



Abbey Court **MATTERS**

Spring Term 3 2025 Issue 388 Circulation 1116

We are a UNICEF **Gold**
Rights Respecting School!



‘Children of all ages were able to explain, using different methods of communication, how some of their rights, such as their right to be healthy, are met at school, and knew that they had a right to express their views and be involved in decision-making.’

‘The human rights principle of dignity underpins many of the decisions at the school.’

Parent testimony: ‘It would take a long time to list all the ways Abbey Court staff have supported [my child] to have rights and the opportunity to explore them, whilst also supporting our whole family too.’

Staff Voice: “Rights are a golden thread that runs through all we do. It’s about empowering the children and them seeing that they can make a change.”



MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNORS



**Barry Kemp,
Local Authority
Governor**

It is always nice to have a pat on the back in recognition of a job well done. This is true in every walk of life; an actor cherishes being nominated for an Oscar, and Olympic Athletes are proud to see their names on the front of high-speed trains.

As a Governor, I am taking the opportunity to congratulate Abbey Court School on receiving the prestigious Rights Respecting Schools GOLD Award from UNICEF. To achieve this award, schools must demonstrate that they have integrated children's rights throughout their practice and culture, and that this has had a positive impact on the children's learning and wellbeing. This is a remarkable achievement, and I am confident that Abbey Court will continue to set a shining example for others to follow.

That is not all. Congratulations all round on the imminent arrival of some precious lambs to join the flock at Larkin Farm. Hard work, dedication and care have led to this incredible moment, and is a special reward for everyone's teamwork and passion for nurturing life. It is also a reminder of the joy and new beginnings that the school's work brings.

Keep up the fantastic work, and cherish these special moments. We are all proud of you. Alleluia, Abbey Court, on we go.

Best wishes, Barry.

This term, the governors:

- ◇ Held a Full Governing Body and Finance Committee Meeting on 21st January.
- ◇ Received a presentation on 'Learning Outside the Classroom'.
- ◇ Completed monitoring of Writing in the school.
- ◇ Monitored the Single Central Record— a record of the safeguarding checks carried out on all staff, volunteers and visitors.
- ◇ Attended a staff briefing.

Rights Respecting Schools Gold Award



Abbey Court are extremely proud to share that we have once again been accredited as a Unicef UK Gold: Rights Respecting School!

On 11th November, two Unicef Rights Respecting School Award Senior Professional Advisers visited the school to carry out their assessment. They met with senior leaders, teachers, support staff, governors, parents, and 25 pupils from across the school. Learning walks were carried out at both school sites and the farm, and the wide range of evidence provided by the school was reviewed. It was a highly enjoyable day, celebrating all of the school's work on teaching and learning about, through and for children's rights!

The school has been on its rights respecting journey with Unicef since 2011, achieving the Gold Award in 2014, 2017 and 2021. In the RRSA Reaccreditation Report, it states that, 'It was evident that children's rights are embedded across the school and underpin every facet of school life.'

The Unicef RRSA reaccreditation report identifies that the school's strengths include:

- ◇ A strategic approach of senior leaders to embed a rights-based approach, putting it at the core of the school's ethos;
- ◇ Staff members who are passionate about the rights respecting work of the school and the impact this is having on outcomes for children;
- ◇ The focus on the best interests of the child and a culture of high expectations that helps every child to succeed;
- ◇ A nurturing family atmosphere with strong relationships with parents/carers;
- ◇ Pupil voice that is valued highly and a commitment to ensuring that every child can share their thoughts and opinions in whatever way works for them.

What are we going to focus on next?

- ◇ Supporting pupils to develop and lead campaigns from a children's rights perspective;
- ◇ Continuing to act as ambassadors for rights and the RRSA, supporting and working with other special schools across the UK.

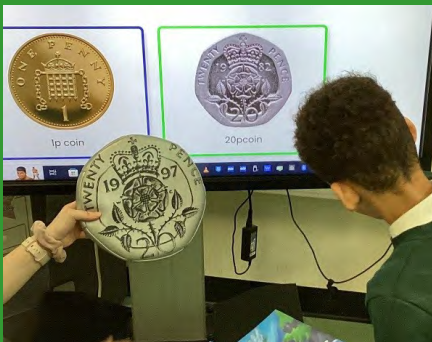


Learning about Coins

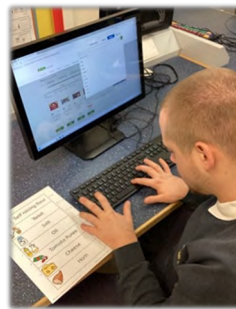
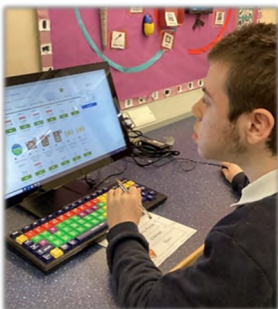


Pupils in P7 have been working hard on handling and exchanging money for items in our class 'shops'.

