



Abbey Court **MATTERS**

Autumn Term 2 2023 Issue 381 Circulation 1112



MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNORS



Barry Kemp
Local Authority

Well, Folks! What an interesting time the past few months have been. Yet again, Ofsted has recognised that Abbey Court continues to be an outstanding school. Although I can't remember a time when it wasn't, it remains a wonderful achievement. The credit for this lies squarely on the shoulders of the teachers, classroom assistants and support staff who work tirelessly day in and day out in order that our children receive the absolute best during their time at the school. Counted amongst those is, of course, Karen Joy OBE. We were all so pleased when, on November 8th 2023, Karen received her OBE from King Charles, for "Services to Children and Young People with Severe, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties". Karen worked so hard and for so long that she deserves it, and we all wish her a long and happy retirement.

It gives me great pleasure to recognise that Vicky Aspin has settled into her new role as head teacher. She would be the first to recognise that she has a hard act to follow but, to her credit, the transition has been both seamless and painless.

Dr. Tim Walker is coming to the end of his term of office as a governor and is stepping down from this role. I will take this opportunity, on behalf of the governors, to thank him for his help and advice which has been invaluable. I am pleased, and somewhat relieved, that Tim will remain a friend of the school and has agreed to be 'on call' whenever his expertise is needed.

It hasn't escaped anyone's notice that Christmas is coming upon us at a rate of knots. As a church organist, this is a busy time of the year. As such, I will be involved in several Christmas Carol Services. The one I looked forward to most was 'Carols at the Farm'. I do hope that many of you joined me at this event, which was a magical experience.

All that is left is for me to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful 2024.

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117

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Trust Lottery Draw

45

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The second Trust Lottery Draw of the 2023/24 Academic Year took place on Friday 20th October 2023.

The first prize of £40 went to Chloe Knight; the second prize of £20 to Marilyn Pawley; and the third prize of £10 went to Rosanne Paine.


















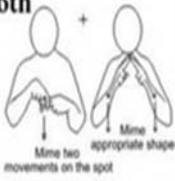








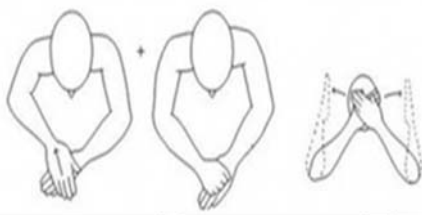

The Third Trust Lottery Draw of the 2023/24 Academic Year took place on Friday 24th November 2023.

The first prize of £40 went to Steve & Suzie Hitchings; the second prize of £20 to Graham Jenner; and the third prize of £10 went to Emma Howie.

Many congratulations to all of the lucky winners!

Below is a list of Makaton signs relating to the Christmas period that your children will use at school. 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 and also remember to use your dominant hand and sign slowly and to the length of the word.

Makaton Advent Calender

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1st  Snowman	2nd  Christmas Tree	3rd  Move hands from wrists quickly Sleigh	4th  Finger spell 'F', circles clockwise in front of body Family	5th  Stars	6th  Happy	7th  Bells
8th  Pudding	9th  Winter	10th  Right middle finger touches centre of other palm, repeat with left hand Jesus	11th  Movement of hands show antler size Reindeer	12th  Holiday	13th  Presents	14th  Mime pulling bell rope Church
15th  Flat hands flap down and up at wrists Donkey	16th  Mime two movements on the spot Mime appropriate shape Stable	17th  Candles	18th  Hands make slight flutter movements Angel	19th  Stroke beard King	20th  Cake	21st  Touch chest Robin
22nd  Waggle thumb & 2 fingers under chin Turkey	23rd  Whole formation circles twice Toys	24th  Sleep	25th Christmas Day 		Father Christmas  Stroke long beard	

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.



Class P2 - On The Farm



Class P2 all absolutely love the farm! Each week when we visit, we always have a special request from one of our pupils to see the pigs, which are her favourite animals. Her love of pigs stemmed from her favourite TV character, George Pig.

This pupil is incredibly creative and amazed her class team with her fantastic drawing of George Pig, which she drew completely from memory. She is very proud of her drawing and has taken great pride in showing it to staff around school and putting it onto the celebration wall in our classroom.



