

Houghton School Newsletter



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Dear Families

The photo above was shared with me when we had the Grand Opening of our 'Circle of Life Garden' in early November, and the villager who showed it me, said it was taken in 1923. There have been lots of changes in school life since then, but I reflected on how wonderful it was, that 100 years later, at Houghton, some things have stayed the same. Considering the space in the front of our school is minimal, how lucky are we to have a huge field, ballcourt, playground, forest school, trim trail, daily mile track, outdoor classroom and now a fenced off eco-garden, tucked behind our school!

Being outside and taking part in physical activity are just as important as the academic subjects as they support our wellbeing in so many ways. Improved mood, physical and mental health, better sleep, and social interaction are just some of the benefits of being outside. We are lucky that our school has the space to promote this, but we also have staff who are advocates for physical exercise and give up their time to take children to sporting events after school, such as Mrs Bradley and Mrs Davis. We have had such a lot of successes this term, some of which are mentioned further on in our newsletter.

The weather may be getting colder, but our outdoor provision will continue. Mrs Davis regularly says, 'There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing.' This not only applies to Forest School, but playtimes and PE so please make sure children have the appropriate clothing and shoes for all weathers this term.

Best wishes
Ali Woollerson



CONGRATULATIONS

As well as impressive Cross-Country results , our athletes and footballers have been successful too. Mrs Bradley has been so proud of them all, not just because of their teamwork and enthusiasm, but because of the smiles on their faces. Some successes....

Year 5 and 6 girls (+ 1 boy) attended the Beauchamp Indoor Athletics competition.

Boys Oadby And Wigston Football league.

Two wins, St Lukes (7 -4) Launde (8-4)

Boys County (small schools) football competition. Progressed to county finals.

Girls County Final (small school)football competition – runners up. Played 5, won 2, drew 3.

Well done, for representing Houghton and making us proud of you all.

Thank you for the **Hamper donations** for the **Christmas raffle**. Class teachers should have sent you information about this already. Please can we have donations by the end of November, in time for our Christmas performances.

Raffle tickets have also been sent home so please check book bags. Let us know if you would like any more.

The raffle raises so much money for school so thank you for your support with this.

FS- white
Yr 1- Red
Yr 2- Green
Yr3- Blue
Yr 4 - Purple
Yr 5- Gold
Yr 6- Silver

PHOTO CONSENTS

As part of our ongoing commitment to online safety and the safeguarding of all children, all Learn-At schools are streamlining the consents for photography and videos and are renewing the information that we currently hold. We have asked all parents/carers to take a few moments to complete the following form.

[Learn-AT Schools Photographic Consents](#)

Please note that if you are **not** consenting to photo and video images of your child being used for trust and school media purposes, **this also includes photos for Class Dojo, the newsletter, displays in school, performances, trips and residential.**

We know that this might disappoint some parents as it is either a yes or no to photos, but this is due to the fact that

- 1) We have to streamline this due to the number of ways we use photos
- 2) Photos taken for ClassDojo, for example, could be screenshot and shared.

We would never use names in photos.

Previously, we have also shared that parents and visitors cannot take photos during performances too as not all children have had photos permissions, so please remember this during the Christmas performances and let other family members know if they are coming to one of the events. We will allow for photos to be taken at the end of the performance when we can remove children from photos if they do not have consent. Thank you for your support with this.



The Circle of Life Garden

On the 8th November, we had the official opening of the “Circle of Life” garden, and we welcomed special guests to mark this significant occasion. Some families also popped in at the end of the day to see the transformation.

The opening event marks the first phase of this project. Francesca and the school's Eco Team were joined by Deputy Lord Lieutenant Richard Clowes, Councillor Simon Galton, representatives from the Houghton School Helpers, a small group of pupils, parents, and villagers. There are exciting plans for the garden's future, and any additional donations would be greatly appreciated. If you have resources to contribute or are a business interested in supporting this initiative, please get in touch at office@hhs.learnat.uk

Classes have already started visiting the area, exploring every corner of the space, noticing nine bug hotels, the green man and lady, a fairy door and ceramic owl, as well as sitting on the logs in the contemplation area and enjoying being outdoors.

Thank you for all the daffodil bulbs. We can't wait for spring! Every child has planted some as there were enough to share around.



Gathering sticks for the Bug Hotels



Eco-committee get the grand tour



Planting daffodil bulbs for springtime

SPOTLIGHT ON READING AND PHONICS - Mrs Pickford



In EYFS and KS1 children are taught to read through daily lessons in synthetic, systematic phonics. We follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds phonics programme to ensure high-quality systematic, synthetic phonics provision in FS, KS1 and Year 3. Further details on the teaching of phonics can be found on our web-site here: [Houghton-on-the-Hill Primary School - Phonics](#)

- As we move into Year 2 and beyond, we have an increasing emphasis on reading fluently and with expression as all of the research suggests that this is vital if we are to understand and enjoy what we read. At Houghton, we have introduced a reading spine which is regularly reviewed and has been designed to ensure that children make excellent progress in all aspects of reading. Our new website has extra details on how reading is taught at our school.
- Reading for pleasure is a huge focus for us as a school and, as a staff, we regularly receive training on how to encourage children to read for pleasure. Throughout the year, children will be exposed to a diverse range of texts and have opportunities to discuss them. I am a member of the Open University's Teachers' Reading for Pleasure group, and we will be continuing to introduce lots of initiatives to encourage the love of reading.

