trust supports and fundraises for the school and community. Our current fundraising efforts are focused on raising money to maintain and develop Larkin Farm. Our goal this year is to raise more than £14,000. Please get in touch if you can help us to achieve this.



Race Night proved to be an enjoyable and successful event, bringing together families, staff and friends to support the school while enjoying a lively evening of entertainment.



The event featured seven horse races. Before each race, the betting desk opened, allowing guests to bet on the horse they thought would cross the finish line first. As bets were placed, excitement grew and friendly competition followed.

Each race was shown on a large projected screen, complete with sound and live commentary. With close finishes and plenty of cheering, the atmosphere remained lively throughout the night. Once the winning horse was confirmed on screen, lucky ticket holders collected their winnings.



Guests also enjoyed a delicious dinner which kept everyone fueled for the evening. One of the highlights of the night was the ever popular Tonto horse riding simulator, which let guests test their riding skills and allowed the riders to experience what our pupils do.

Thank you to everyone who attended and supported the event — your generosity helps make a real difference to our school community.

We look forward to seeing you at our next event!



Running the London Marathon in April 2026 is a deeply personal journey for me. I am a proud mum to two amazing children who attend Abbey Court School, and this challenge is my way of giving something back to a place that has given so much to our family.

Abbey Court has been a true lifeline. The care, dedication and unwavering support shown every day have made a profound difference to our lives. Seeing my children grow, thrive and be celebrated within such a nurturing environment has inspired me to take on this challenge in support of the school and its wider community.

This marathon will push me well beyond my comfort zone. Until recently, the furthest I had ever run was 12km, so training for 26.2 miles is both a physical and mental challenge. Training is going well — I've now reached 17km, with just 25.2km still to conquer. Hopefully, as the weather improves, training can really pick up!

Every step I take is for my children, for the families who rely on Abbey Court, and for the staff who go above and beyond to support pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning disabilities. This isn't just a race — it's a tribute to the children, the community and the belief that every child deserves the opportunity to shine.

Larkin Farm Amazon Wish List

Next time you're browsing Amazon, why not pop a little something in your basket for our furry and feathered friends at Larkin Farm? From everyday essentials to special treats, your kindness helps us keep tails wagging and feathers fluffed!

Every gift, big or small, makes a difference — and our animals will be very grateful!

Scan the QR code or click on the link to find our more.

<https://amzn.eu/a1GEacq>



Fundraising is also going well, but any donation, no matter how small, is very gratefully received. Every pound truly does make a difference.

Thank you to everyone who has supported this journey so far. Together, we can continue to create more opportunities, more joy and more hope for the children who need it most.



ABBHEY COURT SCHOOL VS FIVE ACRE WOOD



On Tuesday 27th January, Five Acre Wood visited Abbey Court School to take part in their bi-annual sports competition.

The competition involved pupils from both schools' Key Stage 2 departments, who took part in a variety of relay events, including an obstacle race, a football dribbling race, a hurdles race, and an under and over race.



Much fun was had by all! Abbey Court pupils worked incredibly hard, but were narrowly beaten to the Interschools Trophy by Five Acre Wood.

We already have a rematch scheduled for Term 4, when Abbey Court pupils will travel to Five Acre Wood—where we hope to bring the trophy home to Abbey Court!



La Traviata

On Wednesday 28th January 2026, a group of our pupils enjoyed an exciting trip to London to watch a live performance of *La Traviata* at the Royal Ballet and Opera House. For many pupils, this was their first experience of visiting such a famous theatre and watching a live opera, making it a very special and memorable day.

La Traviata is an opera by Giuseppe Verdi that tells the story of Violetta and Alfredo, who fall in love but face difficult choices and challenges along the way. The pupils were captivated by the beautiful singing, powerful music, colourful costumes and dramatic acting, which helped bring the story to life. The performance kept pupils engaged throughout and offered a rich sensory experience that sparked curiosity and imagination.

The visit linked closely to pupils' learning in Literacy and Drama/Dance, where they have been exploring the story of *La Traviata* and expressing ideas through movement, role play and creative activities.