IEP Target Newsletter Article

A pupil in class S6 has been using his communicator to discuss with an adult what he has enjoyed doing this term at school. After discussing this with an adult, who helped to write down his ideas, he then typed them up independently, choosing the Microsoft Word program over Symwriter to create his newsletter article.

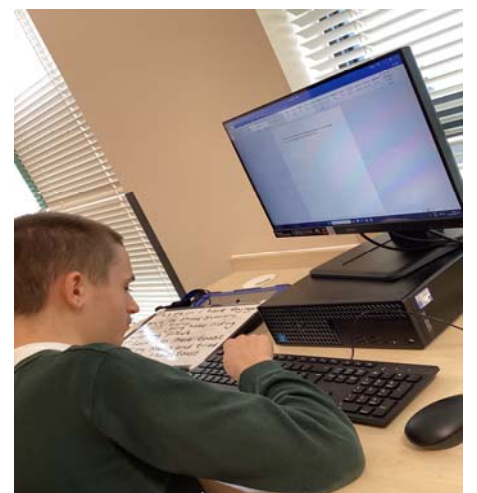
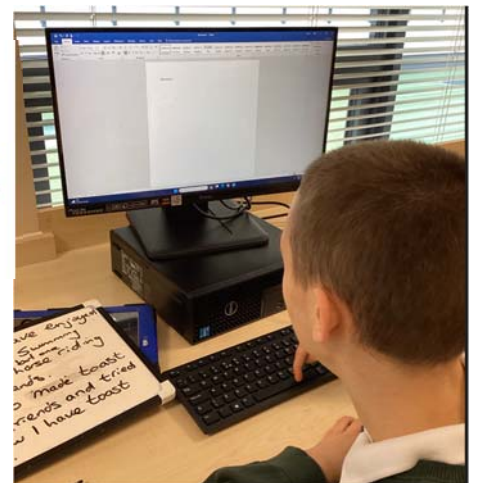
This is what he wrote...

"This term I have enjoyed going to Strood swimming pool it is a bit cold but once I put my shovlders under it felt warmer.

I enjoy going horse riding with my friends.

I have also made toast with my friends and tasted it and now I have toast every day."

Great work! IEP target achieved!



Further Education Work Experience



Each week, all our FE students undertake work experience in the community, to help them to develop functional life skills, and contribute to enterprise projects for charity fundraising. Their experiences are in a variety of settings; this has recently included Age UK. The students have been socialising with the elderly people and helping them by handing out items for bingo. In addition, they have been working to improve the Age UK environment by planting pots with bulbs and clearing the garden area for the visitors.

At Broomhill Park, our young people support the Friends of Broomhill charity by litter picking and pruning back vegetation, to improve the local environment. At our farm, FE students take great pride in taking part in the daily upkeep and caring for the animals, vegetables and plants.

Within their own environment in the FE Department, students sort, tidy, clean, wash, shop and cook. Students have been learning about the needs of wildlife and what would improve their habitat by making wooden shelters for them. As part of their enterprise work, students get involved in planning, designing and making crafts to sell. This is a great opportunity for confidence building for all of the students. Finding out about their personal interests and skills helps prepare them to make choices in their careers and future work as volunteers in their community.





KS2 Off Site Horse Riding

Over the past term, six pupils from KS2 have been going to Mierscourt Valley Riding School in Rainham for horse riding sessions. Each session starts with the pupils preparing for their ride by being fitted with a riding hat and putting on their wellington boots. Pupils spend some time grooming the horses and learning about basic pony care.



The horses are then saddled and led up to the paddock, where the pupils mount the horses using the correct technique; from the left of the horse, putting their left foot in the stirrup and lifting themselves on. The pupils have been learning how to hold the reins correctly and use them to steer the horse around the paddock and cones. The pupils then trot the horses around the paddock, supported by the Mierscourt Riding School staff.



KS3 Off Site Horse Riding



At the start of November, the secondary pupils began attending their weekly horse riding sessions at the Arrow Riding School in Dartford. In their first two sessions, the pupils learnt how to mount and dismount a horse safely, how to sit on the horse and how to make the horse go by saying or Makaton signing the words, 'Walk on'. The pupils have made great improvements in their riding skills, and are now able to ride over obstacles and also ride the horse using just their feet, not holding on with their hands (as you can see in the photographs)!



