

news

February 2017

FREE BOOKS!



Last week our Reception children received their free book from BookTrust.

Lots of happy faces. Happy reading everyone.

 **BookTrust**
Inspire a love of reading

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YEAR 2 TUDOR DAY

Year 2 had great fun during their Tudor day. They got to experience the life of as a Tudor by dressing up and even watching their teachers transform into Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn.

They certainly enjoyed learning about the weird and gruesome facts about the Tudors. They even got to make their own bow and arrows after holding real artifacts from the era.

The feedback from the children shows how much fun they had, but most of them are glad they don't have to live in those times. They are lucky to avoid getting the cane at school!



Our little Tudors

SCIENCE WORKSHOP

Mrs Barnard was very well supported by families at the latest Science challenge.

Thank you all so much for attending. I can't tell you how excited the children get whenever they have the opportunity to take part in these events with you, their parents. They love to tell me that you are coming in!

I also want to say a big thank you to Mrs Barnard for organising this event for families- another excellent example of the lengths our teachers go to in order to enhance the curriculum!



SCHOOL CROSSING PATROL

URGENTLY REQUIRED

We are urgently seeking to recruit a School Crossing Patrol for Oakleaf Drive.

We are looking for candidates over 18 years of age, either a single applicant or 2 applicants on a job-share basis. Training and equipment will be provided by East Sussex County Council, in order for you to help local children cross the road safely. Working hours are from 08:30 to 09:00 in the mornings and from 15:10 to 15:40 in the afternoons from Monday to Friday during term-time. The pay is £7.58 per hour.

There must be someone in the local community that is able to help with this very important task, parents, grandparents, other family members or friends etc.



CAN YOU HELP?

If you are interested, or know of anyone who would be suitable for this position, please contact Gillian Todd (Area Supervisor) on 07803 899215, or Darren Dowd (Senior Supervisor) on 01273 482293.



PARKING ISSUES AROUND THE SCHOOL

We are all concerned about the parking and traffic around and outside the school currently. I wanted to make you aware that we have two school governors that are also town councillors: Martin Faulkner and Angela Snell.

Martin has been working tirelessly behind the scenes as a member of the parking committee and with the Mayor has been investigating ways to solve this. Angela has contacted the Police and Crime Commissioner and also had the road safety officer out to see if anything can be done regarding road signage and speed limits.

Both are incredibly supportive of the school and I wanted to let you know just how hard they are working on our behalf.

Our school council is currently working on a project to promote awareness of parking around the school. Watch out for them in their 'high vis' vests coming soon to Oakleaf Drive!

CHARITY CAKE SALE

I could not be prouder of the children at Polegate. A group of pupils approached me to ask if they could raise some money for Crisis.

This was not prompted by school or teachers. I listened to what they had to say and they were sent away to come up with a proposal and a letter explaining what they wanted to do. That is exactly what they did!

Using their own initiative to come up with an ambitious plan which has allowed them to show their independence, teamwork and compassion towards others. I am so proud.

Crisis is the national charity for homeless people. They are dedicated to ending homelessness by delivering life-changing services and campaigning for change.



DID YOU KNOW?

Homeless people are 13 times more likely to be a victim of violence.

7581 people slept rough on the street of London last year

As of November 2014, schools must now promote British values. It is a little bizarre in my opinion because I don't consider these to be only 'British values', they are simply about being a good citizen and apply to all nationalities equally.

According to Ofsted, 'fundamental British values' are:

- democracy
- the rule of law
- individual liberty

mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith.

Through this one event these pupils have shown an excellent understanding of these values.

To promote British values schools should and as you will see they achieved all of these:

- develop pupils self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence.
- encourage students to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality of the school and to society more widely.

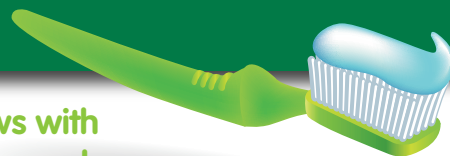
- encourage respect for other people, and
- encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

The cakes were absolutely delicious! I've suggested they do this every week!

I know that parents were all very busy supporting behind the scenes and so I want to say a huge thank you to you for supporting your children's endeavours!

They raised a total of £109.57 which is brilliant and over their target of £100!

