



Abbey Court **MATTERS**

Autumn Term 1 2024 Issue 386 Circulation 1114



MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNORS



Jon Carthy
Co-Opted
Governor

Welcome to a new school year.

As a governor, but also a school leader, it always amazes me how quickly the school terms and years pass by when we always seem to work in 6 or 7 week blocks. I have no doubt that the same will happen again this year and, before you know it, you will be reading the final newsletter of the school year!

The start of the school year is always an opportunity for everyone to set new goals and expectations for the year. It is the school equivalent of "new year resolutions". I know that our highly dedicated staff team are very focused and up for the challenges that the coming months will bring.

As most of you know, Jean Kerr has now stepped back from her role on the board of governors. On behalf of the whole board and staff team at Abbey Court, I would like to thank her for her many, many years of commitment to the school community. She has helped and supported so many people in so many ways, and we are delighted that she is going to keep in contact with us all. I have now taken over the governor responsibility for Safeguarding.

We welcome David Field as a new governor to the board, who brings a wealth of experience to supplement that which we already have. He is looking forward to getting into school in the coming months, meeting families and working alongside staff.

Jon Carthy

Work Experience



FE students have enjoyed participating in meaningful work experience activities. At Mid -Kent College, they have undertaken a Hair and Beauty vocational 'taster' course—all students engaged well with this and have been applying their learning to their own personal care!

Other courses coming up this academic year:

- Motor Vehicle Maintenance
- Hospitality
- Digital Skills
- Animal Management



European Day of Languages

This term, we celebrated the 'European Day of Languages'.

Pupils across the whole school listened to stories and poems in different languages. They looked at maps and made different countries' flags, listened to music from different countries, cooked traditional food and learned how to say 'Hi', 'Thank you' or 'Goodbye' in different languages.



DINOSAURS

P10's topic this term is 'Dinosaurs'! We have been exploring the book 'How to catch a dinosaur' and engaging in activities to rescue the dinosaurs from a variety of sensory media. We have explored ice, dinosaur eggs and foam, among other things. Our pupils showed fantastic persistence and teamwork skills during our ice activity, working together to quickly release the dinosaurs. We conducted an investigation to find the quickest way to rescue our dinosaurs, using both salt and warm water to melt the ice.

The pupils in P10 have been using commenting boards to give their opinion on these activities, and to request 'more' or 'stop'. We have also been using our individual communication methods to talk about the activity with an adult, like how each of the activities felt or the colour of their dinosaur.



CHRISTMAS JUMPER APPEAL!



WE WILL BE
HOLDING A
CHRISTMAS
JUMPER FASHION
SHOW IN NOVEMBER.



DO YOU HAVE ANY CHRISTMAS
CLOTHING YOU
NO LONGER
WANT OR NEED?



PLEASE DONATE ANY SPARE
CHRISTMAS CLOTHING TO OUR
SCHOOL OFFICE.
THANK YOU!



Learning about Poland



P3 have been learning about the language of the term, Polish.

We engaged in our normal morning routine by saying 'hello' to our peers, but this time we pressed the switch and said 'Cześć', which is 'Hi' in Polish.

We explored the colours of the Polish flag with rice trays filled with red and white rice. We really enjoyed sprinkling the rice from a height and listening to it drop back into a tray. We then created our own flags using a range of sensory media.

The EAL assistant also came into our class and shared a Polish story with us, which we really enjoyed.



18

8

50

Trust Lottery Draw

The first Trust Lottery Draw of the 2024/25 Academic Year took place on Friday 27th September 2024.



The winners were:

First prize of £40

Pauline Milton

Second prize of £20

Graham Jenner

Third prize of £10

Steve and Suzie Hitchings

Congratulations to the lucky winners!