In P3, we have been learning about Diwali, which is a Hindu festival. In one of our Design & Technology lessons, we have made coconut burfi with our EAL Assistant, Raminder. We all pressed the switch independently to listen to the pronunciation of the Indian words for the ingredients.



We explored the different ingredients with our senses and then worked together to weigh out the ingredients and cook the sweet treat. Once we had cooked the coconut burfi, we left it to cool and then carefully cut it and tasted it. We all loved the burfi and enjoyed trying a new food!



Class S10

In Class S10, as part of our learning about Diwali, we went on an Educational Visit to Morrisons in Strood and bought some Indian food, including onion bhajis and vegetable pakoras. We thought they were delicious!

Back in school, we smelt some incense sticks and Indian spices. We explored some Indian music, dancing, clothes and jewellery, more about the Diwali Festival and how this is traditionally celebrated.

We also created some Rangoli and fireworks artwork.

During an assembly about the festival of Diwali, pupils listened to the story about Rama and Sita and the traditions associated with this festival, and also enjoyed some Bollywood dancing!

Pupils had a chance to make the Dandiya sticks, clay lamps which are called Diyas, and created Rangoli patterns. Some pupils even experienced henna on hands!

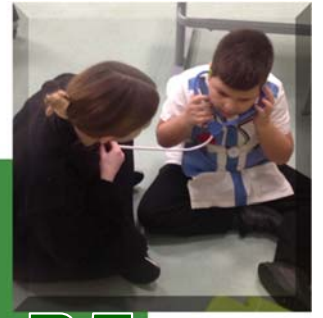
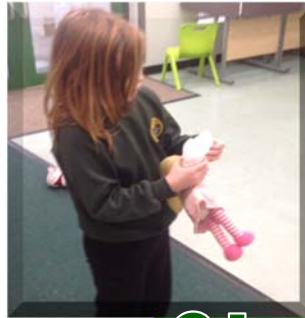


History

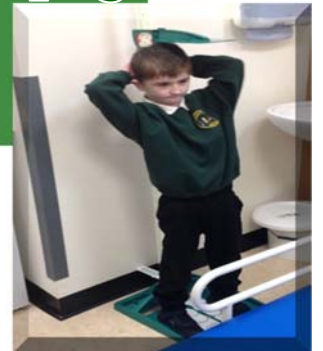
Class P4 Florence Nightingale



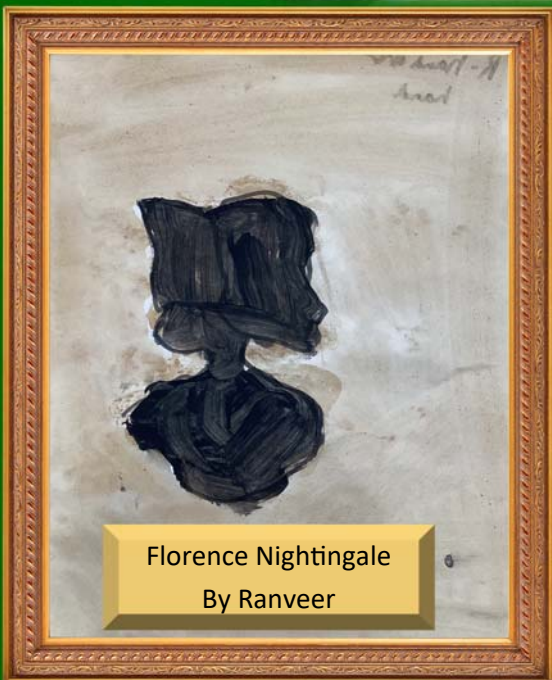
This term, our topic has been 'Florence Nightingale'. In our Art and Design lessons, we have been studying her portrait and worked hard to recreate her silhouette. Pupils were able to use light to trace her image, and tea bags to create a vintage effect to their artwork. The final products really are all masterpieces!