DENTAL HEALTH



Over recent weeks dental care has been a feature of the news with reports stating that too many children need to have teeth removed. Here are the key oral health messages from the British Dental Association:

Children aged up to 3 years

- Brushing should start as soon as the first primary tooth erupts
- Ensure that children brush their teeth twice a day with an appropriate level of fluoride (toothpaste containing no less than 1,000ppm fluoride)
- It is good practice to use only a smear of toothpaste (a thin film of paste covering less than three-quarters of the brush) and children must not be permitted to eat or lick toothpaste from the tube
- Parents/carers should brush or supervise tooth brushing – best to stand behind child if doing the brushing

Children aged 3 to 6 years

- Ensure that children brush their teeth twice a day with an appropriate level of fluoride (toothpaste containing more than 1,000 ppm fluoride)
- It is good practice to use only a pea size amount
- Brushing should be supervised by a parent/carer

General messages

- Thorough cleaning should take about two minutes. Can use an egg timer to make it fun.
- Brushing should occur twice daily as a minimum - clean teeth last thing at night before bed and at least one other time each day
- Children need to be helped or supervised by an adult when brushing until at least seven years of age (or until the child has enough manual dexterity to write their name in joined up writing)
- Spit out after brushing and do not rinse, to maintain fluoride concentration levels
- Brushing is more effective with a small-headed toothbrush with medium-texture bristles
- Ensure that you register with (and see) a dentist
- You can find your local dentist here <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/dentists/Pages/find-an-NHS-dentist.aspx> or by calling NHS 111 (they can tell you which nearby dentists are taking new patients)
- Support for individual issues with tooth brushing should be provided by the dentist

POLEGATE SCHOOL COUNCIL

Our school council is led by Miss Marsh and this term they held a meeting at Polegate Town Council offices.

This term, school councillors had the fantastic opportunity to visit the local council and meet the Mayor, David Watts and Councillor Angela Snell. The children prepared questions prior to the visit and seriously impressed everyone with their maturity, enthusiasm and behaviour.

Currently, road safety around our school is a big concern and the

school councillors raised this with the mayor to discuss how the local council could support us in improving this. After lots of discussion, the children all agreed on a fab plan to help improve this... watch this space!

Overall, the children had an excellent time and even got to wear the Mayor's chain at the end 'It was fantastic' Flo, 2b. 'Amazing!' Matthew, 2b. Well done councillors!

The local councillors feed back to school to say just how impressed they were with the maturity shown by our school pupils. Thanks to Miss Marsh for organising this event.



GRADUATION CEREMONY

Finally the time came for the graduation ceremony for our dedicated Year 6 learners to receive the recognition they deserve!

We arrived on a slightly dismal Saturday morning and met with Sussex University representatives to find out more about life at Sussex University, one of the top ranking universities in the country.

The morning was a celebration of the children's achievements and ended with a graduation ceremony.

I know I have said it before but I am going to say it again anyway! I am so proud of these pupils. It is no small achievement to write a 1,000 word essay on 'Poverty and Progress'. Not necessarily the topic of choice for 11 year olds which made their achievements even more impressive.

The whole project has been a real success. The children's study skills, perseverance and writing stamina have noticeably improved in the classroom.



Did you know:

- It costs £9000 a year in tuition fees to attend university.
- You pay nothing back until you earn over £21000 a year.
- After 30 years the debt is cleared if it is not paid back.
- There are many subsidies available for low income families.
- At Sussex University 92% of previous year's graduates were employed or in further study, and of those in employment, 97% were in graduate-level jobs.

Looking at all graduates, degree holders continue to earn considerably more than non-graduates over a working lifetime, and are also more likely to be in employment.

A spokesperson for the Department of Business told the BBC that their studies showed graduates earning 'on average, around £100,000 more across their working lives' as well as other benefits in areas such as employability and health status.

Our graduates were:

Tillymae Goldsmith

Matthew Jarret Lillie

Layla Higgs

Cerys Allen

Callie Gent

Jake Diprose

Joshua Akehurst

Song hua Goh

Fletcher Sheppard

Leo Groombridge

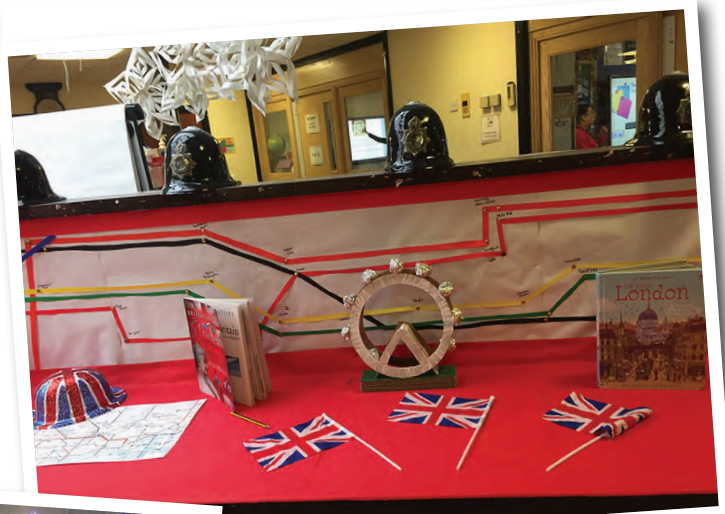
Vinny Russo



OUR SCHOOL DISPLAYS



Take a look at the fabulous environment teachers have created!