Pupil Voice

Pupil Voice groups meet termly at Primary, Secondary and FE to discuss topics that are important to them. This provides pupils with the opportunity to express their opinions and to come up with any ideas to improve what we do at Abbey Court. Our Pupil Voice meetings are already up and running this year, with new class representatives being selected, and discussions on our first topic well underway.

The areas of focus this year are:

Autumn Term — Mental Health and Wellbeing / ELSA

Spring Term — Learning Outside the Classroom

Summer Term — Inclusion and Outreach



At our Pupil Voice meetings, we encourage pupils to become active participants, developing skills that underpin their right to have an opinion and communicate these effectively and at a level appropriate to them.

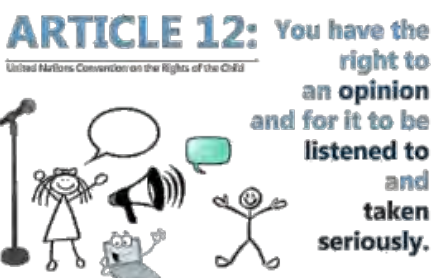
‘Pupil Voice’ is embedded into the curriculum, with teaching and learning activities being used to enable pupils to focus on how to make informed decisions about their lives, their health and well-being, the environment, and their future.

Reading and Writing



S5 have been practising their reading and writing skills in a variety of settings across the school. Have a look at some of the ways we have done this:

- We have read signs to navigate around the school and deliver messages.
- We are learning German words at snack-time.
- We have also read symbols in our lessons to help us understand things more easily.
- We read about Larkin Farm on the school website and learnt about the farm rules on a specially made poster.
- We have also used the E-Tran Board to tell adults and peers how we feel.



Learning Through Colour!

S1 have been investigating colour and shape. As well as developing their fine motor skills and demonstrating engagement in their learning, pupils have named colours and completed coloured shape puzzles. Some have sorted colours into their groups and completed colour patterns by threading the correct coloured buttons onto a string, or copied an adult's cotton reel pattern. A few pupils have engaged with the adults to explore colours through light and sound.

In addition, some pupils have used their developing knowledge of colour to demonstrate how mixing different colours can lead to creating a new colour, and in some cases being able to recreate this from memory. A great deal of colour learning through many different mediums. Well done S1 – a super start to the year!



