Ashdon Primary School

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Challenge · Care · Celebrate

Newsletter

23rd October 2026

AUTUMN TERM 1 · LOOKING BACK

What a Half Term!

As we reach half term, here is a look back at a busy, exciting and very proud first half of the autumn term at Ashdon Primary.

Our Ofsted Inspection

In September, Ofsted inspected our school. The report was shared with all families on 13 October and is now published on the Ofsted website. **Thank you to our amazing children, and to all our families for your support.**

★ SOME OF OUR HALF-TERM HIGHLIGHTS ★



Ancient Greece workshop
Jupiter met the Greek Man



Teddy Bear Run
Mars raced with their teddies



Safari artists
Mars sketched the countryside



Stone Age jewellery
Saturn made clay beads



Music with Mrs Clark
Jupiter explored notes and instruments



Harvest Festival
Songs, readings and gifts



Cross country
Lyla came 3rd and Harry 10th!



Happy 2nd birthday, Jaffle!
Thank you for all the cards



Sports Ambassadors
Trained to lead active playtimes



House hunters
Mars explored the houses in Ashdon



School Council
Organised today's Pyjama Day!



Catapult Challenge
Jupiter built lolly-stick catapults

Have a wonderful half term! School reopens on Monday 2 November.

Ashdon Primary School
Newsletter

SATURN CLASS · YEARS 2 AND 3

Stepping Back to the Stone Age

Saturn Class have been busy archaeologists this half term, exploring the Stone Age: the very long period of history when people made their tools from stone, bone and wood, hunted and gathered their food and, later on, began to farm.

Last week they travelled back thousands of years for their **Portals to the Past** Stone Age workshop! The children (and Mr Swindell, or was it Fred Flintstone?!) came dressed as Stone Age people and handled animal furs, bones, skulls, horns and tusks, finding out how Stone Age people used every part of an animal for food, clothing and tools.











Our Stone Age half term

★ **Stone Age jewellery:** The children made their own beads and pendants from clay, just as Stone Age people decorated themselves with beads made from shells, stones, bones and teeth.

★ **A real-life mystery:** They investigated carved stone balls, around 5,000 years old. Nobody knows what they were used for! Were they weapons, tools, or part of a game?

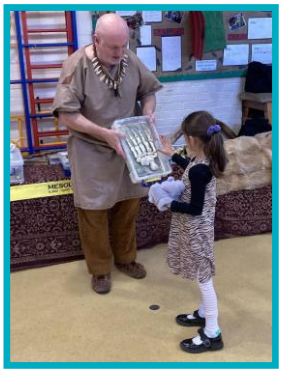
★ **Hands-on history:** At the workshop they explored furs, skulls, bones and horns, and learned how nothing from a hunt was wasted.

★ **Amazing fact:** The Stone Age lasted for more than three million years, and in Britain it ended around 4,500 years ago, when people learned to make tools from metal.

SATURN CLASS · YEARS 2 AND 3

More from our Stone Age Workshop





















Fantastic Stone Age costumes and brilliant questions all day. Well done, Saturn Class!

Ashdon Primary School
Newsletter

MARS CLASS · RECEPTION

Lists of Things We Love

Our Reception children have been busy writers! They each wrote a list of the things they love, using their phonics to say each word slowly, hear the sounds and write them down. We are so proud of how hard they worked. Fantastic writing, Reception!