PAST PUPILS

It is always a delight to hear what are past pupils are up to and I like to share their success with the whole school community.

Hi, my name's Lauren! I used to be a pupil here, at Polegate School, a long time ago, and probably stood exactly where you're standing now.

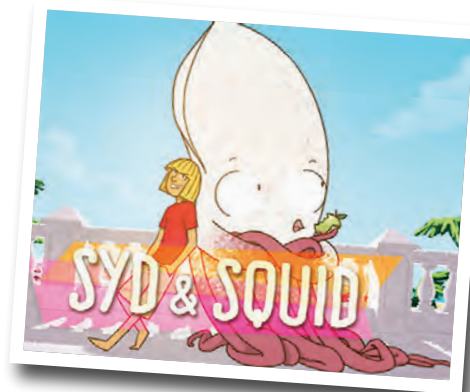
I loved coming to school and learning and drawing and playing and experimenting and filling my brain with as much knowledge as I could. But I've always especially loved art. And now, I'm a 2D animator (yes, I animate things!) and a co-host for an animation podcast!

Since my time at Polegate, I've carried my love of art and design through secondary school, to college, to my art foundation degree, to university – where I did a degree in animation – and now to my work as an animator and podcaster!



And I've travelled to all sorts of places I'd only ever dreamed about when I was your age; I've been to an animation festival in France, tasted the freshest pastries in Portugal, discovered a treasure trove of beauty in Dublin, and watched real Californian surfers surfing in Los Angeles... twice!

As you can see, all my teachers and the things I learnt at school encouraged my curiosity, and have led



me to all sorts of different things. You never know where life will lead you.

If there's one thing I've learnt over the years, it's that, "you get out what you put in" – if you work hard and do your best, then you will reap great rewards (even if it doesn't seem you're receiving those rewards straight away!). I definitely worked hard and did my best, and it's given me so many opportunities...

Do your best, and an abundance of opportunities will open up for you, too.

It is always so lovely to hear about what our past pupils are doing. Lauren happened to be in one of my first classes when I first started teaching at Polegate so I was delighted to hear how well she is doing although not surprised because she always gave 100% to everything and worked so hard. Hopefully an update from her brother will follow in next terms newsletter!

Even more exciting is that Lauren is coming in to school after the holiday to show the children her work and talk to them in an assembly.



My Sketchbook

GOVERNOR UPDATE

We felt it was important for parents to understand the role of governors. We are absolutely committed to doing all that we can to ensure that children here get the very best.

Governors are often referred to as "critical friends", and our role is to support and question on strategic aspects of school life but we are not first point of contact for parents.

Guidance is very clear for all governors across the country that we do not get involved in individual matters, such as a concern about: your child, teachers, or aspect of the curriculum. It is not appropriate for parents to approach parent governors and raise a concern on the playground.

At that time we are in school as a parent and not in a governor. We would ask that you respect this as we are all volunteers and this is not our role. Your initial point of contact should always be with the school. If you are not satisfied there is a complaints procedure that needs to

be followed. At that point individual governors with responsibility for complaints will then be involved.

Recently the school has brought significant concerns regarding attendance to your attention. We fully support this because for a pupil to reach their full educational achievement a high level of attendance is essential. We have to promote the highest levels of attendance and would hope that all parents support this.

Our duties include:

- Ensuring statutory duties in relation to pupil attendance are met.
- Minimising levels of absence and the impact on pupils' achievement.

We are judged on:

- Overall absence and persistent absence rates for all pupils, and for

different groups in relation to national figures for all pupils. The extent to which low attenders are improving their attendance over time and whether attendance is consistently low (we are identified as falling into the lowest 10% nationally).

Attendance is low for FSM and SEN, this means it is not above 95%. We fall into the lowest 10% of schools across the country. Persistent absence is high for the same groups. Meaning there are large numbers with attendance below 90% and once again in the lowest 10% of schools in the country. These groups form a large percentage of the school. This not a small group of pupils. There are approximately 120 children in the school that fall into one of these categories. We hope you will support the school in making a difference.

