Houghton School Newsletter

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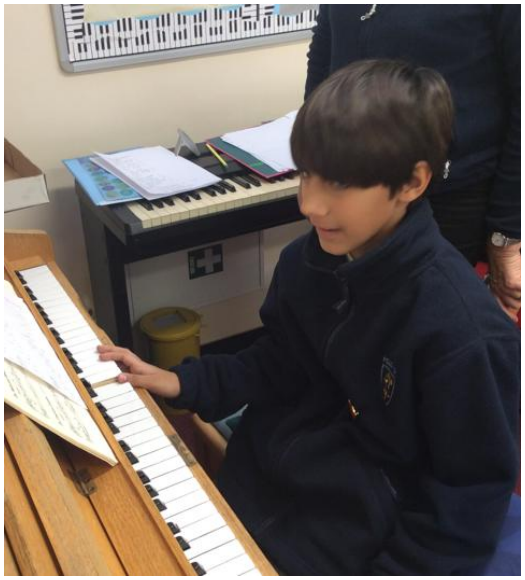


Happy New Year to all our Houghton families!

Christmas traditions vary from family to family—not just because of faith, but because of the unique customs that make each household special. Whatever your celebrations looked like, I hope they were filled with laughter, love, and plenty of time to recharge.

The New Year is a wonderful moment to pause and reflect. As I planned our first Collective Worship of 2026, I found myself thinking about all the things I'm grateful for. Our staff are, as always, deeply appreciative of the cards and gifts they received. But what truly touched our hearts this year were the words written inside those cards—messages from children, parents, and colleagues expressing support for our school and the team at Houghton.

It's easy to focus on the bumps in the road, but those unexpected messages—whether through Dojo, on a label, in a card, or shared during drop off or pick up —remind us how much we are valued and supported by our Houghton families. Thank you for that encouragement; it means more than you know.

The winter months may bring shorter days and frosty mornings, but inside our school we'll keep things bright and welcoming—filled with learning, laughter, and the warmth of friendship. Together, we'll create special memories and live out our values to make 2026 a truly wonderful year.

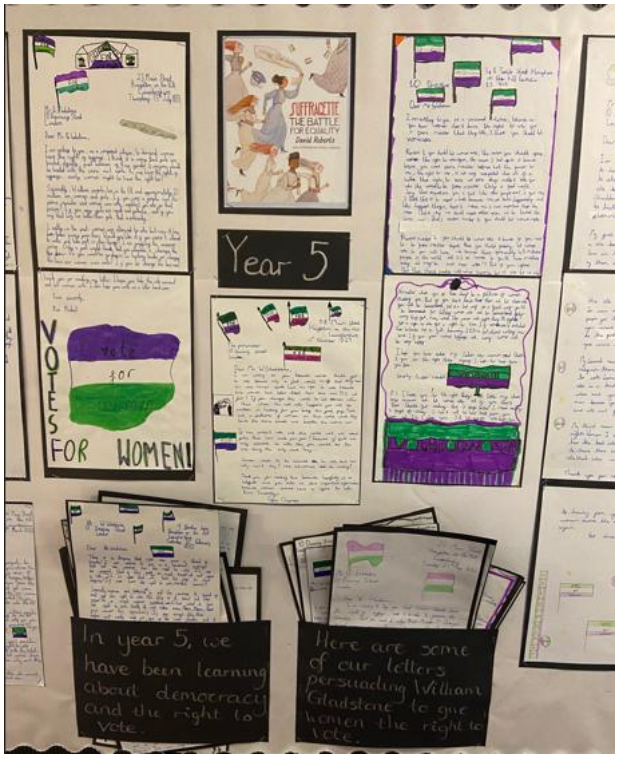
Warm regards.
Ali Woollerson
Headteacher

Learn-AT
Learning ~ Fellowship

SEVERE WEATHER REMINDER

We managed to have an autumn term without snow but the forecast for the coming week is looking as if we will be having frosty mornings and possibly snow.

If we experience snowy weather, please check Class Dojo regularly for updates. The safety of children and staff is always our top priority, and we also need to ensure we have enough adults in school to operate safely. Closing the school will always be a last resort. Sometimes, instead of closing, we may delay opening by an hour or so. Often, the first part of the morning is the most dangerous for travel, but a few hours later, the roads are much clearer. We will of course keep you updated but please check dojo before phoning the office.



REMEMBER our Food Bank is in school all year round, not just at Christmas and Harvest time!

