



Abbey Court **MATTERS**

Summer Term 5 2025 Issue 390 Circulation 1118



Community Comes Together for Larkin Farm's Open Day



MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNORS



Jane Heyes— Chair of Governors

After a busy few years, the past twelve months have been relatively quite, although as you know, a school is never quiet!

The Board has two new members who will introduce themselves to you in the newsletter over the next few months. They bring a great deal of experience to the board. We have been supporting the school to achieve its aims, and make sure that all the right checks and balances are in place. We have also met many of your children and young people both during our visits, and when they come to talk to us about what they have been doing. This is the most important part of the role and also the most enjoyable.

Governors have continued their learning, and have received training about Keeping Children Safe In Education, finance, first aid, mental health, learning outside the classroom, wellbeing, online safety and more. If you are a regular reader of our meeting minutes, please feel free to let us know if you think we can improve them for our audience of parents.

If you are thinking about becoming a governor, I can assure you that it is very rewarding. We meet six times a year, and read and talk about both the school, and local or national policy and change. We also have the pleasure of visiting the school regularly to see it in action, and observe your fantastic children enjoying their learning. New governors all receive induction so that they can gradually participate more fully as they gain experience. We all have to start somewhere!

Finally, thanks for all that you do to support your child's education and the school more widely. Have an enjoyable summer.

This term, the governors:

- ◇ Held a full Governing Body and Finance Committee Meeting on 20th May.
- ◇ Completed a safeguarding audit.
- ◇ Supported a subject review of PE .
- ◇ Attended school events, including the farm open day and the parent cooking events.

London Marathon



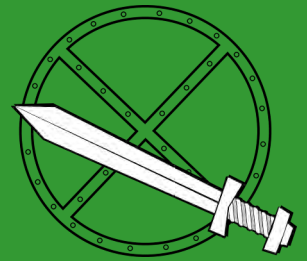
On Friday 25th April, Further Education hosted their very own Marathon.

Throughout the year, the students have been participating in the Daily Mile, and using their gym sessions to help to develop their strength and stamina to travel long distances.

Across the day, staff and students worked together to travel the combined distance of 26.2 miles, which is 262 laps around the school field!



Battle Re-enactment



Year 7 have been learning all about the Norman conquest this term!

Pupils engaged with sensory exploration of life during the Norman period, studying the Bayeux Tapestry, visiting Rochester castle, and listening to the story of the Battle of Hastings.

To consolidate our learning, pupils created their own shields, swords and armour, and joined together to recreate their own Norman battle!

It was lots of fun, and was a fantastic opportunity for pupils to demonstrate and reflect on their learning. Well done, Year 7!



Cozenton Park Swimming

Once a week, a group of Further Education students attend the casual swim session at Cozenton Park.

The students use their money skills to pay for their entrance fee. They have been developing their independence in getting changed and finding a locker to keep their personal belongings safe.

In the pool, some of the students have been working on a range of swimming strokes such as front crawl, backstroke and even swimming under water, whilst others have been improving their confidence around being in the water and working on physiotherapy programmes. The students have also worked towards achieving an AQA Award in 'Using a Swimming Recreation Centre'.

After swimming, the students head up to the café area to enjoy a drink and snack. Some even buy their own items from the vending machines!



You said...

In the Spring term, our Pupil Voice topic was 'Learning Outside the Classroom'.

Primary -

- You enjoy learning in class and in other places outside of the classroom, such as in the Hydropool, the hall, the playground, the immersion room, offsite and at the farm.

Secondary and Further Education—

- You like accessing the school farm, and going on educational visits.
- You do lots of outdoor learning, such as college, offsite swimming, work experience at Broomhill Park, Duke of Edinburgh and Tennis Club.
- You would like to do more Outdoor Learning.
- You don't go outside when the weather is not very nice outside, to avoid getting wet and cold.



...we did!