Learning to Cross Safely: Road Safety Workshops



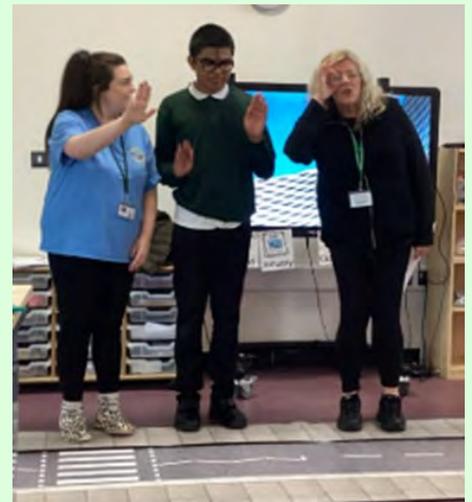
This term, pupils took part in a series of informative workshops led by Medway Council’s Road Safety Officers. The sessions focused on developing pupils’ understanding and confidence when staying safe near roads.

Pupils were introduced to the Green Cross Code, broken down into clear and memorable steps. Through interactive activities and role play, children practised the key message of “*Stop, Look, Listen and Think*”, and learned why each step is important.

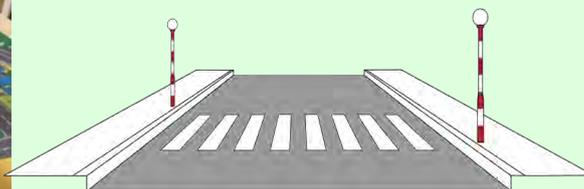
To support inclusive learning, pupils were also taught how to sign the Green Cross Code using British Sign Language, helping to reinforce understanding and promote communication.

The workshops included exploration of the THINK! road safety website, where pupils learned how everyday choices — as pedestrians, cyclists or passengers — contribute to keeping themselves and others safe. The importance of visibility was also highlighted through the message “Be Bright, Be Seen!”, with pupils learning how bright and reflective clothing can improve safety, particularly in low light conditions.

The visit was both informative and engaging, and pupils left better prepared to make safe choices when crossing the road.



STOP **LOOK** **LISTEN**





EAL COFFEE MORNING: KARAOKE FAMILY FUN

We were delighted to welcome parents and carers to our recent EAL Coffee Morning, held at the Cliffe Road site on Monday 2nd February 2026.

The morning was 'Karaoke Family Fun' themed and provided a relaxed, friendly atmosphere where families could come together, enjoy a cup of tea or coffee, and take part in some light-hearted karaoke activities. Whether joining in or simply watching and enjoying the moment, there was plenty of laughter and shared enjoyment throughout the session.

Parents and carers also had the opportunity to meet our Network Manager, who was available to offer support and guidance with using ParentMail, answering questions and helping families feel more confident accessing school communications.

Our EAL Coffee Mornings are a valuable opportunity for families to build connections, share experiences, ask questions, and learn more about how we support EAL learners across the school. It was wonderful to see families engaging with one another and strengthening our school community.

Thank you to everyone who attended and we look forward to welcoming you to our next EAL Coffee Morning soon!



Spanish Theme Day and Three Kings Celebrations

Pupils across the school recently took part in a lively Spanish Theme Day, celebrating Spanish language, culture, and traditions through a wide range of engaging, hands on activities.

As part of the Three Kings Day celebrations, Rebecca Adams, one of our class teachers, led an enjoyable practical session with pupils in Secondary. The group learnt about the traditional Spanish cake Rosca de Reyes, before making and decorating their own cakes. Once finished, pupils took a portion back to their classrooms to share with their peers, promoting teamwork and creating a wonderful sense of celebration. Pupils also enjoyed making and decorating traditional crowns, linking perfectly to the Three Kings theme.



One of our Spanish parents, Maria Berjano Alvarez, joined the group to support the crown making activities and further enhance the session. She helped pupils learn key Spanish words and numbers, and pupils were enthusiastic in asking questions about the Spanish language, demonstrating great curiosity and engagement.

Throughout the day in Further Education, pupils explored Spanish food, famous places, and culture. Activities included listening to and enjoying Spanish music, learning about the Spanish flag, and creating artwork inspired by architect Antoni Gaudí. Pupils also had the opportunity to make and taste Spanish tortilla, allowing them to experience traditional Spanish cuisine.



