

The John Hampden School Newsletter

Issue Three Friday October 2nd 2026

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At the start of the new school year, it is especially important that our children feel settled in their new classes and begin to build strong relationships with their teachers and teaching assistants. In these first few weeks, we have focused on embedding our school values and behaviour expectations. We take a positive approach to behaviour management, highlighting what children should do and celebrating success in a variety of ways. Each class has a 'Recognition Board' to showcase impressive behaviour and learning, and children are often sent to share their achievements with me, receiving a special Head Teacher sticker. Our weekly 'Over & Above' assembly further celebrates exceptional effort, with certificates and stickers, while the silver cup for 'Class of the Week' adds to the excitement. So far Badgers and Squirrels have received the Class Of The Week Cup – I will let your children tell you who was awarded 'The Class of The Week' today!

Both of last week's Harvest Festivals were very special – a time to be thankful for the food we have and to think of those less fortunate. Thank you for your generous donations; the Women's Refuge were truly grateful. The Foundation Stage wowed us with three poems and three songs, including a much-loved reprise of Big Red Combine Harvester! Year 1 and Year 2 performed eight songs beautifully, with each class showcasing their own. It was wonderful to see our school values shining through, including belonging as the children felt a very important part of The John Hampden School, collaboration perseverance to learn the songs in such a short space of time. A big thank you to Mrs Mannering for teaching the songs so expertly.

We are looking forward to our upcoming Parent's Evenings where we can provide you with feedback about how your child is settling in to their new class. Please remember that your appointment only lasts for 10 minutes. If it appears that you require more time, a new meeting will need to be arranged as others are delayed if your appointment overruns. If, following your meeting, you would like to speak to me about any matter we can arrange a mutually convenient time to speak. Thank you for your continued support.

Steph Parkinson - Headteacher



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Our School Development Plan is closely aligned with Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework ensuring that priorities directly address Ofsted's key judgement areas. Together, these priorities ensure that the school continues to provide a broad, ambitious and inclusive education that enables all pupils to thrive. The objectives link to the Ofsted Inspection Framework:

Curriculum and Teaching — covering targets linked to curriculum intent, implementation, and impact

Attendance and Behaviour — behaviour, attitudes to learning, attendance, and punctuality

Personal Development and Wellbeing — pupil voice, equalities and diversity, PSHE, extra-curricular activities, and support for learning

Leadership & Governance — collaboration arrangements, deficit recovery, professional development for staff, safeguarding, and managing workload

The annual school development plan 2026-2027 is available on the school website and each fortnight you will receive an update on our progress towards meeting the targets in the plan in this newsletter.





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Curriculum

Wendover Music

Last Monday, our school was delighted to welcome Wendover Music for a special visit. The musicians captivated the children with their performances, introducing them to a range of instruments and styles in an engaging and interactive way. The children were enthralled throughout and clapping along. It was a wonderful opportunity for them to experience live music up close, sparking excitement and curiosity. The visit left the children inspired and full of enthusiasm, with many talking about their favourite moments long after the performance had ended.

Thank you to The Lionel Abel Smith Trust for funding this event.





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Exciting News!

We have very exciting news to share. During the Summer Term, we embarked on a wonderful new project that we are incredibly excited to see taking shape. For many years, we had an area of our grounds that had become very overgrown and was largely unused. We saw an opportunity to transform this neglected space into something truly special - a dedicated nature area where our children could explore, discover, learn and develop a deeper appreciation for the natural world around them.

Of course, before we could begin creating our nature area, there was quite a lot of work to be done! The first task was to clear the space and uncover its potential. This was no small job, and Mr Richardson certainly had his work cut out for him as he tackled the overgrown vegetation and began bringing the area back to life.

Once the initial clearing was underway, there was another challenge to contend with - the leaves! Years of fallen leaves had built up across the area, creating an enormous task. Slowly but surely, the space began to emerge, and we could finally start to see what this special area could become. What was once an overgrown and forgotten corner of our grounds was now being transformed into a wonderful outdoor learning space.





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A Helping Hand From HS2!

We were incredibly fortunate to have some extra help along the way when we enlisted the support of HS2.