Primary

- Arranged a vote for each class to choose a specific place that they would like to do a learning activity. We then shared the results of the votes and pictures of activities which took place in the areas that were chosen.
- Collected and shared ideas for activities in different areas to encourage teachers to use them more often.

Secondary and Further Education

- Each class has participated in at least 1 new outdoor learning activity this term, that they had not done before.
- A display board has been created to emphasise what 'Learning Outside the Classroom' is, and to give ideas for outdoor learning.
- Pupils created a note to go into contact books, asking for waterproof clothes and footwear, or a change of clothes to enable pupils to access outdoor learning even if the weather is poor.



Staff Voice - You Said, We Did

You said...

Last term, our Staff Voice topic was Learning Outside of the Classroom (LOTC). Staff were split into groups representing the Primary, Secondary and Further Education departments.

Staff discussed their understanding of LOTC, and gave many different examples of how this happens in their classes. Many different subjects were covered, as well as different aspects of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI).

Everyone agreed that these examples of LOTC have had a positive impact, not only on pupil learning, their mental health and wellbeing, but also on how it prepares pupils for their future. It also supports staff's own mental, health and wellbeing.

All staff agreed to build on what is already being done, and look forward to continued enhanced opportunities in the future.

We did... agree that this will be a whole staff development target next year.

Parent Voice - You Said, We Did

The Parent Voice Coffee Morning for Terms 3&4 was held on 13th March 2025. The topic was on 'Learning Outside of the Classroom'. Parents discussed the opportunities provided by the school for their child to be involved in outside learning, and gave positive feedback on the range of educational visits currently offered, as well as the sessions delivered at the school farm and other outside activities, such as Duke of Edinburgh sessions, and use of outdoor areas including the Multi-Use Games Area, courtyards and playgrounds/fields.

You said...

- please can the school support our child(ren) to participate in more outdoors leisure activities that it can be difficult for them to access due to their disabilities?
- please can the school help my child to experience riding a bike and join a sports club?

We did...

- continue to support pupils to access activities such as horseriding, skiing and fishing. We are also reviewing our offer of outdoor leisure activities for all pupils as part of our work towards the Learning Outside of the Classroom Award
- offer more activities such as basketball club (at Secondary) during lunchtime play, using our MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area). We will continue to develop the range of sports clubs we can offer in school, as well as look for any opportunities to participate in tournaments with other schools. We are also planning to re-launch the school's cycling award scheme!

Friday 13th June 2025



QUIZ NIGHT



Up to 8 people per team
(smaller groups welcome)

£5 per person

(please bring your own drinks and nibbles)



Doors open at 7.00pm
(prompt start 7.30pm)

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

Have you ever wished
you could take part in
the London Marathon?

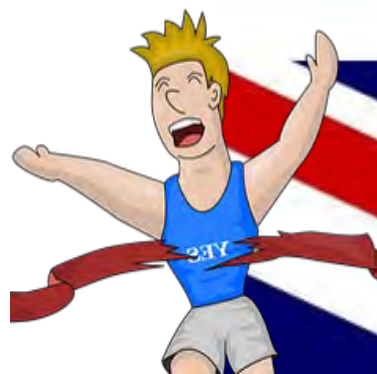
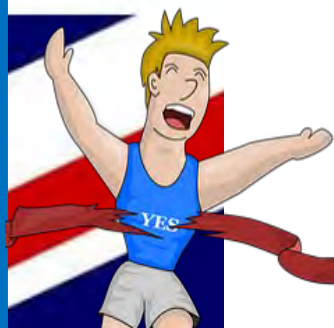
Would you like to run
the London Marathon
2026 for Abbey Court
Trust?

LONDON MARATHON 2026

Please submit your interest to
office@abbeycourt.medway.sch.uk

You would be required to raise a minimum
of £3,000

The participant will be selected at random
if we have multiple requests.



Seeds to Spring



Further Education's Spring Enterprise Event was entitled 'Seeds to Spring'. Students and their parents and guardians helped to develop the sensory garden area in the cafe courtyard. This event supported Further Education's work for Science Week, as well as the Horticulture & Environment ASDAN modules that the students are working towards.