The pupils enjoyed role-playing in different shops, and taking turns in being the shopkeepers and customers. Our favourite shop to role-play was the ice cream shop! Pupils in P7 are showing fantastic recognition of money by matching the correct coins to the price sign symbols, and then exchanging the coin for an item. We are also beginning to explore ordering coins by their value and into sets of matching coin.



£ ASDAN Award for Money £



Pathway 3 students have been working towards the ASDAN Award for Money, which has involved recognising British coins, learning how to keep their money safe and using the school shop.

The students' favourite part has been learning how to complete an online shop! In order for them to have the food items that they want for snack, they have been researching the different brands and prices of food items, working within a budget, before adding them to the online basket and placing their online food shop order.

You said...

In the autumn term, our Pupil Voice topic was Mental Health & Wellbeing and ELSA Support.

Primary pupils -

- Most of you understand some basic feelings.
- You said that you feel happy at school most of the time.
- You said that you would like more activities to help those who are not so happy.

Secondary –

- You all agreed you could talk to staff about things that make you worried or cross, but also what makes you happy or excited.
- You said you wanted to have a better understanding of the difference between physical and mental health.

Further Education -

- You said you wanted more posters around the FE department displaying Mental Health and Wellbeing awareness.
- It was suggested each class should have a 'Wellbeing Box', containing simple items that can be used to support wellbeing.



...we did!

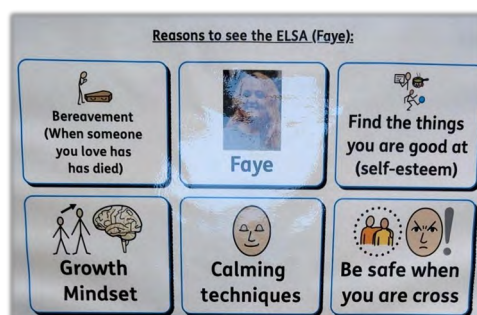
Primary

- We provided opportunities to try new 'mindfulness and well being' activities, such as singing, breathing, role play and yoga.
- We arranged a survey to see how the activities are working.



Secondary

- Posters were created and shared about mental and physical health, and reasons to see our ELSA.
- Pupils have also been having regular 'emotion check ins'.



FE

- A display board has been made to promote 'mindful moments' throughout the day, that students have been using.
- A wellbeing box has been made and is being trialled in classes.



Staff Voice

You said...

Last term, our Staff Voice topic was Mental Health & Wellbeing and ELSA Support. Staff were split into groups representing the Primary, Secondary and FE departments.

Staff discussed how they recognise and monitor the mental health and wellbeing of pupils in class and around school, how they support pupils, and the different strategies that they use to do this.

Staff also explored how they recognise, monitor and support their own mental health and wellbeing.

They identified the different types of support they have welcomed in school and what they would like to see more of.

We did...



Staff briefings include a scheduled focus on Mental Health and Wellbeing.



Regular opportunities for staff to walk and talk.



Leadership provide a wellbeing breakfast for staff on INSET days.



Time in Department meetings / drop-ins to share!



Yoga is available for staff.



The Headteacher gives her thanks to staff.

Parent Events

Keep an eye on your Parentmail for upcoming parent events!

The first event will be a Chinese cooking event (after the February half term).



Bird Boxes



S1 have been making bird boxes as part of their Design Technology 'Shelter' scheme of work. They considered the meaning of a shelter by identifying shelters on Larkin Farm. The process has also included a visit to B&Q to look at and handle real bird boxes.

Pupils then completed paper designs, before exploring woodwork tools they could use to make their boxes. They then independently, or with support if required, used a saw to cut the wood to size. Everyone used a hammer to bang in the nails to attach the sides of their bird boxes.

In addition, pupils have used their design plans to paint the boxes, and they have considered suitable places to place them on the farm.

Some super engagement and lots of health and safety rules were carefully listened to and adhered to. Well done, S1 — your bird boxes look amazing! We wonder if we will have any birds choosing to next in them in the coming months... watch this space!