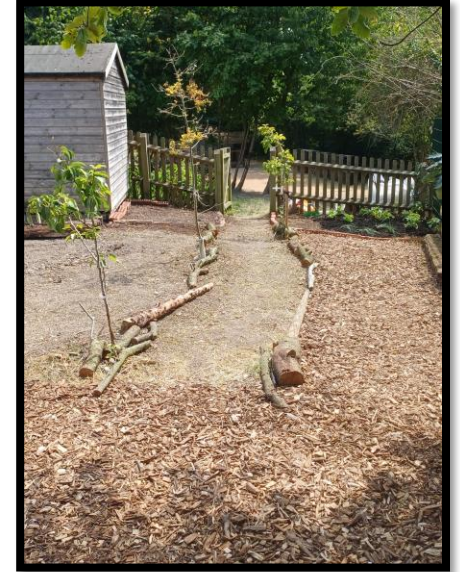
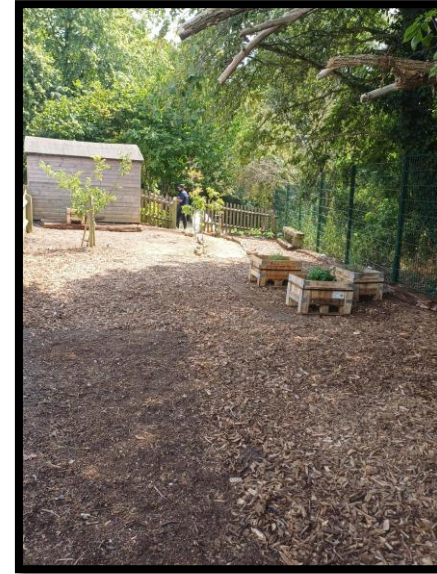
A wonderful team of volunteers generously gave up two days of their time to help us bring our nature area to life. There was certainly no shortage of hard work! The team spent their time raking, shovelling and clearing the area further, before spreading bark chippings to help create a more inviting and accessible space for the children to explore.

Their creativity and enthusiasm didn't stop there. Using wooden pallets, they constructed a fantastic composter, giving us the perfect opportunity to teach the children about composting, recycling and how we can make good use of natural materials.

The volunteers also collected branches from around the grounds, which were used to create a natural pathway through the area. This will provide the children with an exciting route to explore as they discover the different plants, wildlife and features within our new nature space.

Adding even more colour and life to the area, the team planted a selection of herbs in planters that they had kindly donated. These will give the children the opportunity to see, smell and eventually even use a variety of herbs as they learn more about growing plants and caring for them.

We were extremely grateful for all the time, hard work and enthusiasm that the HS2 volunteers brought to our project. Their support has made such a difference and has helped us to transform what was once an overgrown space into a wonderful environment for our children to enjoy, explore and learn from.





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The Final Stage!

There was still a substantial area to complete before our nature project could truly be finished, and we were incredibly fortunate to receive a very generous donation from a family, which enabled us to bring our plans to completion.

With this support, Jack and Max from Oxfordshire Fencing were able to carry out the final stage of the transformation. They worked incredibly hard, digging out the remaining overgrown area and covering it with bark chippings, creating a safe, natural and inviting space for the children to explore.

We also secured a giant cable reel firmly into the ground, creating a fantastic natural seating area where the children can sit, chat, investigate their surroundings or simply enjoy spending time outdoors. It was wonderful to see the space really beginning to take shape and become the special outdoor area we had imagined.

With the main work complete, it was time to add the resources that would make the area even more exciting for our children. We purchased a mud kitchen, along with buckets, wheelbarrows, spades and rakes, providing endless opportunities for imaginative play, exploration and hands-on learning. We also added bird feeders and drinkers to encourage our children to observe and learn about the birds and wildlife that visit our grounds.

For the final finishing touches, we asked our families to help us collect natural treasures such as conkers, fir cones and sticks. You certainly rose to the challenge and collected them in abundance! These wonderful natural materials will be perfect for the children to use in their play, investigations and creative activities.





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The Grand Opening!

On Wednesday, we were absolutely delighted to welcome Chris Armstrong-Stacey, Director of Education for Early Years at the Department for Education, to our school.

As part of his visit, Chris had the very special job of officially opening our brand-new nature area! It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate all the hard work, generosity and teamwork that has gone into transforming this once-overgrown space into a fantastic outdoor learning environment for our children.