Students made plant pots, which the students and their parents then decorated. Students also ran a 'Seed Stall', with a variety of seed types for sale. Mystery bags of unknown seeds were also sold!

There was also a chance for parents to work alongside the students to help add soil and seeds/plants to the planters.

Keep an eye out for updates in future newsletters about our sensory garden.



Bake and Boogie



On Tuesday 29th April, pupils from classes P5, P6 and P7, in Key Stage Two, were invited to stay after school to attend a 'Bake and Boogie' afternoon.

Pupils engaged in baking fairy cakes, decorating biscuits and boogying along to live music whilst enjoying the warm weather in the drama courtyard.

The pupils had a wonderful time and engaged well throughout the activities, coping well with the changes to their routines.

Further Education Family Feast



On 26th March, Further Education hosted a Family Feast.

Parents and carers enjoyed a lovely roast gammon meal or vegetarian cheese whirl, with a shortcake biscuit and strawberry milkshake for dessert.

Students helped to decorate the tables, and a relaxing playlist was chosen to play during the meal.



Welcome to Nursery!



We have had some new children join us in the nursery class. We have been busy exploring the environment and meeting new people!



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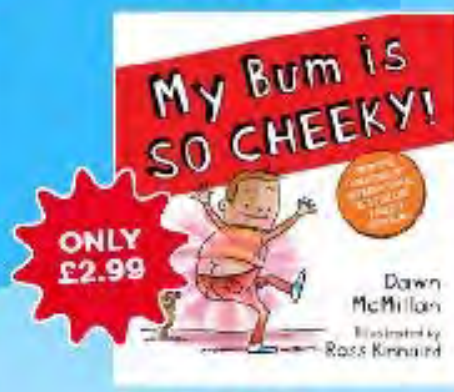


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£5.3M IN FREE BOOKS TO SCHOOLS NATIONWIDE**

Circo Rum Ba Ba Takes Abbey Court Over the Moon!



On the 6th May, Key Stage 2 were treated to an unforgettable performance by the wonderfully creative 'Circo Rum Ba Ba', who brought their magical, multi-sensory show, 'Over the Moon', to our school.

The story followed a lively astronaut on a journey through space, discovering life in the most imaginative and heart-warming ways. From defying gravity to curious creatures, the pupils were taken on a cosmic adventure that sparked wonder and excitement at every turn.

What made the experience so special, was how completely immersed and engaged our pupils were. With its rich sensory elements, the show was accessible and inclusive for all.

A huge thank you to Circo Rum Ba Ba for such a fantastic performance!



We were all left feeling truly over the moon!



Educational Visits



We have been on lots of educational visits this term, giving pupils opportunities to learn outside the classroom!



Exploring Our Community

P5 have been learning about their local community, and went on an Educational Visit to our local Morrisons.



We did some food shopping, and even had the opportunity to role play being a cashier, by scanning our own purchases.





ABBHEY COURT TRUST



Abbey Court School Charitable Trust supports and fundraises for the school and community. We want to help enhance the facilities and education on offer to all of the pupils at Abbey Court.

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. If you would like to help us achieve our goal, please do get in touch.

This year, our fundraising events have raised:

- ◇ Silver Coin Race: £587.05
- ◇ Christmas Fashion Show: £464.36
- ◇ Christmas Jumper Day: 333.81
- ◇ Carols on the Farm: £1,184.82
- ◇ Non School Uniform Day: £189.20
- ◇ Race Night: £1000
- ◇ Farm Open Day: £5788.11

Thank You!

We would like to thank:

- ◇ Everyone who volunteered their time at the recent Farm Open Day.
- ◇ Everyone who donated Tombola and Raffle prizes.
- ◇ Kingcott Dairy for the cheese donation.
- ◇ Hannah Wright's family for bringing 3 tractors to the Farm Open Day.
- ◇ Mel Minvalla for doing a wool spinning demonstration.