Big Schools' Birdwatch 2025



This term, Abbey Court pupils took part in the 'Big Schools' Birdwatch'. It was a great way to explore the environment, incorporate this term's project on recycling, and be a part of the largest wildlife garden survey in the United Kingdom.

Pupils enjoyed visiting the farm to watch which birds landed on the grass; they saw great tits, pigeons, river gulls, robins, goldfinches, pied wagtails, crows, starlings, blackbirds, magpies, and even a bird of prey called a buzzard.

Pupils enjoyed listening to, and trying to identify, different types of bird song, using binoculars, taking photographs, and learning about different types of birds.

Classes looked at ways to enrich the birds' environment. They made bird feeders and apple treat balls, hanging these in different locations around the farm. Some pupils also made bird feeders to hang outside their classrooms, and areas around the school.

Well done to everyone who took part in the survey! We will be submitting our findings to the RSPB.



Children's Mental Health Week



3rd—9th February was Children's Mental Health Week, and this year's theme was: **'Know yourself, grow yourself'**.

'Know yourself, grow yourself' was about exploring self-awareness and expressing emotions. The week was aimed at 'encouraging children across the UK to discover how getting to know who they are can help build resilience and grow'.

Pupils across the school spent the week engaging in activities to promote positive mental health. This included activities such as mindfulness colouring, daily movement activities, learning about different emotions and how to communicate these, and art activities.

We ended the week with an 'express yourself' non-uniform day, where the pupils enjoyed wearing bright colours and different outfits from their usual school uniform.



Children's Mental Health Event



On 5th February, a group of both primary and secondary pupils attended a mental health event at Rochester Corn Exchange, arranged by Medway Council.

The pupils had a fantastic time engaging in various activities such as drum fit, a silent disco and a creepy crawly animal show.

We particularly enjoyed the Creepy Claws session, where we got to learn about a variety of creatures that people have as pets. These pets bring a lot of contentment to their owners, which aids their mental health.

We loved participating in the silent disco - this is something that made use feel energised and happy! Music is a favourite choice amongst lots of pupils in our school.

Pupils also visited the various stalls to learn more about ways to support and promote their own mental health and wellbeing.



Rugby Theme Day



To celebrate the start of the upcoming Six Nation's Rugby Competition, and to develop a 'love of sport', the pupils and students at Abbey Court undertook a Rugby Theme Day.

Pupils and students participated in many activities, including the wearing of rugby shirts, exploring rugby balls, watching a match on the plasma screen, doing the Haka, throwing a ball around in the pool and many more different rugby-based activities.

The purpose of this event was not only to develop a knowledge of a sport, but to reinforce their development in Physical Education in a fun and engaging way.



Abbey Court vs Five Acre Wood

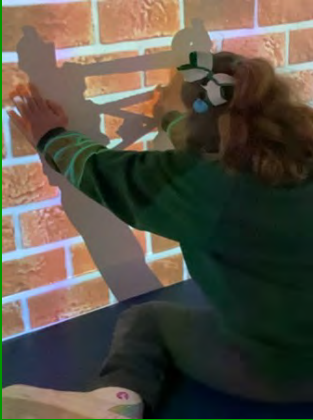
On 21st January, pupils from Abbey Court School travelled to Maidstone to compete in a mini competition with Five Acre Wood School pupils.

Pupils competed in different races, including running races, the pasta race and relay races. They worked really hard on following instructions and working as a team, and fun was had by all. Both schools were very competitive, but also very respectful of all of the other pupils undertaking the races, cheering everyone on and being good sports. At the end of the competition, the pupils enjoyed lunch together.

The overall winners of the competition were Abbey Court! Well done to all of those who took part. We look forward to welcoming Five Acre Wood back to Abbey Court in the summer term for another event.



Writing!



This term, S6 have been working hard on practicing their writing skills in lots of different contexts.

The pupils have found that there are lots of opportunities within the school day to practice mark making. This has included designing their own rugby shirts for rugby theme day, mark making on the immersion room walls, and practising their letter formations.



On 29th January, P10 celebrated Chinese New Year! Pupils started off by finding out which animal they are in the Chinese calendar (according to their year of birth) - the pupils are all sheep or horses! They explored the characteristics of these animals, and agreed that they are all enthusiastic, lively and well-liked people!

They created their own masks and took part in a class Chinese new year parade, where pupils listened to music and paraded around the classroom!

Pupils explored the tradition of receiving a bright red envelope with money, which represents good wishes for the year ahead. They each received a bright red envelope, filled with a motivating gift in to take part in this celebration.