The London Marathon

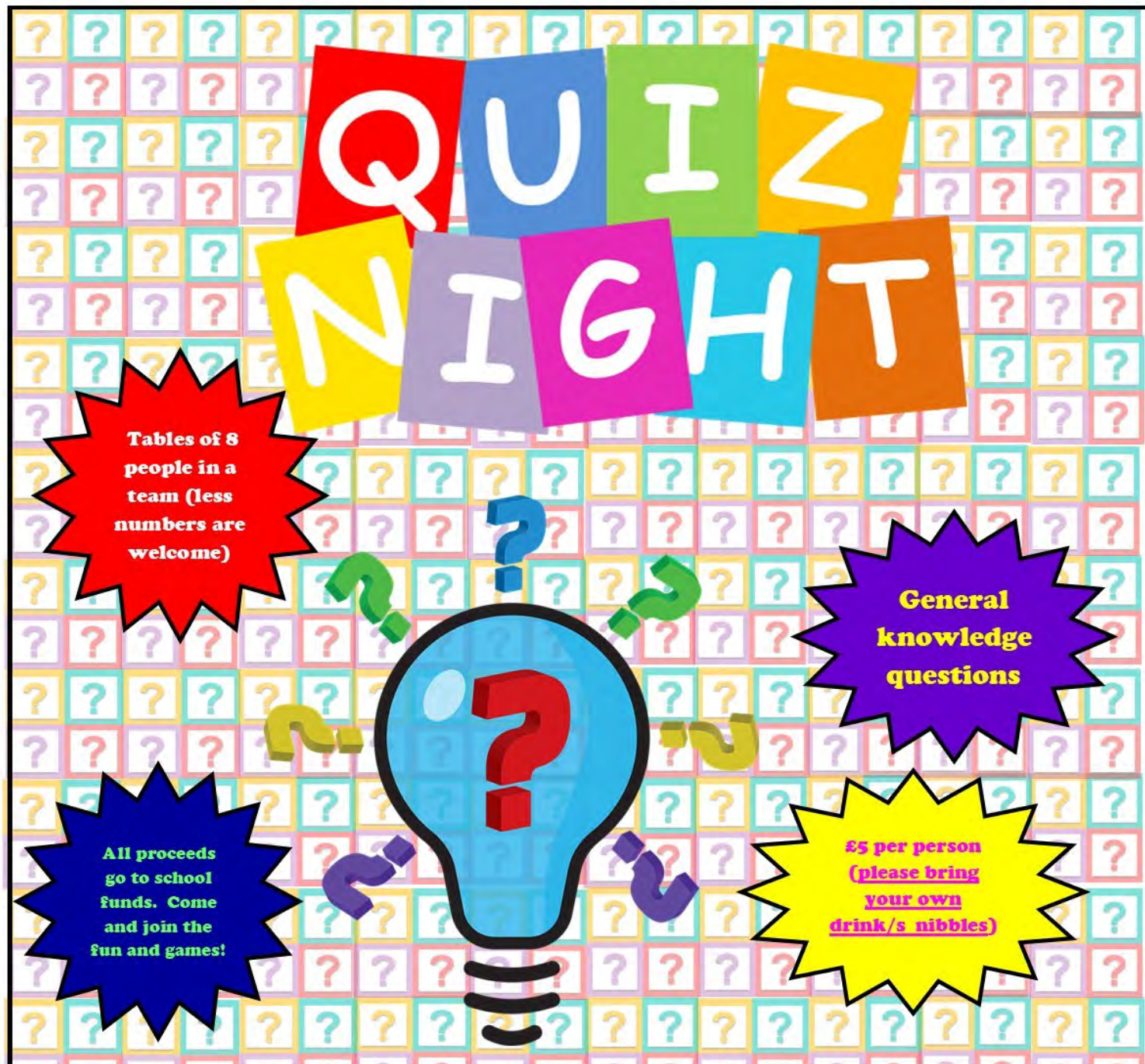


This term, FE3 have been learning about the London Marathon.

We have explored the landmarks that you may see along the way, researched the distance of the marathon, and then measured the school field to see how many laps we would have to complete in order to run a marathon.



Our goal in the FE Department is to complete the marathon distance as a team in support of FE2's teacher Alex, who is running the London Marathon in April 2025. We are developing our strength and stamina through participating in the Daily Mile and making use of the gym.



Tables of 8
people in a
team (less
numbers are
welcome)

General
knowledge
questions

All proceeds
go to school
funds. Come
and join the
fun and games!

£5 per person
(please bring
your own
drink/s nibbles)

*Come along and help
us to support our
special pupils on:*

*Friday 15th November
2024*

*Doors open at 7.00pm
(prompt start 7.15pm)*

*Abbey Court School, Cliffe
Road, Strood, Rochester,
Kent, ME2 3DL*

Please complete and return to school by 06.11.2024 or scan the QR code to reserve your table.

Please reserve me _____ places for the Friday, 15 November 2024 Quiz Night at £5 each, which I will pay for on the night or use the QR code.

Name: _____

(please print clearly)

Telephone Number: _____



Stay and Play

The children in Reception class had a wonderful time with their parents at the Stay and Play event. It was the perfect opportunity for parents to see how well their child has settled into school, what they do in class, and to engage in their learning with them.

There was lots of fun exploring different activities using their senses. There was also the chance for parents to relax and have a coffee and a chat afterwards with other parents.

A great time was had by all!



Caring for Animals

P8 have been enjoying their farm sessions, where they have been exploring how to care for different animals.