Christmas Market

on the farm

7th December



Animal Adoption



Funds raised through the scheme go towards the welfare of the animals and upkeep of Larkin Farm, making sure our furry and feathery friends have everything they need.

Larkin Farm and the animals we look after provide the pupils at Abbey Court School with unique learning and life experiences, helping them gain a wealth of key skills.

Please contact
office@abbeycourt.medway.sch.uk if you would like an application pack.



A Message from Del King of Abbey Court Trust

As Trustees, we are committed to raising funds for Abbey Court School and Larkin Farm. We cannot do this without the commitment from the wonderful parents and friends of the School.

To this end, we recently ran a Race Night, with horse racing, pig racing and a race at the dogs where all the runners were Afghan hounds. It was very funny indeed! The volunteers running the tote also had a great competition to see who could serve the most punters! Overall, the evening was a great success.

Keep an eye out for other events throughout the coming year, and please give us the support that we need.

Del King, Trustee

Registered Charity Number: 1160511

Medway Youth Games Skiing Competition

On 1st May, 6 pupils from across Key Stages 2 and 3 were invited to attend a skiing competition run by Medway Youth Games.

As well as skiing, pupils worked on everyday skills, such as learning to interact with other adults and turn-taking with other schools. As a reward for their great effort at skiing, they undertook some snow tubing, which was a favourite of all pupils!

The competition was an event to work towards gaining their STAR award (an introduction to dry slope skiing). Each pupil who attended the competition earned a certificate and a medal. The school also received two trophies, including the 'Most Improved Skiers' Trophy.



Exploring the World of Native America



This term, P11 have been diving into the fascinating world of Native American culture through hands-on, creative learning. From the very beginning, the pupils embraced the topic with enthusiasm and curiosity.

We started by role-playing as Native Americans, helping us to imagine life in a traditional tribe. The children worked together to build their own tipis, learning how these structures were made and why they were so important. We also explored traditional foods, tasting wild rice and discussing the natural ingredients used by Native American communities such as corn, beans and squash!

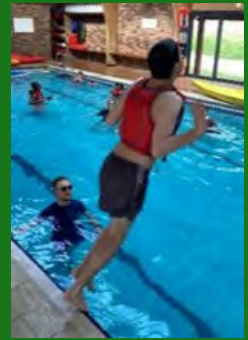
One of the most special moments was when we created our own totem poles, each based on the children's unique "birth totem" spirit animal. This activity helped us connect to the symbolic meanings and stories behind Native American art and beliefs.

It has been a rich, imaginative topic that we have really enjoyed to learn about this term!



Bowles Residential

On Wednesday, the pupils worked together with the Bowles instructors and school staff to use ropes, plastic bottles and wooden frames to build a raft strong enough to carry their weight. With great perseverance and attention to detail, the pupils worked in 2 teams to complete the challenge. Next, we went on an Earth Walk with some challenges and tasks to complete along the way – exploring nature's colours and textures. To finish the day, we heard stories around the campfire and toasted some marshmallows before our bedtime routines.



Thursday was even busier. We started the day with Bushcraft sessions, learning how to build a fire and light it using flints: the dancing flames were mesmerising. Next, was Team Building. We were faced with a range of problems and challenges to solve. We worked well together to move the tyre stack, build a funnel with tubes and used pulleys to move items. There were lots of laughs, wrong turns and communication to help each other out. After lunch, we tried orienteering and archery. We worked hard to hold the bow correctly and aim at the target.



Friday was spent developing some life skills by helping pack our bags and strip the beds. We had one last session in the pool using kayaks and jumping in. We all had a fantastic time, developing our confidence, problem-solving skills and independence.



Trust Lottery Draw

8th Trust Lottery Draw on

Friday 25th April 2025:

First prize of £40— Marilyn Pawley

Second prize of £20 - David and Jean Park

Third prize of £10 — Evelyn White

**Congratulations to
the lucky winners!**

114

43

177



Do you know a business that could sponsor Larkin Farm?