HOW EARLY WRITING DEVELOPS

1 — **Mark making** — Scribbles, lines and circles

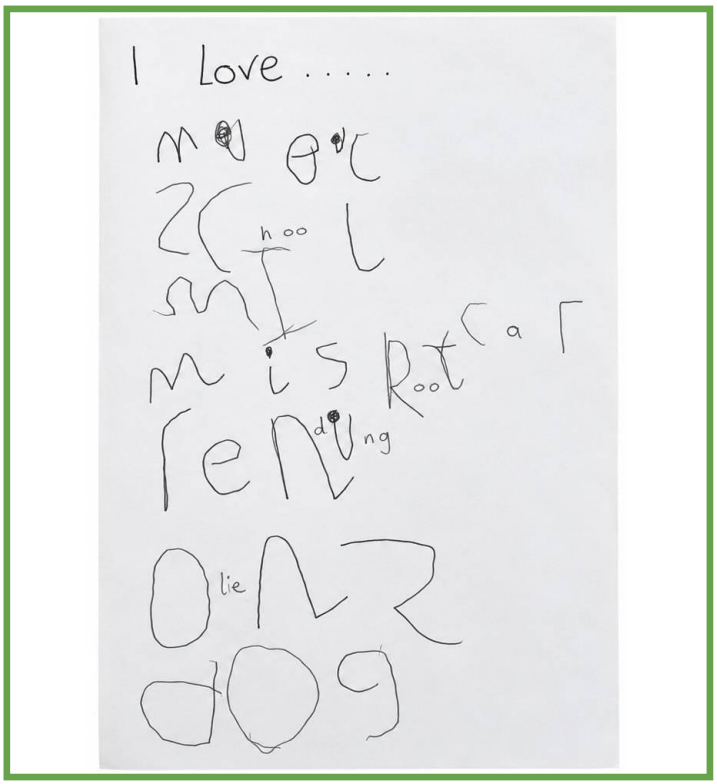
2 — **Drawing and telling** — Pictures that tell a story

3 — **Letter shapes** — Letters from their name

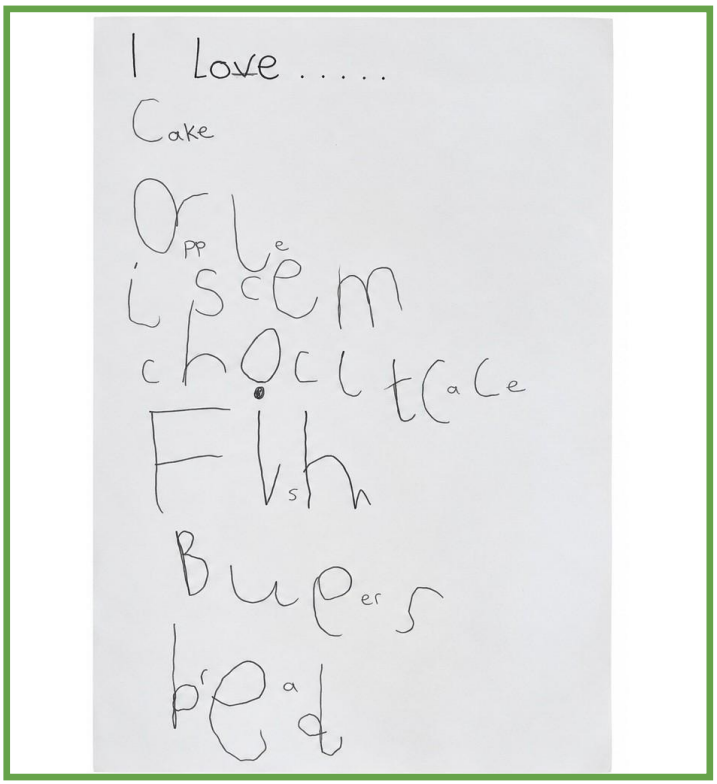
4 — **Writing sounds** — Hearing sounds in words

5 — **Words and lists** — Labels, lists and sentences

Every child moves through these stages at their own pace. Spelling words the way they sound, such as "frogz" or "peeza", is a brilliant sign that a child is using their phonics!



H. loves school! What a fantastic list!



Yum! Cake, apples, ice cream, fish and burgers!

Supporting writing at home

★ **Write for real reasons.** Shopping lists, birthday cards, labels and notes all make writing fun and meaningful.

★ **Say it, sound it, write it.** Say the word slowly together and help your child hear each sound before they write it.

★ **Celebrate their sounds.** Praise words spelt the way they sound, rather than correcting every spelling.

★ **Build strong fingers.** Playdough, threading, pegs, chalk and painting all help little hands get ready to write.

Ashdon Primary School
Newsletter

MARS CLASS · RECEPTION AND YEAR 1

A Fruity Feast with Tesco!



Mars Class had a wonderful visit from Tesco for a fruit tasting session! The children sat together in the hall to talk about healthy eating, then tasted lots of different fruits, including pineapple, blackberries, watermelon and mango. They were very brave, trying new tastes and describing what they could see, smell and taste. There were lots of thumbs up! A big thank you to Tesco for visiting us.















🍎 Eat your 5 a day!

Eating at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day helps keep our bodies healthy and strong. Fresh, frozen, tinned and dried all count! A child's portion is roughly what fits in the palm of their hand.

🌈 Eat a rainbow at home!