As part of this, they have been learning how to handle the rabbits and guinea pigs appropriately - making sure to be gentle and use a flat hand. The pupils have also been cleaning out their cages and replacing the bedding.

In addition, P8 have explored how to care for the goats by grooming, feeding and walking them.



Stay to Tea



Some of the children in P1, P2, P3 and P4 enjoyed a Stay to Tea event with their friends.

We had lots of fun exploring Autumnal activities, including feeling the squelchy seeds in a pumpkin, collecting leaves to make a hedgehog and playing outside with friends. One of the guinea pigs from the farm even came to join us! We then sat together to enjoy a delicious picnic style tea in the hall.



Fun on the Farm

The pupils have enjoyed coming to the farm this term and were surprised to see how much the lambs, chicks and ducklings had all grown.



Pupils enjoyed saying hello to Benjamin Button, our Shetland pony, who was making the pupils giggle with his inquisitive manner.



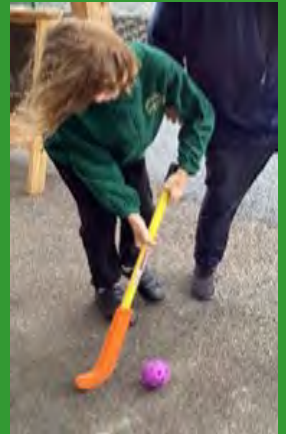
One class enjoyed grooming and walking the Pygmy goats, whilst another explored the difference between guinea pigs and rabbits.

I Like to Move



In S4 this term, we have been undertaking lots of physical activities.

Within our PE lessons, we have been learning the skills needed to play Field Hockey. Some of our pupils have worked on using the outdoor trampoline, improving our balance by walking on a bench and improving our hand and eye coordination by rolling a ball down a ramp to knock over 10 pins in bowling. In addition, some pupils have been undertaking their MOVE (Movement Opportunities Via Education) programme.



Packaging!



This term, S6 have been working hard on designing and creating their own packaging. As part of this learning, S6 have been on an Educational visit to Morrisons to investigate the different types of packaging we could find on the supermarket shelves. The class were investigating which food items you would potentially find in jars, packets and nets. We also found some food items which we did not find in man made packaging.



Carols On The Farm

Larkin Farm

Sunday 15th December 2024

3:45pm

Carol Service with the Salvation Army

Music

*Meet the
animals*



Refreshments

*Christmas
Market*

Places are limited to first come first served.

*To request a place, [click here](#), scan the QR code
or email office@abbeycourt.medway.sch.uk
by 29th November.*



*This event is outside
so wrap up warm!*

*Please park at:
Abbey Court School, Cliffe
Road, Strood, ME2 3DL*

Grandparents Lunch

On Wednesday 2nd October, Key Stages 1 and 3 welcomed grandparents to share a delicious roast dinner with their grandchildren.

Pupils and grandparents had a great time socialising over the meal, and grandparents reported 'how lovely' it was to see the pupils growing in confidence and having these experiences.

Thank you to all who attended, the kitchen staff, and the farm staff who provided sunflowers for our tables.



Fun with our Friends

P2 have settled back to school after the summer break, enjoying being with old friends, making new ones, and sharing lots of fun activities. We have been learning about being a good friend and being kind, creating our Class Charter to share our values.



One of our class books this term is 'Commotion in the Ocean', so we have been learning about under the sea. We have explored the feel and sound of water, made sea shakers, and counted fish by singing '1,2,3,4,5, once I caught a fish alive'. There is lots more fun to come!





ATTENDANCE MATTERS



New statutory guidance is out!

`Working Together to Improve Attendance August 2024`

Schools, parents, local education authorities, and the wider community all have a role to play in ensuring a child's attendance at school is good, and to support improving attendance where this is needed.

At Abbey Court, our pupils have a full and varied curriculum where learning, structure, routine, social interaction, communication, experiences and friendships are explored and developed. All are crucial to their overall development and wellbeing so any time out of school does mean they miss out.