Abbey Court School Trust is continually fundraising to pay for the upkeep of Larkin Farm. All money goes towards looking after the welfare of the animals, to make sure that they have everything they need and enriching the curriculum for our pupils and Medway children.

If you work for a business, or know a business who may be interested in sponsoring us, please get in touch by emailing office@abbeycourt.medway.sch.uk.

Our Ofsted inspection reports that:
"Larkin Farm, the school's farm, provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to extend their communication and independence skills..." (Ofsted, March 2023)

We are fundraising for...

- Polytunnel improvements to enhance our growing opportunities - £1500
- New fencing and building materials to improve animal enclosures and enhance animal enrichment opportunities
- Groundwork tools to support maintenance of grazing areas - £200
- Young Farmers' Club members uniform and equipment - £500

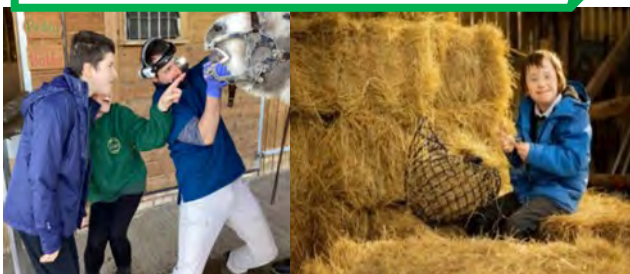
Larkin Farm opened in 2020 to enrich the curriculum, and offer pupils a learning environment that would engage, motivate, and prepare them for the future.

Animals we have include donkeys, Shetland ponies, alpacas, goats, pigs, rabbits, guinea pigs, sheep, ducks, and chickens. We also have a polytunnel, vegetable patch, fruit trees, and a fruit garden.

Outreach is offered to local schools to access our farm, and the fantastic learning it provides. This year, we have welcomed children and young people from local primary, secondary and specialist schools.

Our Young Farmers' Club is open to Abbey Court School pupils, as well as young people from the local community. It provides us with the ability to extend our curriculum beyond the school day for those who show a passion for farming.

We are very proud of our school farm! We were awarded 'Most Inspirational Educational Farm or Garden 2023' and 'Best Educational Farm Project 2023' by the School Farms Network.



Telephone: 01634 338 220
Email: office@abbeycourt.medway.sch.uk
Address: Abbey Court School, Cliffe Road, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3DL


Abbey Court School
"We grow people"

Registered Charity Number: 1160511

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 aged 10 to 28 years

Based at: Larkin Farm, Templars Drive, Strood, Kent, ME2 3FD

Come along to one of our YFC sessions and find out more.

Sessions are every Wednesday, 4.15-5.45pm.



About us

Based at Larkin Farm at Abbey Court School, Abbey Court and District Young Farmers Club has access to a 7 acre plot with 3 grazing paddocks, stables, a classroom and a barn. Currently, we have donkeys, goats, pigs, sheep, chickens, ducks, guinea pigs, rabbits, alpacas and Shetland ponies. We also have a poly-tunnel and raised beds for horticultural activities.

Is Young Farmers for you?

Abbey Court and District Young Farmers Club is designed to have something for everyone. Whether you are an animal lover, enjoy gardening, are an artist, sporty or just enjoy trying something new, then Abbey Court and District Young Farmers Club could be for you! It is not just a place to learn about farming, but a chance to also meet new people and try new things.

Join the largest youth organisation in England and Wales for a whole new range of opportunities in both farming and other activities, such as:

- Getting the chance to care and look after a range of animals.
- Training and information days (animal husbandry, fencing and estate maintenance, livestock stock- judging).
- Social events such as junior balls and parties held throughout the year.
- The chance to show a variety of livestock at shows and competitions around the south east.
- Sports and competitions days (incl. football, rounders, arts and crafts, public speaking, dance and much more).