The excitement continued as our Crickets children became the very first children to explore and use the new area. They had a wonderful time investigating the space, discovering all the different features and getting stuck into some exciting outdoor play. The nature area will now become a regular part of their week, providing them with opportunities to explore, create, investigate and learn from the natural world around them.

We are incredibly proud of what has been achieved and so excited to see how all of the children at The John Hampden will use the space and make it their own. We hope it will become a much-loved part of our school for many years to come.

But there is just one thing missing...Our nature area needs a name! 🌱 This is where we need your help. We would love our children and families to put their thinking caps on and come up with a special and memorable name for our new nature area. So, what should we call it? We can't wait to hear your ideas! Please email the office or send suggestions via your class teacher. 🌱





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A Very Special Visit!



During his visit, Chris also had the opportunity to spend time getting to know our school and seeing all the wonderful things that happen here each day.

Chris alongside Martyn Dolbear, our Chair of Governors, visited classrooms, where they were able to see our children engaged in their learning, and attended an assembly, giving them a real insight into the welcoming community that makes our school so special. They also had the chance to meet and speak with children and staff along the way.



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A Very Special Visit!

One of the highlights of the afternoon was seeing our children confidently interview Chris. Their thoughtful questions, curiosity and enthusiasm were a wonderful reflection of the children at The John Hampden School. They asked:

- What did you 'love to learn' when you were at school?
- Did you have a favourite teacher at school? What made then so special?
- What did you want to be when you were our age?
- What does the best start in life mean to you?
- What is the favourite part of your job?
- At The John Hampden School we love reading. What was your favourite book when you were our age?
- Last year, Year 2 wrote to Mr Dolbear to say we didn't have enough to play with at playtime and now we have new equipment including an obstacle course. Do you have a favourite game?
- We made a 'Loving To Learn' cake in assembly today. What is your favourite cake?
- You have visited different schools. What is something you have seen that has really impressed or inspired you?



It was a very special afternoon, and I felt incredibly proud to have the opportunity to show Chris our school, introduce him to our wonderful children and staff, and share just some of the many things that make The John Hampden School such a special place to be.

Thank you to Mr Dolbear for arranging such a special afternoon.



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Governor Section

Last week, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to watch the KSI Harvest Festival, and what a brilliant morning it was!

It was wonderful to see all of the children take to the stage with such enthusiasm and confidence. They demonstrated the school's values perfectly, supporting one another and clearly taking great pride in their performances. As a parent governor, it was particularly lovely to see how much the children have grown in confidence since last year. Seeing their proud faces as they performed was a real highlight and a wonderful reminder of just how much they achieve.

There were plenty of songs to remember, but the song (and accompanying actions!) about the different types of beans was a particular favourite. It certainly brought a smile to everyone's faces and was a great example of the fun and creativity the children bring to their learning.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the hard work, enthusiasm and dedication of the school staff. A huge thank you to everyone involved in preparing the children and making the morning such a success, and especially to Mrs Mannering for all her hard work.

Well done to all of the children - you should be incredibly proud of yourselves. I can't wait to see what the Christmas nativities will hold!

Emma Ramell
Parent Governor





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The Friends Of The John Hampden

The Friends of John Hampden work incredibly hard to raise an amazing amount of money for the school, helping to provide extra resources, activities and experiences that benefit all the children. Their fundraising and support make a fantastic difference to school life.





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Diary Dates – Autumn Term

- 13th October – Parents evening**
- 14th October – Parents evening**
- 15th October – Parents evening**
- 19th October – Growth mindset week**
- 20th October – 9.15 am Open Morning for prospective EYFS (Nursery and FS) parents**
- 2nd November – School opens after half-term**
- 12th November – Open Morning for prospective EYFS (Nursery and FS) parents**
- 25th November – Open Morning for prospective EYFS (Nursery and FS) parents**
- 1st December - FS dress rehearsal**
- 2nd December – 9.30 am FS Nativity**
- 3rd December - 9.30 am FS Nativity**
- 4th December – INSET day**
- 8th December – 9.30 am EY Nativity**
- 14th December – Dress Rehearsal Christmas Performances Year 1 9.30am Year 2 11.00am**
- 15th December - Christmas Performances Year 2 9.30am Year 1 2.00pm**
- 16th December - Christmas Performances Year 1 9.30am Year 2 2.00pm**
- 18th December – Christmas Parties and finish school at 1.00pm**