Please support your child's attendance so they don't miss out

In line with our Attendance policy, your child's attendance should be at least 90%.

We know that sometimes your child can be unwell and this can impact their attendance, however, 90% is generally achievable for most of our children.

Often children with sniffles, colds or tummy aches still enjoy being in school and taking part in all the learning and social activities offered throughout their day. Unless they are extremely poorly, have an underlying health condition, or an illness requiring them to be off for 48 hours, such as vomiting or diarrhoea, please continue to send them to school. We will call you if we have concerns about your child being unwell when in school.

When your child is unable to attend due to illness, please call the school on the first day of absence. Where illness continues, please keep us regularly updated and also provide evidence of prescription medication or medical/hospital letters/appointment cards. This helps us to understand the context of your child's absence.

If you believe there are 'exceptional reasons' for your child to take leave during school time, you must complete an absence request form, available from the school office, and send it to the Headteacher two weeks in advance of the leave. A Headteacher is only allowed the discretion to authorise an absence if they believe there are exceptional circumstances and they will decide whether the absence is authorised or not.

We regularly review attendance and where your child's attendance falls below 90%, we may write to you, or invite you in for a meeting to talk about what support might be needed to improve your child's attendance.

We also work closely with the Local Authority Attendance Advisory Service to monitor and improve pupil attendance where needed.

Headteachers have the right to issue a Penalty Notice, which is an out of court settlement that can cost up to £160 and they will issue a Notice to Improve before this point. Clearly, we want to avoid this and work with you to ensure your child's attendance is as good as it can be at all times. We welcome your support with this.

If you require more information on the new statutory guidance, please visit our website to read the Attendance Policy.



Horseriding



Pupils from Reception through to Further Education have access to Tonto, our mechanical horse. Pupils can steer and jump Tonto, whilst they ride around different locations such as the zoo, a farm and the beach.

Pupils can communicate what they would like to do through objects of reference, symbols, sign language and verbal communication.

We also attend horseriding sessions at The Arrow Riding Centre, where pupils can apply all of the skills they have developed with real horses.



Swimming

This term in Key Stage 2, we have been enjoying our swimming sessions and working hard towards achieving our swimming targets. It has been wonderful to see all of the pupils engaged and happy as they partake in their swimming lessons.

A group of Key Stage 2 pupils have also been attending a local leisure centre for an offsite swim. They have been consolidating and extending their in-school learning in these sessions. Well Done, Key Stage 2!



We said that we would tell you if the hydropool is out of action. This term, the pool has been closed on 19th and 20th September (6% of the term) due to chemical levels.

Term Dates

Friday 18th October

Last Day of Term

Monday 21st October to Friday 25th October

Autumn Break

Monday 28th October

Inset Day

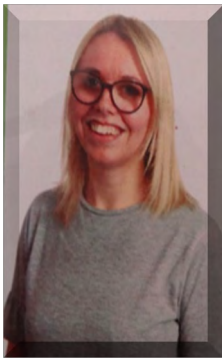
Tuesday 29th October

Children Return to School

Communication Corner



Lynsey Cook



Kelly Ann Ralph

An '**object of reference**' is a way of supporting our pupils with routine and transitions throughout the school day. They are useful for pupils that have a multisensory impairment, or struggle to follow verbal instructions.

Objects of reference are items that have a special meaning attached to them. They can represent anything that words can such as **places, people and activities**.

We use objects of reference in lots of ways at school. We can use them in a timetable form to let someone know what is happening, and we also use them to help with transition around the school.

If you have visited school, we have our object of reference boxes in key locations around the school which look like this.



The pupils are given the matching object from an objects of reference bag. The pupil then explores and holds onto the item while they are transitioning from class to the location. The pupil would then be encouraged to match the items and drop the one they were holding into the box at the bottom. This indicates they have reached the right location.