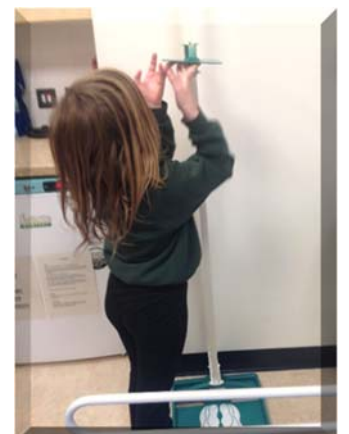
Class P5



In Class P5, as part of our learning about Florence Nightingale, we have enjoyed exploring the jobs of doctors and nurses through role play and drama activities! The pupils have been very helpful to a 'poorly' adult, practicing their nursing skills! They have taken temperatures, used the stethoscope and wrapped a bandage around the injured area! Some pupils have transferred this skill when playing with teddies or dolls. The pupils also took a trip to the Nurses' Room at school to explore the different equipment that nurses use nowadays. The pupils weighed themselves and measured their height.



Florence Nightingale
By Ranveer



Class P12

As a school, Abbey Court always commemorates Remembrance Day and classes make individual poppies or a wreath to share as part of a school assembly. The pupils have previously discussed the meaning of the colours associated with the poppy and were all able to name them using their voices, symbols or by pointing.



However, this year, P12 wanted to lay the wreath at an actual memorial and so we visited the Chatham Naval War Memorial site. The pupils were extremely interested in what they saw and were able to identify the equipment being held by each of the sailor statues. The pupils were very respectful when laying their wreath, and they were all able to wait quietly for one minute, as we paid a tribute of our own to the brave men and women who lost their lives or were injured during previous conflicts. Lest we forget.



Class S5



This term, as part of S5's History lessons, we have been learning about World War Two, to support the pupils to understand the importance of this, and why it is important to remember the service personnel who fought and died in war. To do this, they made some poppy wreaths, visited the Royal Engineers' Museum in Gillingham and then went to the Naval War Memorial in Brompton. Whilst there, the children were able to be silent for a few moments whilst they were laying the poppy wreaths. The children understood the importance of going to the Memorial and were very respectful. Well done, S5!



Christmas at Abbey Court



Fashion Show

On Thursday 7th December, we hosted a Christmas Jumper Fashion Show. A range of pupils from Nursery to Class S10 took part in modelling the Christmas jumpers to the parents and carers who came to watch. Each pupil took to the runway, strutting their stuff and twirling mid-way in order to show off the wide range of Christmas jumpers we had on offer. At the end of the fashion show, the parents and carers had the opportunity to buy the Christmas jumpers.



Christingle

On Thursday 14th December, pupils from P7 – P12 travelled to All Saints Church to engage in a Christingle service with Reverend Nicholas Cooper. They were welcomed into the church by members of the congregation. Pupils from Nursery to P6 joined together in the school hall with Reverend Sue Valenta-Kerr to learn about the story of Christingle.

They learnt about the meaning of The Christingle and sang together to celebrate this. The children brought the Christingles they made in class and stood around the church in a circle to light their Christingle candles together.

Primary Christmas 'Twelve Days of Christmas' Production

Pupils in the Primary department came together to perform a Christmas show based on the traditional carol, 'The Twelve Days of Christmas.' Each class from Nursery through to P12 worked hard to present a verse of the song in their own unique way.

It was fantastic to see such a range of talents, interests and skills from the pupils, as well as seeing their engagement and enjoyment of this festive time of year. Well done, everyone!





Christmas Market

Monday 18th December was Christmas Market Day for Secondary pupils. In the run up to the event, classes had been busy creating the items that they would sell. This included Christmas tree decorations, snow globes, gongs, scented candles and reindeer food, to name just a few.

The market stalls lined the corridors and bunting and decorations gave the corridors a true Christmas market feel. Refreshments were available for parents and carers, and there was even the opportunity for a 'Meet & Greet' with the Alpacas.



FE Festive Fun

On Thursday 14th December, FE parents and carers were welcomed into the department to celebrate Christmas with their young people.

Students had expressed that they wanted to host an event which they could share with their families, and this is where the idea of 'Make, take and cake' came from.

Everybody enjoyed a craft session, where they made a beautiful candle holder, perfect for the festive season.

The students were able to share some refreshments with one another and discuss their plans for over Christmas.

And finally, there was a festive photo booth! Fun was had with all of the props, and our nativity scene backdrop. It was lovely to see families coming together, as well as friends, sharing in some festive frolics.

Merry Christmas from all of the students and staff in the FE Department.