Register your interest by contacting Abbey Court School
on 01634 338220 or via e-mail at
farm@abbeycourt.medway.sch.uk



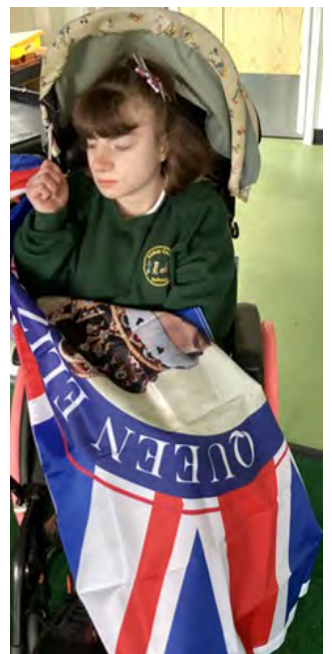


VE Day



The pupils at Secondary thoroughly enjoyed learning about VE Day during their History lessons. All the classes gathered their decorations and set up the tables to celebrate VE Day by having their own version of a VE Day 'Street Party'.

The classes prepared food, listened to wartime music and wore celebratory hats. It was a beautiful sunny afternoon, enjoyed by everyone.



Larkin Farm Open Day



Over 900 family members, friends, and members of the community came along to our Larkin Farm Open Day.

Guests enjoyed walking and grooming experiences, animal information sessions, tractor displays, wool spinning, games stalls run by our Young Farmers Club, as well as local vendors selling food, ice cream, baked goods and handmade crafts. Families were delighted to see the chicks and lambs, have their face painted, comparing their weight to different farm animals, and got to take home part of our farm by planting a sunflower.

The event exceeded our fundraising expectations. Thank you to everyone that came along to support this event. All money raised goes towards the upkeep of the farm and animals.

Saturday 10th May, 2025



"What a truly amazing day, thank you for opening up your amazing farm, we had a super time" – Charlie T

"Thank you, Florence loved that she adopted little Arrow. She's super excited for the next one. It was brilliant" – Tierney H

"Well done everyone – great family fun for all. The kids had a lovely time planting sunflower seeds, doing 'hook a duck' and walking the pygmy goats." Claire L

**Please follow our
Larkin farm
page on Facebook**



Learning about Rivers

This term, S7 have been learning about local rivers. We used Google Earth to follow the River Medway and River Thames from their source to their mouth. We noticed how they start on higher ground and make their way to the sea, getting wider on the way.

We spent time at Gillingham Strand and learnt that the Medway is a tidal river. This means that you have to be careful not to get stuck in the mud when the tide is out, or fall into deep water when the tide is in.

The River Medway is now used for activities such as swimming, kayaking, fishing and sailing. In the past, the river was used to transport goods and for fishing. The mud was also dug up and sold to make cement.



Our Community

This term, P6 have been learning about our community, and engaging in activities to explore the roles of different people in our community.

We have enjoyed role playing different community professions, including nurses, dentists, firefighters, gardeners and cleaners.

Whilst role playing being gardeners and learning about the role of a gardener, we have also been learning about what plants need to grow. During our farm sessions, we have been watering the plants in the polytunnel, and have used our learning about the role of gardeners to plant and care for our own sunflowers.





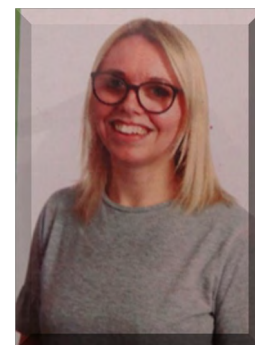
Communication Corner



Lynsey Cook

This term's article is focused on the use of VOCAs (Voice Output Communication Aids) as a way of supporting our pupils to get their voice heard if they are unable to speak themselves.

These are recording devices that can have one message on, or several, but only require a press of the top or button to activate. Switch access is available on some, which means if a pupil struggles with activating the VOCA using its main method, you can plug a more suitable switch into the device to activate it.