Can your child try a fruit or vegetable of every colour this week? Let them help choose and wash fruit at the shops or at home, and try something new together.

Ashdon Primary School
Newsletter

MARS CLASS · RECEPTION AND YEAR 1

Happy 100th Birthday, Pooh!

This month, Winnie-the-Pooh turned **100 years old!** A. A. Milne's first book about the "bear of very little brain" was published on 14 October 1926, and children all over the world still love Pooh and his friends today.

To celebrate, Mars Class (and their teachers!) dressed up as Pooh, Piglet, Tigger, Eeyore and Kanga and set off on a very special Safari to the **Hundred Acre Wood**. They followed a trail of buzzing bees through the trees and discovered little jars of **honey** hidden at the end. Pooh would have been delighted! Back at school, they played **pin the tail on the donkey**, just like Eeyore, who famously loses his tail in the stories.








Did you know?

★ **A real bear:** Pooh was named after Winnipeg, a real black bear at London Zoo that Christopher Robin loved to visit.

★ **A real wood:** The Hundred Acre Wood is based on Ashdown Forest in East Sussex, where the game of Poohsticks began on a little bridge.

★ **Real toys:** Christopher Robin was A. A. Milne's son, and Pooh, Piglet, Eeyore, Kanga and Tigger were his own toys. You can still see them today in New York: scan the QR code!

★ **Late arrivals:** Owl and Rabbit were not toys. Milne made them up, and Tigger only bounced into the stories in the second book, in 1928.

Scan to see the real toys!

MARS CLASS · RECEPTION AND YEAR 1

Our Hundred Acre Wood Adventure










Tiggers, Piglets, Eeyores and Poohs exploring the woods, peering over the bridge, saying hello to a horse and proudly showing off their honey. What a wonderful way to celebrate 100 years of Pooh!

YEARS 5 AND 6 · SPORTS AMBASSADORS

Multi-Skills Training

Our Year 5 and Year 6 children took part in a multi-skills training session with **Carron from USSP** and **Mr O'Sullivan**. They learned how to set up and run fun, active games for younger children, including throwing and catching, passing a ball around a circle, dribbling a football around cones and through little gates, and running games with markers. They practised explaining the rules clearly, encouraging everyone to join in and keeping games safe and fair.

Our **Sports Ambassadors** are already putting these skills to great use, leading games for the younger children at playtimes, and they have been a huge success! Thank you to Carron and Mr O'Sullivan, and well done to our brilliant young leaders.





















Ashdon Primary School
Newsletter

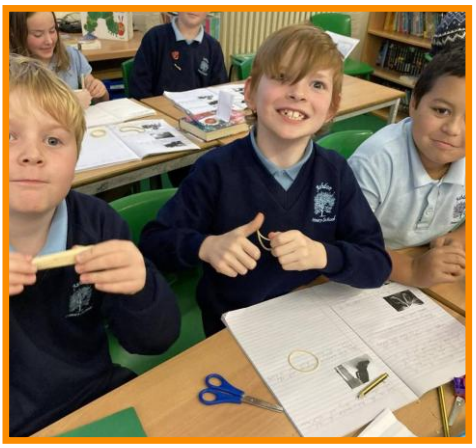
JUPITER CLASS · SCIENCE

Catapult Challenge!

Jupiter Class have been learning about **forces** in science, and in particular about **mechanisms**: levers, pulleys and gears. These clever machines allow a small force to have a much bigger effect. In their books, the children explored mechanisms we use every day, from cranes and escalators to the moving belts at the supermarket checkout.

Then it was time to get hands-on! Working in small groups, the children built their own **catapults** from lolly sticks and elastic bands. A catapult is a type of lever: the arm turns around a pivot, and the stretched elastic band stores energy that springs the arm forward when it is released. Brilliant engineering, Jupiter!









How does a lever work?

Every lever has a **pivot** (the point it turns around), an **effort** (the force you put in) and a **load** (the object being moved).

Key words: *force, mechanism, lever, pulley, gear, pivot*

Try it at home!

Go on a mechanism hunt! How many levers, pulleys and gears can you spot? Look at scissors, a bottle opener, the gears on a bike or the cord on a window blind.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH · HALF-TERM PROJECT

Your Project Challenge!

As part of Black History Month, we would love the children to research a person, event or achievement linked to Black History Month and present their learning in a creative way over half term. **Please bring your project to school by Friday 6 November.**



Ashdon Primary School
Newsletter

GOVERNORS

News from the Governing Body

The governors met on Thursday evening and we wanted to share a few highlights with you.