I am often asked what parents can do to help their child read. Reading helps your child's wellbeing, develops imagination and has educational benefits too. Just a few minutes a day can have a big impact on children of all ages.

Top tips:

1. Read aloud regularly

Try to read to your child every day. It's a special time to snuggle up and enjoy a story. Stories matter and children love re-reading them and poring over the pictures. Try adding funny voices to bring characters to life.

2. Encourage reading choice

Give children lots of opportunities to read different things in their own time - it doesn't just have to be books. There's fiction, non-fiction, poetry, comics, magazines, recipes and much more. Try leaving interesting reading material in different places around the home and see who picks it up.

3. Talk about books

This is a great way to make connections, develop understanding and make reading even more enjoyable. Start by discussing the front cover and talking about what it reveals and suggests the book could be about. Then talk about what you've been reading and share ideas. You could discuss something that happened that surprised you, or something new that you found out. You could talk about how the book makes you feel and whether it reminds you of anything.

Above all, reading should be enjoyable. If it is becoming an issue, please speak to us.

Happy Reading!



Learn-AT
Learning - Fellowship

TERM DATES 25-26

The new term dates for **25-26** are being added to the website this week. All Learn-At school have the same dates.

Children will start back to school on **Tuesday 26th August 2025** so please make sure you have not booked any holidays for then, as the first few days in class are so important and help pupils to embed routines.

One of the main changes is that the October half term break is a couple of days longer (**Monday 20th October to Tuesday 28th October**, returning to school on the Wednesday). Again, please do not book holidays at the end of the previous week- we regularly have children not in on the Friday. **All holidays requested in term –time will not be authorised unless in exceptional circumstances.**

General Dates for the Diary

Friday 29th Nov

Chocolate Donations
Crazy hair or Face Paint Day
Please note: no hair dye, please

Friday 6th Dec

Christmas Tree Festival 5-7pm

Tuesday 17th Dec

Trip to the panto!
Please remember to complete the online form

Friday 20th Dec

Last day of term

Monday 6th January

Back to school

Christmas Plans

Foundation Stage Nativity

Tuesday 3rd December 2.15pm
Wednesday 4th December 9.15am

KS1 Performance

Tuesday 10th December 9.15am
Wednesday 11th 2 pm

KS2 Service

Friday 13th December 9.15
Friday 13th December 2pm

Tickets only

Due to fire safety requirements and limited space, we will be allocating tickets for all the Christmas Performances. There will be an opportunity for at least 2 family members to attend one performance/service so hopefully nobody will be disappointed.

- **Foundation will have 4 tickets altogether, 2 for the Tuesday and 2 for the Wednesday (in school)**
- **KS1 will have 4 altogether, 2 for the Tuesday and 2 for the Wednesday**
- **KS2 will have 2 altogether, 1 for the morning and one for the afternoon, on the Friday.**

You are more than welcome to swap them with other parents in the class. You will receive a separate ticket letter, with further details.

Local Governance in Learn-AT



We are extremely lucky to have an experienced Local Governing Board who support our school vision and direction, nurture the school ethos and identify and hold school leaders to account. They know our school and staff so well, with several past and present governors also volunteering their time to come to school each week to support individual pupils with reading, for example.

After many years filling the Chair and Vice Chair of the school's Local Governing Body, Mark Newman and Roger Bettles have retired from office though both remain as Governors. They have said how rewarding they found accepting responsibility in this way and, 'how privileged they have felt working with such a great school, both in its staff and its children.'

I would like to personally thank them both for their service. I cannot express in a few sentences how much I have felt supported in my role as a new(ish!) headteacher, and they have been a 'listening ear' on several occasions. I was so relieved when they agreed to continue their roles for a short period when we transferred to Learn-At and when Jan Knox retired, and delighted that they are remaining on the governing board. The school has seen many changes since they first took up the roles such as changes to admissions and a transfer to a new trust and I know how much the previous headteacher, Jan Knox, also valued their support and guidance.

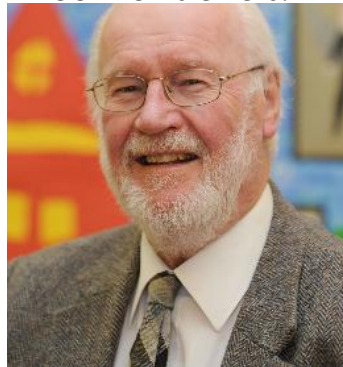
The Local Governing Board now has new leadership and structure, in light of recent changes in school leadership and joining the multi-academy trust, LearnAT.

The chair of governor's role is now being shared between two co-chairs: Pat Ford and Harriet Hurdley Lees. Governors are now undertaking link lead roles, in order to work with senior teaching staff to review the school improvement programmes and learning. These link leads roles include; Safeguarding, Health and Safety, SEND, Pupil Premium, and Finance. A key part of school governor's work is visiting the school to speak to children, staff and parents to understand their experiences, the schools' strengths and any areas for improvement.

We are in the process of updating our governor page on the website but will continue to share updates in our newsletters.



Mark Newman



Roger Bettles

Have you checked out
our new website yet?

<https://www.houghton.leics.sch.uk/>