Pupils also enjoyed exploring a dragon sensory tray, making their own lanterns and using their fine motor skills to try to eat some noodles.



Learning about Bakeries



P2 pupils have been busy learning and having fun through a range of exciting real life experiences. As part of the Great Fire of London topic, pupils have been learning about the great fire starting in a bakery.



Pupils developed their understanding by going on educational visits to bakeries to learn about bread and how it is baked, and bought ingredients to make and taste bread back in school.



Visiting the Local Community

This term, P3 has had the opportunity to get out into the local community to develop their independence and social interactions.

Pupils have been learning about the story 'The Little Red Hen', so visited 'Pets at Home' to look at the different animals. They also explored the bedding and toys, feeling the different materials and then using a commenting board to state if they 'liked' or 'disliked' the material.

P3 has also been to Morrisons to buy snacks for the class, as well as going to Starbucks, where they sat and enjoyed their snack together whilst trying a 'babycino'.

All of the children have worked really hard on their social skills, and are looking forward to their next adventures out in the community.



FREE SCHOOL MEALS



DO YOU THINK YOUR CHILD MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS?

- School receives Pupil Premium funding based on numbers of pupils receiving Free School Meals.
- Even if your child is currently receiving Universal Free school meals, unable to have lunch, or you do not want them to have school meals, the school can still benefit from the extra funding if you qualify and register. Your child can, of course, continue their current meal arrangements.

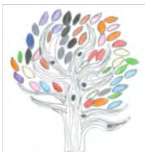
Children are entitled to receive free school meals if they, or their parents or guardians, receive any of the benefits below:

- **Income Support**
- **Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance**
- **Income-related Employment and Support Allowance support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 the guaranteed element of Pension Credit**
- **Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)**
- **Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit**
- **Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)**

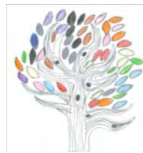
Pupils under the compulsory school age who are in full time education may also be able to get free school meals.

Registering is really quick and easy—apply online at:
<https://apply.cloudforedu.org.uk/ofsm/medway>





ABBHEY COURT TRUST



Abbey Court School Charitable Trust supports and fundraises for the school and community.

We are currently raising money to maintain and develop Larkin Farm. This year's goal is to raise more than £14,000. So far, we have raised £5,000. Can you help us to reach our target?

Abbey Court School's Lottery

Cost: £10 per lottery ball number

How it works: Each ball is entered into all 10 of the academic year's draws, so there are 10 opportunities to win!

Contact the office to sign up!

Animal Adoption



Adoptees receive:

- An adoption certificate
- A toy of keyring of your chosen animal
- A photo of your animal
- A factsheet and seasonal updates
- Free entry to our community open day

Contact the office for a membership form.

Message from The Trustees

I have recently joined the Trust, and I can say that the Trust is doing an incredible job. The Trust works tirelessly to raise funds for the school, ensuring that the animals are well fed and taken care of.

Larkin Farm is a very important part of the school, as it enables the pupils to have access to it as a form of therapy. My son loves going to the farm as he loves animals, particularly the chickens! We have had a few fundraising events such as the Silver Race, Carols on the Farm.

Abbey Court School Trust has demonstrated exceptional leadership in fundraising. The Trust has raised significant funds through their tireless effort to support the school, and are dedicated to continue in doing so.

Lydia Ogundolawa, Trustee



Registered Charity Number: 1160511

Farm Charter



P12 have been working on their new farm charter this term. Just like for their class charter, pupils listened to suggestions from the adults about potential rules. Pupils then suggested their ideas, like, 'no throwing.' They used symbol support to think about which rules are the most important, before making a list.

At the farm, the pupils found ways to practice the rules on their Farm Charter. They took photos of each other using kind hands when interacting with the animals, moving slowly from one area to another and using quiet voices as they work on the farm.



Slow



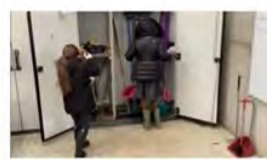
Kind hands



Quiet voices



Close gates



Tidy up



Wash your hands

The following week, the pupils focused on 'tidying up.' Pupils got their gloves and wellies on and used brushes and sponges to help clean the farm tools, before returning them to where they came from. The P12 class farm charter also includes the very important thing pupils must always do before they leave the farm —wash their hands!