In Primary, Maria Berjano Alvarez kindly visited to lead a storytelling session, sharing the story *Alien Loves Underpants* in Spanish. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed hearing a familiar story in another language and were fully engaged throughout. Alongside the storytelling, pupils learnt Spanish numbers, helping to build their confidence and enjoyment of language learning in a fun and interactive way.

News from Larkin Farm

Maggie Is Expecting!

We are thrilled to share some very special news from Larkin Farm — our much loved Zwartble sheep, Maggie, is pregnant!

A veterinarian visited the farm to carry out an ultrasound scan, with several classes being lucky enough to quietly observe this exciting and memorable moment during their visit. It was a wonderful opportunity for pupils to see real life animal care and farming in action. The scan confirmed that Maggie is expecting,

although the exact number of lambs remains a mystery for now.

Maggie is doing really well, and is being carefully monitored and looked after as she prepares for this important time.

Maggie is expected to give birth on Mother's Day, making this arrival even more special. We will be watching closely over the coming weeks, and can't wait to share updates as we count down to welcoming her lambs.



Watch this space for more Larkin Farm baby news!



Our farm cats, Penny and Danny, are also making the most of our warm farm classroom while the weather is chilly!

Abbey Court & District Young Farmers Club

'We Grow People'



**'You do not have to be a farmer to
become a young farmer'**

Become a member...

Abbey Court and District Young Farmers Club

For young people age 10 to 28 years

Based at: Larkin Farm, Templars Drive, Strood,

Kent, ME2 3FD



Abbey Court Young Farmers' Club worked incredibly hard on their entries for the Winter Competition which took place on 31st January. Some of our young farmers have practised and perfected a dance routine, showing fantastic enthusiasm, confidence, and determination as they learn new steps and work together to create an entertaining performance to showcase on the day. At the same time, other members collaborated on a practical and environmentally friendly project, upcycling wooden pallets to create hanging strawberry planters for the polytunnel. This hands-on task has required careful planning, patience, and strong teamwork, as well as a real focus on sustainability and reuse.

Throughout all activities, the young farmers have demonstrated excellent listening skills, paying close attention to one another and to their leaders as they follow instructions, share ideas, and support their teammates. Particular care was taken when learning how to safely handle powerful tools, with members showing maturity and responsibility while developing valuable practical skills. These sessions have not only helped prepare competition entries, but have also built confidence, cooperation, and respect within the group.

Abbey Court Young Farmers' Club should be extremely proud of the effort, focus, and positive attitude shown by all members as they prepare to represent the club at the Winter Competition.

If you are interested in becoming a young farmer, please contact Abbey Court School on 01634 338220 or via e-mail to farm@abbeycourt.medway.sch.uk.



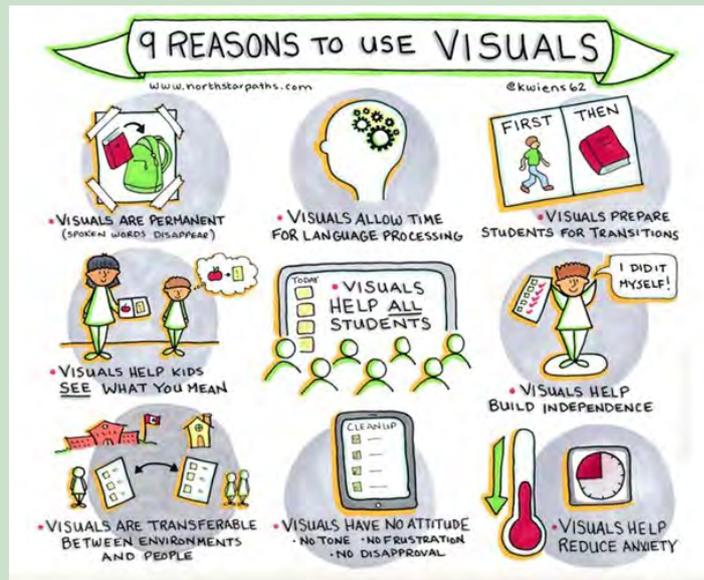
Communication Corner

In this newsletter, we wanted to focus on the use of visual supports and strategies we use here that our pupils benefit from. We all use visual supports throughout our days to support our understanding as well. They are an effective way to stop repeating ourselves over and over when it comes to supporting a pupil to do a task. When we repeat ourselves verbally, we can just extend the processing time for our pupils and this can lead to frustration.