KEEPING WARM

As we head into the colder months, remember the saying: "There's no such thing as bad weather, only the wrong clothing." With the right layers, children can enjoy fresh air and outdoor play, even on chilly days. Please make sure your child comes to school with a warm coat, hat, and gloves so they can make the most of break times and outdoor learning. Please remember to label all clothes- you will not be surprised to hear that our Lost Property boxes are usually overflowing with hats, scarfs and gloves which can't be returned to their owners as they are not named.

We are also happy for children to come to school in wellingtons especially if snow is forecast but please put normal school shoes in a bag so that your child can change into these when inside. We do have a policy for no boots, but these are acceptable if they are flat soled, ankle height only (not calf or knee boots), black, no logos or decorations and easy to slip on and off.

It is also a good idea to put in an extra pair of socks or tights into your child's bag- just in case these are needed!

Attendance Matters

No newsletter would be complete without a reminder about attendance. As you know, attendance is monitored both internally and externally, and OFSTED now includes a dedicated section on it in their latest framework.
Last term, I analysed our attendance data and contacted some families where attendance was a concern for reasons other than illness. The spring term often brings requests for holidays—sometimes skiing—but please remember these will be recorded as **unauthorised absences**. If this results in more than **10 sessions (5 full days)** of missed school, a penalty notice may be issued by the Local Authority.

Reassuringly, our overall attendance remains slightly above the national average. However, if you are considering taking your child out of school for a holiday, please think about the impact on their learning. It's not just about percentages on a spreadsheet—it's about the gaps in knowledge that missed lessons can create and the effect this has on both the pupil and the teacher.

Punctuality Matters Too

More worryingly, we have seen an increase in the number of **Lates**, and we will be monitoring this more closely this term and communicating with parents if this continues. Analysis shows that **74 children** had at least one late mark recorded in the autumn term (arriving after 8:45am). We completely understand that things happen—transport issues, forgotten book bags, or alarms not going off. Most late marks are one-offs or only a few minutes late, but some pupils are regularly late. For example, **8 pupils** recorded between **10 and 20 late marks** last term. Arriving on time sets the tone for a successful day of learning. When children are late, they miss important parts of the morning routine—such as registration, instructions, and the start of lessons—which can make it harder to settle and catch up. Even being **5–10 minutes late each day adds up to hours of lost learning over a term**, creating gaps in understanding and affecting progress in key subjects.

Please Help Us by Making Punctuality a Priority

•**School starts promptly at 8:45am**, when the register officially opens.
•If arrival is **less than 30 minutes after the register opens**, it will be recorded as **Late (L code)**.
•Pupils arriving **30 minutes or more after the register opens** will be marked as having an **unauthorised absence for the morning session**.
•Aim to arrive a few minutes early so your child is ready to learn.
•If lateness becomes frequent, it may be recorded as an unauthorised absence after the register closes, which can contribute to penalty notices.

Thank you for your continued support in giving your child the best start to each school day. If you require help with this, please speak to me—we know that some pupils need adaptations, and these are already in place for some children to ensure a positive start to the day. We also understand that severe weather, such as snow, can impact travel time, and safety must always come first.

Dates for the Diary

Remember to check our school website for term dates
Houghton-on-the-Hill Primary School - Term Dates

Class Assemblies 2026

Year 2: Friday 13th February
Year 4: Friday 6th March
Year 1: Friday 20th March
Year 5: Friday 24th April
Year 3: Friday 8th May

15th January 2026- deadline for new starters

If your child has a sibling that is due to start school in Autumn 26, please remember that the deadline for applying is 15th January 2026. Don't delay!

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our Autumn Fair and Raffle—whether through your time, ideas, or generous spending. We are delighted to announce that we raised an amazing total of £2,000!

Monday 5th January
Return to school

Thursday 8th January
9.30-10.30
Open Morning for new starters 26-27

wc 12th January
Parent meetings for children who have IEPs (Individual Education Plan).
Teachers will contact parents directly if this applies to your child.

Tuesday 27th January
School Nurse: Weights and measures for Foundation and Year 6

Monday 9th February
Year 5 trip to the Space Centre

Monday 16th- Friday 20th February
Half term Holiday

Monday 23rd February
10-11am
Parent Forum for the PINSs project
All families welcome
Have a say in improving support for children with additional needs.

Monday 2nd and Wednesday 4th March
3.30pm -6.30pm
Parent meetings

Wednesday 4th March
Class Photos

wc 9th March
Bikeability week for Year 5 pupils

Thursday 26th March
2pm
Easter Service

Easter Holidays
Monday 30th March- Friday 10th April