123

153

113

93

Trust Lottery Draw

89

225

137



Fourth Trust Lottery Draw on Friday 20th December 2024:

Christmas £100 Prize —Marilyn Pawley

First prize of £40 — Veronica Kitney

Second prize of £20 - Danny Stewart

Third prize of £10 — Karen Joy

Fifth Trust Lottery Draw on 31st January 2025:

First prize of £40 — Karen Joy

Second prize of £20— Sheila Flynn

Third prize of £10— Sheila Flynn

Congratulations to the lucky winners!

Anglo Saxons

This term, P9 have been learning about Anglo Saxons. Pupils have been engrossed in lots of different activities to support their learning and to immerse themselves into the life of an Anglo Saxon.

One activity pupils enjoyed was having a banquet. In the morning of the banquet, they prepared the food. They followed a recipe to create honey shortbread and 'peasant bread' - these were yummy! P9 teamed up with P10 and role played a traditional Anglo Saxon banquet, exploring what they might have eaten, listened to and wore. The pupils loved this experience!

Another activity pupils participated in was having a campfire. They sung songs, listened to stories and tried 'mead', just like an Anglo Saxon would.



Children and Family Hubs

Did you know that Medway has 4 Children and Family Hubs to provide support to children and their parents/carers?

The Children and Family Hubs offer:

- ◇ activity sessions for parents and children;
- ◇ support with parenting, such as Triple P parenting programme;
- ◇ antenatal classes and baby clinics;
- ◇ links with local schools and voluntary agencies;
- ◇ information and advice about breastfeeding, speech and language, parenting, health issues and all difficult experiences that families with babies and young children often face;
- ◇ information about other local services and activities that can help you and your family.

There are regular SEND 'Drop-in' sessions held, where the Education and Health Care Plan process can be discussed with representatives from the Medway SEND Department, in addition to 'Small Steps' sessions, and much more. Early Help/Family Solutions support can also be accessed through the hubs. Find out more about sessions being run at each hub:

Chatham Children and Family Hub - 01634 338833

Gillingham Children and Family Hub - 01634 338877

Strood Children and Family Hub - 01634 335533

Wayfield and Rainham Children and Family Hub - 01634 337733.

Further information can be found on the Medway Council website: www.medway.gov.uk/familyhubs

Parent Voice - Mental Health and Wellbeing

You said... Please could the school reshare the links/ information for parents on how to access additional mental health and wellbeing support for their child?

We did... There is a whole section for Mental Health and Wellbeing Support on the school website, including key contacts for additional support and suggested helpful activities/ resources you could use with your child at home.

Please visit:

www.abbeycourt.medway.sch.uk/about-us/mental-health-and-wellbeing/



Making a Hedgehog Shelter

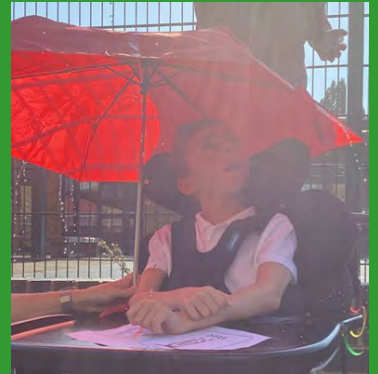


In Design and Technology lessons, S3 have been learning about shelters.

Pupils tested different materials to see if they are waterproof or not, and then used these materials to make a shelter for a hedgehog.

Pupils found a box, filled it up with torn up newspaper and then took it down to the Farm's Hedgehog Hideout. They then covered it with plastic and hid it under some branches. When pupils went back to check on their box, they noticed that some of the newspaper had been pulled out of the box and some of the edges had been nibbled!

Although the pupils didn't see any creatures when they were there, they were excited to think that a small animal might be using their shelter to keep warm on a cold winter's night.



An Enchanting Performance

Further Education students had the incredible opportunity to attend a performance of the opera 'Hansel and Gretel' at the Royal Opera House in London.

They were captivated by the stunning sets, beautiful music, and powerful performances.

The opera's magical retelling of the classic fairy tale truly mesmerized the students. The stunning orchestral music and vibrant visuals created a truly immersive experience.

The experience was further enhanced by a sing-a-long at the end. Students expressed their joy through smiles and wide-eyed wonder as the cast, and other neighbouring schools, filled the auditorium with song!

Thank you to the Royal Opera House for making this such a special day for everyone involved.