The red button on the box is a recorded message that can be activated to give the auditory feedback about the location and would simply say the name of the location. If you have any questions, or want more information about anything, then contact me via the contact book or the office.

The next SALT PARENT WORKSHOP is on **11th November** at Cliffe Road. It will be a welcome coffee morning with our 'object of reference' on display. We look forward to seeing you there!



Let's talk Makaton

Below is a list of Makaton signs.

Please share these with your family and friends
to enable them to communicate with your
child.

Remember to always say the word when you
are Makaton signing. Use your dominant hand
to sign slowly and to the length of the word.

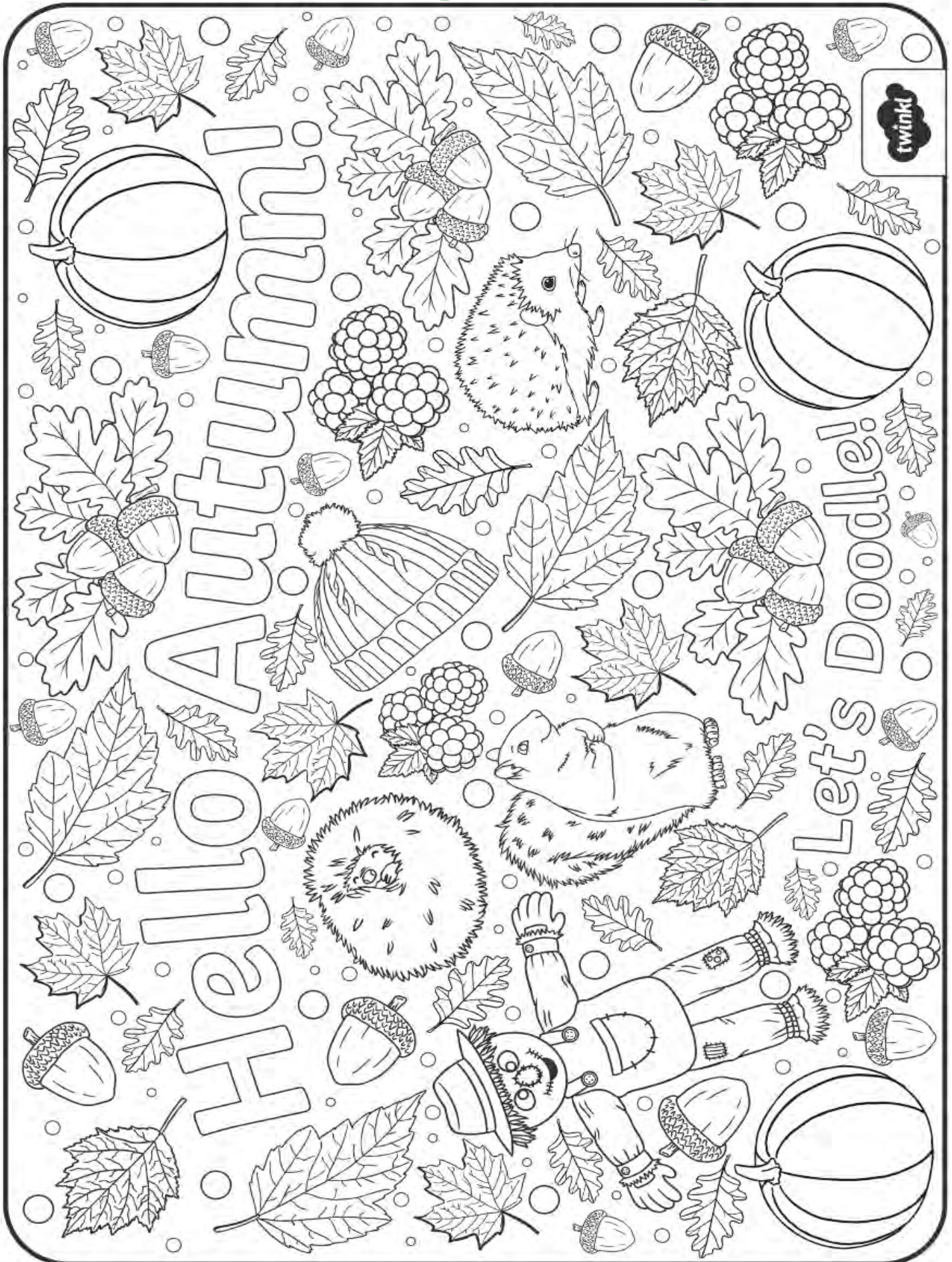


What is Makaton?

Makaton is a unique language programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate.

It supports the development of essential communication skills, such as attention and listening, comprehension, memory, recall, and organisation of language and expression.

Siblings Page





WELCOME TO OUR NEW STAFF!



Lauren Robbins — Teacher

I am the new teacher for S2. I previously worked in another SEN school, in both ASD and PMLD classes.

I moved to Kent after I graduated from University. Outside of school, I enjoy exploring the countryside, reading and catching up with friends over a coffee!



Rebecca Adams — Teacher

I am Rebecca and I have been a teacher for a long time. I have a wide range of experience and a very positive attitude that I hope will help inspire and encourage pupils to reach their full potential.



Alison Shepherd — Clerical Officer

My name is Alison and I work in the school office. I have 2 daughters and four grandchildren and I love to spend time with them at my chalet by the seaside. I have 5 dogs: 4 chihuahuas and one very disgruntled old doggie who is kept young by the rabble of chi's!



Sam Parr — Caretaker

My name is Sam and I am the new caretaker here at Abbey Court.

Before this role, I was a lorry driver. In my free time, you'll find me in the gym or with friends.



Eva McIntyre — Teaching Assistant

I previously worked as a barista in a local coffee shop.