Kelly Ann Ralph



As you record your own voice onto these devices, the possibilities are almost endless as to what you can do/say with these. Some examples are:

Core vocabulary	More/finished/different/help/go
Greetings	Hello/Good Morning/Goodbye/How are you?
Messages –	Do you have some green paint please?
Jokes – these are particularly good on a Step by Step VOCA, as the different pushes can have the different parts of the joke e.g.	(on VOCA) 'Knock knock! (communication partner) 'Who's there?' (VOCA) 'Hoo.' (communication partner) 'Hoo Who?' (VOCA) 'Are you an owl?'
Repetitive lines in books or songs.	There's no such thing as a Gruffalo (The Gruffalo) I sent him back (Dear Zoo) If you're happy and you know it... Hop little bunny hop hop hop
Games	Actions for Simon Says Record a clip of a song for musical statues Actions for a warm up in PE Counting activities (laps, how many little ducks are left etc.)
Choice making	Activities or songs to choose from, people to work with. Phonic sounds

This is not an exhaustive list, but you can see that VOCAs are very versatile communication aids!

Siblings Page

twinkl

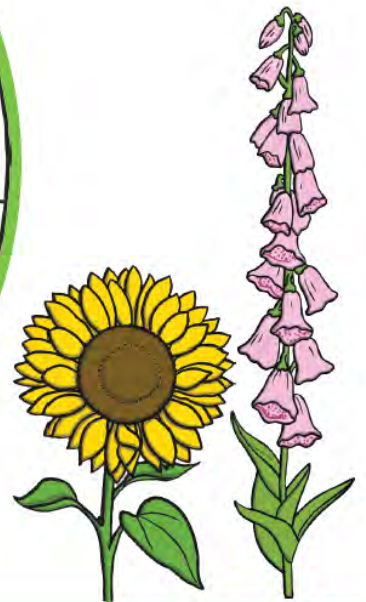
Honeybee Maze



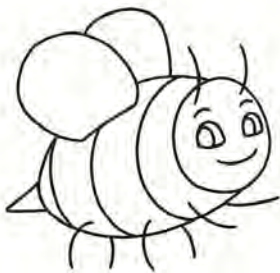
Start



Finish



twinkl





WEDNESDAY SQUAD

**A SAFE SPACE FOR
SEND YOUNG ADULTS**



AGES 16-25

**WEDNESDAYS
6:30-8:30PM
PARKWOOD
YOUTH CENTRE**

WHATS ON?

- Budgeting ●
- Art & Crafts ●
- Health & Wellbeing ●
- Skills Development ●
- Sexual Health ●
- Cookery ●
- Fun & Games ●
- Socialise and make friends ●
- And much more... ●



Email

Angela.Cox@medway.gov.uk



WELCOME TO OUR NEW STAFF!



Jessica Edwards— Teaching Assistant

I've really enjoyed my time so far, and am looking forward to my future at Abbey Court. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my horse and walking my dog with my mum.



Tierney Hodges— Teaching Assistant

I've just started as a Teaching Assistant in the Primary department.

I have two cats and a dog, and my previous role was in Adult Support Services.



Good Bye!

We are sorry to say goodbye to Alison Shepherd, Clerical Assistant, and Laura Colley, Catering Assistant. We wish them well for the future!

Parents' Information Board

The 48 Hour Rule

If your child has sickness or diarrhoea, please keep them at home for 48 hours from the end of their symptoms.

Summer Safety

Please send your child to school with a water bottle, sun hat and sun cream.

**Beach Party Day
on Wednesday
25th June!**

Hydropool

This term, there have been 5 occasions when one of our two hydropools has been out of use.

Term Dates

Friday 23rd May 2025	Last day of term
Monday 26th May to Friday 30th May 2025	Half Term Break
Monday 2nd June 2025	Children return to school
Tuesday 22nd July 2025	Last day of the Summer term