Race Night

**In aid of
Abbey Court School Trust**

Friday 14th March 2025

At Abbey Court School

Cliffe Road, Cliffe Road, Strood, Kent, ME2 3DL

Doors Open and food at 7.00pm

£8 a ticket including supper

Sausage and chips or Vegetarian option

**Buying horses and betting available on the night +
Raffle**

Scan QR Code to reserve your place



Racing Equipment Supplied by Simon Chapman
07896 080010 <http://www.goracenights.co.uk/>

Abbey Court School Trust is a registered charity (number: 1160511)

Siblings Page

Valentine's Day Colour by Calculation Number Bonds within 10 Activity

Solve the additions and colour the picture by matching the answers to the numbers in the table. You can colour in the lettering using any colour.

10	red
9	orange
8	light blue
7	green
6	dark blue
5	pink

Challenge Question

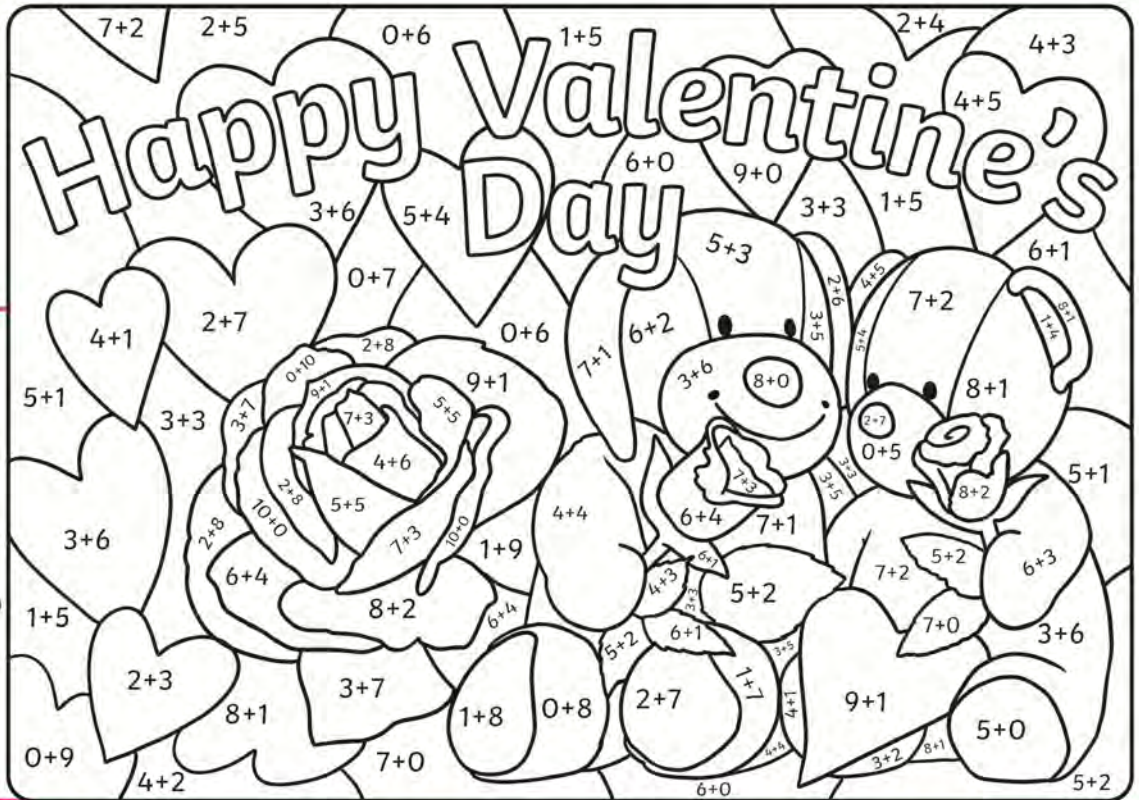
Jo

One cuddly toy is orange and the other is green.



Is she correct?

Explain your answer.