Medway Music Association Carol Festival Rochester Cathedral



On Monday 4th December 2023, a group of pupils attended the Medway Music Association Carol Concert at Rochester Cathedral.

The pupils practised the songs they were going to perform in school and then, at the event, joined in singing these with a range of other local Medway schools in the cathedral setting. The pupils listened to the Christmas story and joined in with prayers and readings. All of the pupils engaged fully with the experience, joined their voices as a choir and danced along to the Christmas Calypso Carol! One of our pupils went up to the pulpit to read a prayer at the start of the service and said thank you for all we have.

It was a great way to start the Christmas season, and we are very proud of the pupils who represented our school at this fantastic event.

Poultry



Class S2 have been working on the AQA Award in 'Animal Husbandry: Poultry'. For this award, the pupils had to identify feed for the chickens, give them fresh water, provide fresh food and collect eggs. The pupils really enjoyed all elements of the award, but they agreed that their favourite activity was cutting up strawberries and grapes then feeding them to the chickens, which they loved! Great work on the farm!

Class S3 Farm Project



Our FE students work really hard on the farm to practice and learn new skills. They work well to keep the animals clean, groomed, fed and happy, and we really appreciate all their hard work on the farm.

One student, in particular, has been showing real strength in practical work and helped to clean out the pig arc, which is where the pigs snuggle up together to sleep. It had become damp and a little muddy due to the wet weather. He was able to collect his own tools and follow instructions alongside Tom, our farm assistant, to complete the important job.

When the pigs were let into the arc with the fresh straw and hay, they absolutely loved it and were rooting around, in their element. The student was very proud of himself with his achievement and that he had made the pigs comfortable and happy. In the warmer weather, we clean the arc out every three to four weeks, but in the winter with the undesirable wet weather it needs to be done weekly!



We have really enjoyed being part of the 'Farm Project' this term. We learnt about different ways we can look after the farm environment. We started off weeding, sweeping, and composting.

We have really enjoyed exploring the Hedgehog Hideout', and spent some time with our friends in the peaceful 'wood woven' area near to our Forest School space. Thank you to the school's Site Team for working so hard together to provide us with this space.

We did some research about how we can make the farm more 'bug friendly', as bugs help pollinate the vegetables we grow in the polytunnel. We decided to make a 'LadyBug Hotel'. We did some research about what we needed and collected the items and built it together.

We are very proud of our 'LadyBug' Hotel and can't wait to meet all of the bugs who stay here!



The New Library and Community Hub in FE!

FE have enjoyed visiting and working in our new Library and Community Hub. It has been designed to be a modern learning environment that gives our pupils the freedom and independence to develop and apply a range of reading and functional literacy skills. Students have been visiting the Library and Community Hub as a part of their ASDAN work on developing their communication skills, including reading and sharing preferred genres of books. One group has been working alongside a careers' advisor, discussing options for their futures by using the computers in the Hub to research whilst working on our individual targets. Some students have made use of the large space to engage in sensory stories and audio books. It is a great environment for the students to use for learning and leisure, and they are looking forward to using this more in the future!



FE Coffee Morning



At the end of Term 1, the students in FE held their first enterprise event of the year, our Autumnal Coffee Morning. We invited parents, carers and some governors to join us. The students worked hard to produce a range of tasty treats, using produce from the farm, as well as using their craft skills to design and then make some bookmarks and recipe books.

The event raised £130, which will go back into the FE Enterprise fund, in preparation for our next event.

Thank you to those who attended and supported the students.



Speech and Language Therapy Parent Workshop

School Speech and Language Therapy Parent Workshops are offered throughout the year by the in-house Speech and Language Therapy Team – the first one for this academic year was held on 27th November 2023, and it was lovely to see some familiar faces and lots of new ones!

This term's workshop was an informal Coffee Morning: a chance for parents to meet the school SALT Team and other parents from the school. We had a great time catching up and meeting everyone that attended, as well as sharing information about how to support your child's communication skills.

We had lots of examples of the different things that we support the classes to implement in their everyday teaching with the children on display, and we shared some lovely videos of our pupils using their communication systems (high and no tech) with great success!

We offer three parent workshops over the academic year - the next date is Monday 4th March 2024 – pop it in your diary!