A brand-new nursery at Ashdon!

Plans have progressed! The governors have confirmed their full support, and plans are now underway with a private provider who is ready to go with a brand-new nursery based at Ashdon Primary School.

The nursery will be an independent setting, registered separately with Ofsted, for children from the age of two until they start school. There are still several steps to complete, including approval from Essex County Council and Ofsted registration, but the aim is to open after the Easter holidays.

Thank you to everyone who completed the survey earlier this term. Your response was overwhelmingly positive and helped us take this step. We will share more details, including how to register interest, soon.

Our new Parent Governor

We are pleased to welcome **Christine Sanderson-Collins** as our new Parent Governor. Christine was the only parent to submit a nomination by the closing date, so she has been elected unopposed and no ballot was needed.

Christine's child joined our Reception class this September. She is committed to every child receiving a high-quality education and feeling supported, included and able to thrive. In her professional life she has extensive experience of governance, risk, regulation and strategic decision-making, which she will bring to the board's work alongside a parent's perspective. Christine will join the governing board for her first meeting on Thursday 10 December.

As a reminder, all questions, concerns and complaints are handled through the school's established procedures rather than through individual governors, so that every family is treated fairly and consistently. Please speak to your child's class teacher in the first instance, or contact the school office.

Governor responsibilities for 2026–27

Each governor now leads on particular areas of school life. They will visit school, talk with staff and pupils, and report back to the full governing board.

- **Karen Hoxby:** Safeguarding and Child Protection; Attendance and Behaviour
- **Maggie Hartley:** SEND and Vulnerable Pupils; Equity and Funding; English, Reading and Phonics; Personal Development and Wellbeing; Early Years
- **Peter Wiles:** Maths
- **Elrine Retief:** Science; Teaching, Learning and Achievement
- **Chair and Vice-Chair:** Leadership and Governance
- **Whole governing board:** Finance and Data Protection; Health, Safety and Medical
- **Wider curriculum:** Shared between governors, who will look at different subjects as and when needed

Governors have also completed their annual declarations and training, and are carrying out a skills audit this half term. Thank you, as always, for your support of Ashdon. **Maggie Hartley**, Chair of Governors · **Marné Reynecke-Raybould**, Headteacher

GOVERNORS

Governor Visits

Our governors regularly visit school to see learning in action, talk with staff and pupils, and report back to the full governing board.

WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER

Phonics with Mrs Hartley

Mrs Hartley, our Chair of Governors, visited to look at phonics teaching across the school, alongside Mrs Reynecke-Raybould. Thank you to **Mrs Allen**, who welcomed us to see her teach Year 2 phonics, and to **Ms Richardson** for letting us see her teach Year 1 phonics. Mrs Hartley was pleasantly surprised by how well our KS1 children knew their sounds, and that they could even name features of spelling, such as split digraphs!

Year 1

I was incredibly impressed that our Year 1 children could read words containing split digraphs, and spell them too, such as made, same and like. They are also becoming more confident with dictation: writing a sentence that was read aloud to them on their whiteboards, using finger spaces, full stops and a capital letter at the start!

Year 2

Our Year 2 children equally impressed us with their knowledge of spelling rules, such as doubling the consonant when adding some suffixes (map → mapping, run → runner). Wow! They also knew some homophones, such as whole and hole, and here and hear. Amazing!

Reception: Mrs Hartley and Mrs Reynecke-Raybould will visit Reception phonics very soon, but Mrs Reynecke-Raybould is already very proud of our Reception children's phonics results, with some scoring **23 out of 23 sounds!**

TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER

Science with Mrs Retief

Mrs Retief, our Vice-Chair of Governors, visited science lessons with our Science Lead, Mrs Reynolds. She saw purposeful questioning in Jupiter and Saturn, and pupils who could recall and explain their learning. She also praised our culture of "hints, not answers", where children are encouraged to think things through for themselves.

Please note: Mr Wiles's maths visit, planned for this week, has been moved to Monday 16 November.