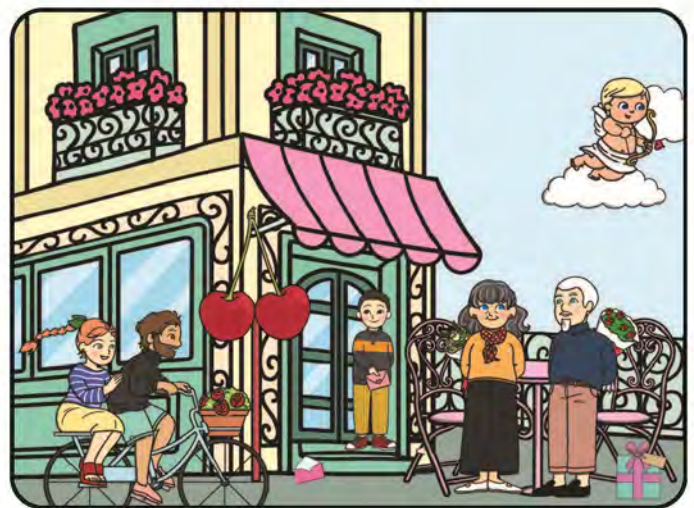
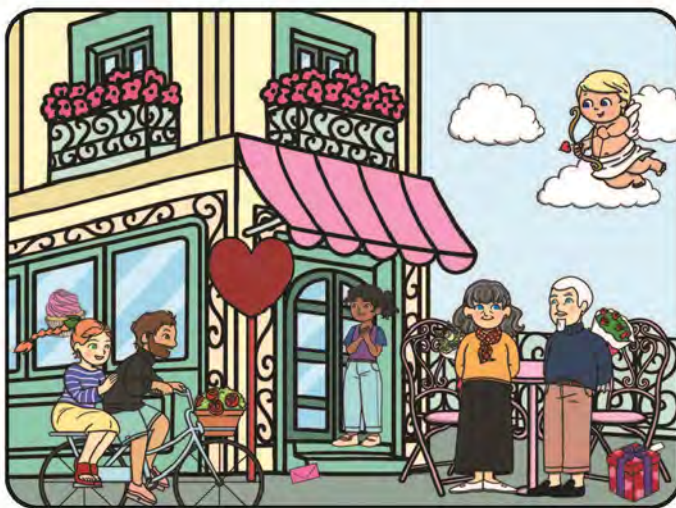
twinkl

visit twinkl.com



Spot the Difference

There are 7 differences in the pictures below, can you find them?



twinkl

visit twinkl.com





Let's talk Makaton

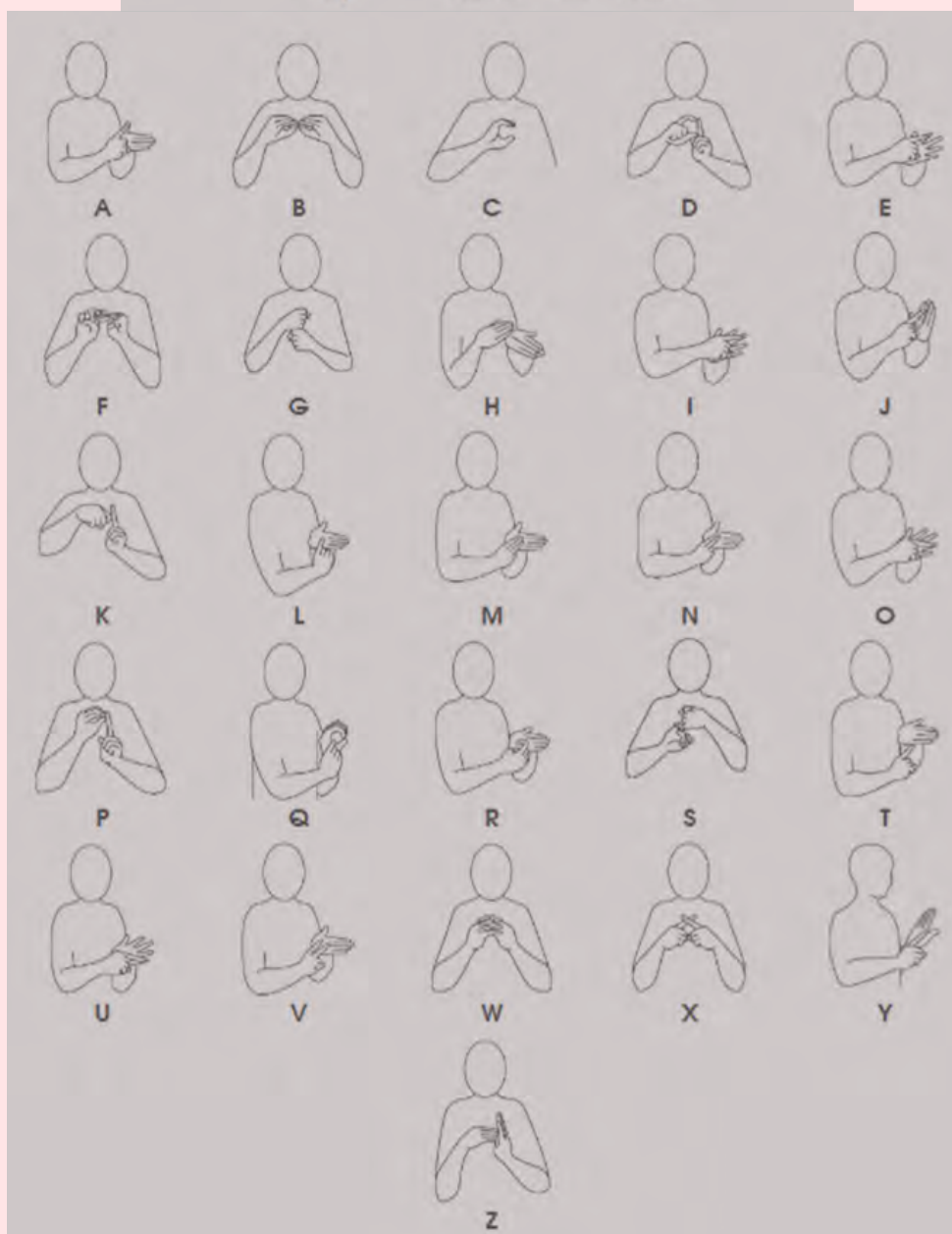
What is Makaton?