Lynsey Cook



Kelly Ann Ralph

If you have any ideas for topics that you would like to see covered in these workshops, please let us know and we'll do our best to incorporate it into a workshop. We try to cater for all the different methods of communication used by our pupils, but as you can imagine, there is a wide range of methods being used in school, as each child has an individual way of communicating and we have a spectrum of abilities across the school.

We look forward to seeing you at a SALT Parent Workshop soon!



William Shakespeare's

'THE TEMPEST'



Performed by Abbey Court School

On the 14th November 2023, Abbey Court School rocked on over to the Woodville Halls Theatre in Gravesend to perform in the Coram Shakespeare for Schools Festival!

We worked hard on rehearsing our performance of a modern version of 'The Tempest' throughout Terms 1 and 2. Being part of the performance was fun! We even got to watch other schools perform. It was an amazing experience!

For our final curtain, we performed to our school, providing all pupils with the opportunity to enjoy live Shakespeare!

Our Headteacher, Vicky Aspin, presented us with certificates and roses for our hard work.



Gravesend



'We are such stuff as dreams are made on'

The Tempest
by Abbey Court Foundation Special School
at The Woodville, 14/11/2023
appraised by Lisa Ors

ABBNEY COURT FOUNDATION SPECIAL SCHOOL

Congratulations Abbey Court Foundation Special School for your fantastic reimagining of The Tempest as part of the Autumn 23 Shakespeare Schools Festival. It was a thrilling night of theatre, and I'd like to shine a spotlight on some aspects I really loved.

I loved how you reimagined Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' and made it your own. The concept was brilliant, setting the isle as a rock music loving Gravesend. It was great as Prospero conjured up the storm, drawing the band's tour bus, emblazoned with 'Acers On Tour', into this new place. Setting the play in the town you were performing in created an immediate connection with the audience.

I really enjoyed your confident use of your voices to tell this story in many different ways. Highlights included the brilliant call and response as Antonio, Alonso, Stefano and Ferdinand asked 'Where are we?' and the rest of the performers replying 'Gravesend'. I also enjoyed you combining character dialogue with narration that guided us through the story, and when, with placards in hands you chanted 'Get Prospero Out!'. You also used some great whispering and cheering in your reactions!

It was very effective how you portrayed the changing weather with characters wiping their brows under the heat of the hot sun and then running to get out of the thunderstorm. This emphasised the magical forces at play in your Gravesend. During the wedding of Miranda and Ferdinand the mood was created beautifully as performers became swaying hearts, showing us all that love was in the air! The audience also really enjoyed your joyous 'La Bamba' dance.

You had some fantastic costumes, with the characters' names emblazoned across the back. I also loved your brilliant props which you handled professionally, including your tour bus which really gave the effect that you were travelling on the road. I also enjoyed the joy you had when playing the inflatable electric guitars, which added to the rock theme in your play.

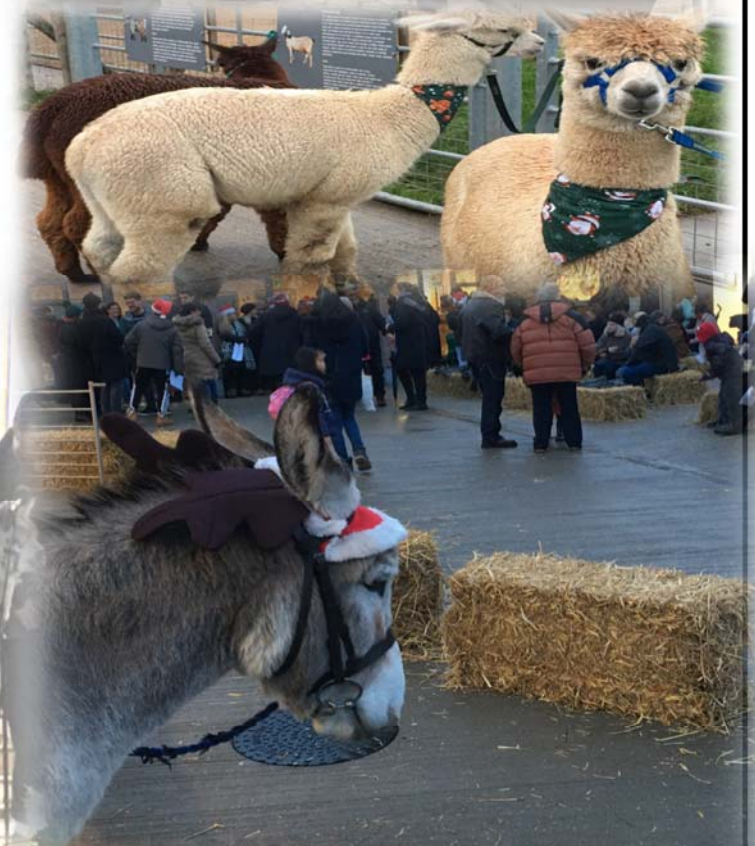
As a cast, you were a pleasure to work with both on and off stage, remaining positive and focused throughout, which was superb.