Lynsey Cook Kelly Ann Ralph

There are many reasons to use visuals. Below is a good image to demonstrate some of these:



We use a range of the following in school to support pupils to understand and follow routines:

Objects of Reference, symbols, photos and written words, lists, sequencing cards, communication boards and books, Now and Next boards, TEACCH approach, visual timetables.

An example Object of Reference:

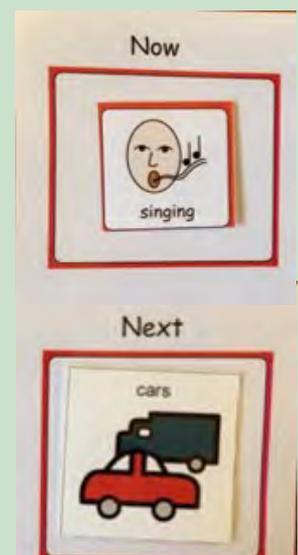


Visual supports also promote independence skills as they can support in the community by providing a shopping list to follow, sequencing preparing a meal and following an individual timetable to know what it happening now, or the next activity they need to follow.

The following link is to a YouTube animation that explains visual supports in a great way! <https://youtu.be/s1eZ7h6u3JM>

As always, if you have any questions or want more information about anything, please contact the school SALT Team via the contact book or the office.

An example Now and Next board:



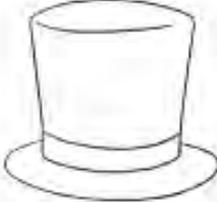
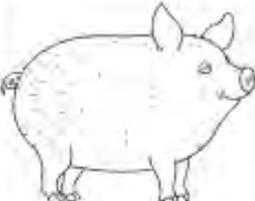
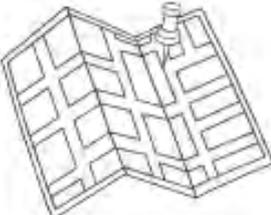


Siblings Page



CVC Words Read and Colour

Read the CVC word and colour in the matching picture.

bus			
jam			
bed			
tap			
pig			
sock			



WELCOME TO OUR NEW STAFF!



Kirsty Phipp joined Abbey Court School as a Teaching Assistant in Class S2. She previously worked in retail and is enjoying her

transition into education. In her spare time, Kirsty enjoys spending time with her family, walking her dog, and crocheting.



Elise Midgley joined Abbey Court this term as our new Farm Teacher. Many will recognise Elise from her previous role as a class teacher within the school. Animals have always been a passion of

hers, leading her to study Animal Science at university before going on to gain her teaching qualification. Elise is excited to combine her love of education and animal care in her new role on the farm.



Sean Rackley joined Abbey Court School as Estate Manager, bringing nearly 41 years of experience in school estate management. He has worked across a wide

range of educational settings, from nursery schools through to adult education, including SEN schools. Sean is looking forward to working with and meeting everyone at Abbey Court. Outside of work, he enjoys music, football, and spending time outdoors.

NOTICE BOARD

Attendance Reminder to Parents

Please inform the school by telephone on the first day if your child is absent, giving the reason for the absence. If the absence continues, please continue to notify the school by telephone or email. If your child is attending a medical, dental, or optician appointment, evidence such as an appointment letter or card must be provided, unless the absence is due to an emergency. Thank you for your cooperation.

Bad Weather

In the event of severe weather, updates on school opening or closure will be posted on our website. Please check the website for the latest information

Save The Date!

Farm Open Day on Saturday 9th May 2026

Term Dates

FRIDAY 13TH FEBRUARY 2026

LAST DAY OF TERM

MONDAY 16TH— FRIDAY 20TH FEBRUARY 2026

FEBRUARY BREAK

MONDAY 23RD FEBRUARY 2026

PUPILS RETURN TO SCHOOL