Makaton is a 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.

Please remember to:

- use your dominant hand to sign.
- speak along with the words you are signing.
- have fun!





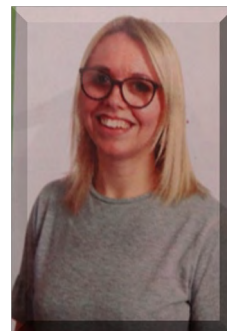
Communication Corner



Augmentative and Alternative Communication ('AAC')



Lynsey Cook



Kelly Ann Ralph

What is 'AAC'?

'AAC' refers to all of the ways that someone communicates, besides talking. This includes the use of 'low tech' objects, symbols, photographs and signing, as well as 'high tech' electronic aids to help a child communicate.

AAC Low Tech or High Tech – which is better?

Neither is better than the other; it is a matter of preference. Some people prefer paper-based AAC, and others prefer technology-based AAC. What is important, is that the AAC is right for the person at the time. The downside of a high-tech device is that they could break, run out of battery, or can't be used around water. Because of this, there will always be a need for a low-tech backup that the AAC user knows how to use.

Modelling

In the beginning, the success of a communication system relies on the 'communication partner': the person who is there with the AAC user. We call this 'modelling'. Modelling is a useful tool to show people how a communication system works.

We start by modelling 'core words', and initially focus on 4; 'more', 'stop', 'different' and 'help'. Core words are words that can be used in a variety of situations to communicate many things.

Sabotage

Sometimes we need to be creative and use 'sabotage'. For example, we could say we are going to do painting but forget to give the paintbrush. The communication partner can then model 'let me HELP you'. Another example is only giving a few items of food at snack time enables the word 'MORE' to be modelled.

Key Points

The most important thing is to make sure that the communication system is available for those unplanned moments. These moments are often the best ways to teach meaningful communication in a real-life setting, and you can't pause real life to grab the AAC System!





WELCOME TO OUR NEW STAFF!



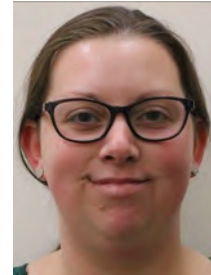
Jordan Owen - Teaching Assistant

I'm a new Teaching Assistant at Abbey Court, and I'm really enjoying it. In my spare time, I enjoy being with friends and family, going to concerts, and going on dog walks with my pet dalmation.



Alicia Gravenell - Cleaner

I've recently started as a cleaner at the Cliffe Road site. Everyone has been very welcoming. I have two children and three cats. In my limited spare time, I enjoy arts and crafts. I also enjoy country walks.



Good Bye!

We are sorry to say goodbye to Sky Marshall, teaching assistant. We wish her well for the future.

Parents' Information Board

Communication

All school letters will now only be sent out on ParentMail — please check your account regularly. The link is:
<https://pmx.parentmail.co.uk>

School Payments

Please ensure you have set up your ParentMail account, as this is used for all trip payments, as well as dinner payments.

**Our next
Non-School Uniform
Day will be on
Friday 14th March!**

Hydropool

We said that we would tell you how often the school hydropool was out of action. This term, there have been four occasions when one of our two hydro pools has been out of use.

Term Dates

Friday 14th February	Last day of term
Monday 17th February to Friday 21st February	Half Term Break
Monday 24th February	Children return to school