Congratulations on an original and terrific production of the Tempest by a committed company.

We're thrilled to have reimagined Shakespeare with you this year and have loved being with you on your journey from classroom to stage. We can't wait to work with Abbey Court Foundation Special School again in the next Festival!

Carols On The Farm

The 'Carols on the Farm' event was a great success for the third year running. Many pupils and their families attended, as well as members of the local community, to enjoy the carols, a warm drink, and a new feature for this year: a Christmas Market! At the market, we had Christmas wreaths that the Further Education students and staff had worked hard to create, wild bird fat ball feeders made by Primary pupils, Animal Adoption boxes, a Tombola, Christmas cards that the students had designed, reindeer food that our Secondary pupils made, and beautiful glass candle holders that our pupils crafted and much more—all for sale with the proceeds going to the Abbey Court Trust. There was a wonderful festive spirit on the farm, with the Young Farmers parading the animals during a retelling of the Nativity story, while the signing choir and Opus Choir sang carols beautifully alongside the Salvation Army band. Thank you to everyone who volunteered and supported this very special festive event!





Alana Briggs joined Abbey Court as a Caretaker at the Cliffe Road site. In her spare time, Alana enjoys photography, History, and watching movies. Alana said she is really excited to come onboard as Caretaker for Abbey Court School.



Laura Bath joined Abbey Court as a Teaching Assistant in FE1, Laura previously worked in Early Years settings and a Secondary provision for pupils with hearing impairment. She has three young daughters and, in her spare time, she enjoys walking the family dog, swimming and reading.



Afza Hassan joined Abbey Court as a Teaching Assistant in Class P12. Afza has a background in Psychology and prior experience working in care. She brings with her lots of spirit and an 'eager to learn' attitude!



Janine Gard joined Abbey Court as a Teaching Assistant in Class S3. Janine has three children aged 20, 12 and 7. In her spare time, She enjoys going to the gym and doing different activities with her children.

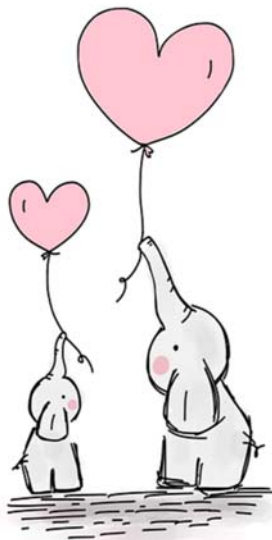


**SWEET
BABY
GIRL**

CONGRATULATIONS

The wait is finally over for Hope Bell & her husband, Alex Scott & her partner, Isabelle Marshall & her Partner, Sam Allen & her husband, Zeynep Cinar Eskisan & her husband, and Jessica Stedman and her husband, who all welcomed beautiful baby girls!

We wish you all the best as you embark on this exciting journey of parenthood. We can't wait to meet your precious newest addition to your family.



Reminder

TERM 2

FINISH: WEDNESDAY 20 DECEMBER 2023

TERM 3

**START: WEDNESDAY 3 JANUARY 2024
(FIRST DAY BACK FOR PUPILS IS THURSDAY
4TH JANUARY 2024)**

FINISH: FRIDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2024

INSET DAY

WEDNESDAY 3 JANUARY 2024

H



SIBLINGS PAGE

J



MATCH THE WORD TO THE PICTURE

B



1 BAUBLE

2 ANGEL

3 WREATH

4 BELLS

5 SNOWMAN

6 CHRISTMAS TREE

7 HOLLY

8 REINDEER

9 STOCKING

10 FATHER CHRISTMAS

I



D



F



G



E



C



A



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