COMING UP AFTER HALF TERM

Fri 6 Nov	**Karen Hoxby:** Safeguarding audit, Single Central Record check, and attendance and behaviour check
Fri 13 Nov	**Maggie Hartley:** History and writing book look
Mon 16 Nov	**Peter Wiles:** Maths lessons and pupil book study
Date to be confirmed	**Maggie Hartley:** Early years indoor and outdoor provision and environment
Date to be confirmed	**Maggie Hartley:** Inclusion learning walk and audit with our SENCo
Date to be confirmed	**Elrine Retief:** Achievement, following assessment week

House Points

Elm	Oak	Ash (WINNERS)
123	145	174

Well done to Ash, this week's winners!



✨ Bonfire Lunch ✨

A special lunch to celebrate Bonfire Night!

On the menu:

- 🔥 Hot bacon baps
- 🧀 or cheese baps
- 🍎 Chocolate apples with sprinkles for dessert

Mrs Henry, our wonderful cook, cannot wait to spoil the children with her Bonfire Lunch!

Thursday 5th November!

Ashdon Primary School

Newsletter

AUTUMN TERM 2

Coming Up This Term

Lots of exciting events are coming up after half term! Here is what each one is about, and what your child will need.

FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER

Children in Need

Come to school dressed as **Pudsey Bear**, or wearing something **spotty** or **yellow**. Please bring a donation for BBC Children in Need.



FRIDAY 4 DECEMBER

Christmas Jumper Day

Children and staff wear their **Christmas jumpers** all day! No school uniform is needed: just a Christmas jumper and comfortable clothes.



DATE TO FOLLOW

Santa Run

A festive **Santa Run** around the field! Children run, jog or walk a fun lap. Please send your child in **wellies**. More details soon.



FRIDAY 11 DECEMBER, 10:00

Carol Service

Our Christmas Carol Service at **All Saints Church**. All our **Year 6** children will be doing readings from the Bible. Families are welcome to join us.



FRIDAY 11 DECEMBER, 15:00–17:00

Christmas Fair

Join us after school for festive stalls, games and activities for all the family. Bring family, friends and some **spending money**!



FRIDAY 18 DECEMBER, 10:00 & 14:00

Nativity

Our **Nativity** performances, with a morning and an afternoon show so that as many families as possible can come. It is also the **last day of term**.



Look out for reminders on Arbor before each event!

Ashdon Primary School

Newsletter

Attendance Winners!

Every Day Counts!

At Ashdon Primary, we know that being in school every day makes a real difference. Good attendance helps children keep up with their learning, build strong friendships and feel happy and settled in class. Missed days add up quickly: a child with 90% attendance misses around half a day every week, which is almost four weeks of school across the year.

As a school, we always aim for whole-school attendance of 97% and above, and we can only achieve this with your support.

To celebrate great attendance, the class with the highest attendance each week wins an extra 10 minutes of playtime on Friday! The winners are announced in our Friday Celebration Assembly and shared in the newsletter.

Thank you for helping your child to be in school, on time, every day.

WINNERS Saturn Class	96.00%
RUNNERS-UP Mars Class	95.90%
THIRD PLACE Jupiter Class	93.90%
OUR TARGET 97% and above	

Important Dates, Events and Reminders

Every Thursday	Piano lessons for KS2 children (in the hall)
Mon 2 Nov	First day of Autumn Term 2
Mon 2 – Wed 11 Nov	Poppy Appeal
Fri 6 Nov	Black History Month projects due · Bikeability (selected children only; an email will follow)
Wed 11 Nov, 11:00	Two-minute silence at the war memorial for Remembrance. All parents are welcome to join us.
Wed 11 Nov, 18:00–19:00	Open Evening for prospective parents. Please spread the word!
Fri 20 Nov	Children in Need: dress as Pudsey, or wear spots or yellow
Mon 30 Nov – Fri 4 Dec	Assessment Week
Wed 2 Dec, 09:30–14:30	Bikeability (selected children only)
Fri 4 Dec	Christmas Jumper Day
Fri 11 Dec	10:00 Carol Service at All Saints Church · 15:00–17:00 Christmas Fair
Fri 18 Dec	Nativity performances at 10:00 and 14:00 · Last day of Autumn Term 2

Parking: please read

Please do not park in front of the cottages when dropping off or collecting your child. We have received numerous complaints from our neighbours, so please park considerately and respect residents' homes and driveways. Thank you.



Arbor

Use the Arbor app or website to:

- ✓ Pay for trips, clubs and school lunches
- ✓ View your child's attendance
- ✓ Receive messages from school

🔔 **Top tip**

Turn on push notifications so you never miss a message.