I love music, especially going to see it live in concerts and festivals. I also enjoy playing the guitar when I have some free time.



Jaleel Bailey — Teaching Assistant

I have experience working as a SEN Teaching Assistant in a mainstream and SEMH (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health) school. In my previous role I ran a chess club, and I'm proud to be in the top 5% of chess players. I'm looking forward to bringing my enthusiasm to this new role!



Karen Patchett — Teaching Assistant

I have been a primary school teacher for the past two years. I studied History at university and in my free time, I enjoy visiting places of historical significance with my family. My hobbies are reading and building Lego with my two children.



Laila Parish — Teaching Assistant

I am delighted to be part of the team. I have personal experience with SEN and additional needs, which has encouraged me to expand my experiences. I am looking forward to being in a new environment and to bring my enthusiasm to this role!



Sky Marshall — Teaching Assistant

Hi, I'm Sky, and I have started as a TA in the primary department.

I have worked in special needs schools before coming to Abbey Court.

My favourite thing is a nice sunset.



Megan Chapman — Teaching Assistant

My name is Megan and I'm excited to be starting at Abbey Court!

In my spare time, I love to read and perform musical theatre.



Nicole Dennis — Teaching Assistant

My name is Nicole.

I am very excited and happy to start my journey here at Abbey Court School.

I have previous experience working in a mainstream preschool.

I am a mum to 2 children and have 2 cats at home.

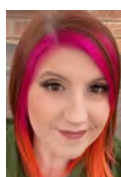


Sophie Sedge — Teaching Assistant

Hi my name is Sophie.

I'm 28 and a mum to 3 children, and have a dog called Buster.

I enjoy doing arts and crafts in my spare time.



Tyler Delaney — Teaching Assistant

I have experience working with children in a pre-school setting.

I also have three children of my own that I love spending family days out with, such as going on country walks with my dog.



**We say goodbye to
teaching assistants
Bethany Williams,
Sam Allen and
Charlene Gardiner,
as well as farm assistant
Beth Lewin.**

**We wish them well for the
future.**