STAFFING NEWS

It has been a little while since we have had any news regarding staffing. Well this term I have quite a lot to share with you!

Congratulations Miss Garland

Miss Garland has secured the headship at Catsfield school starting in September!

We are thrilled for her and this is thoroughly deserved. Miss Garland has made a huge contribution to Polegate School over the last 6 years. In true Polegate School fashion she has

embraced all the creative, ambitious, slightly different ideas that we all believe make such a difference for the children.

She has joined me, willingly (I think!) and supported my many slightly crazy plans: Dressing up as Claudia Winkleman, Mrs Twit, dancing Up Town Funk to name just a few! I feel lucky to have had such a dedicated deputy supporting school improvements.

We will be very sad to see Miss Garland leave but we wish her all the best and know that we will continue to collaborate together in the future.

Congratulations to the Barnard family

Now I thought I had got rid of THAT chair in the staffroom! Obviously not!

Mrs Barnard is expecting her second child and will be starting her maternity in July 2017. She was very considerate in planning this because it means her class will have their wonderful teacher for the full year. I know how pleased 3B will be to hear that! We are really pleased for the Barnard family.

We are currently advertising for a maternity cover to start in Sept so if you know of anyone that you think would fit in well at Polegate please do tell them.

Attendance

A serious weakness for the school in 2016

I am wanting to follow up on my statement in the last newsletter regarding attendance and provide a detailed response as to why it was absolutely necessary to raise this issue.

I have since had a very productive conversation with 2 parents who fall into one of these groups and actually attendance for their children is not an issue. Together we agreed that we would celebrate the success of some children with severe medical conditions who have attendance above 95%. It demonstrates that having SEN is not a reason to have very low attendance.

Why did I need to draw it to your attention?

Attendance is measured by the DFE (department for Education). It is not the school or even East Sussex County Council that make these decisions related to absence. This is the statement published about our school from the Department for Education. It is in the public domain.

- Attendance was low for the groups: FSM, SEN with EHC/Statement, SEN support (in the lowest 10%)
- Persistent absence was high for the groups: FSM, SEN with EHC/Statement, SEN support (in the highest 10%)

This data comes directly to us from the DFE and is an assessment of us as a school. There is a very clear expectation placed upon schools to address poor attendance. It is the government that identifies these groups and we have a duty to act when attendance levels are low.

As you can see. It is simply a fact that these groups in school have attendance in the lowest 10% of the country nationally. This data is published by the DFE. This is very significant and is clearly and very publically identified as a weakness by the DFE for the school.

Just as I will celebrate strengths, believe me that I would always prefer

to do this, I do have to raise school priority areas and this is one. I would be failing in my responsibility as a headteacher if I did not.

I am held to account by governors, Ofsted and the DFE on these areas. Key judgements are made about the school based on SEN and FSM attendance as well as overall because they are a national focus group. If we ignore it then we are failing children. Inclusion is about meeting the needs of all children- we are treating them equally by wanting the very best for them and having high aspirations. One of my own children falls into the SEN group and so I am certainly not discriminating against them.

The government expects:

- Schools and local authorities to:
- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; (this is inclusion) and,
- act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

Current attendance figures across the school

This year so far...

SEN pupils	88.51%
Non SEN pupils	98.05%
Free school meals	93.85%
Non free school meals	96.98%

This is not a small group of pupils. There are about 70 pupils in each group (FSM, SEN). You can see the difference is stark.

I would love to be celebrating success and building on the positives and so I have looked at all available data to analyse attendance. I have looked back to see if so far this year these

groups have increased their attendance but in fact attendance is simply not improving it is declining for these groups. This is very worrying!

I do want to make it very clear that not all children in these groups have poor attendance, of course they don't and these parents will know that as we provide regular reports to you individually about attendance. If you are not sure or don't know then please ask.

Many parents do overcome quite significant difficulties to achieve attendance that is above 97%.

It is not the case that simply by having SEN these children will have poor attendance!

So now, a chance to celebrate!

There is a pupil in the school with significant medical needs and an official diagnosis. The challenges are immense: visually impaired, epileptic, hemiplegic cerebral palsy. These conditions require frequent hospital visits to specialists, physiotherapy, ophthalmologist consultant visits and occupational therapy to name but a few.

I think it will surprise you all to know that this child has attendance at 97.2%. Absolutely incredible! In this case parents have tried to get appointments in the afternoon or outside of school hours and this has helped although this is not always possible and we do recognise this. They also encourage their child to develop resilience and will send in them in with a cough or a cold. I recognise there is much to celebrate amongst individual pupils and would love to share any other stories you have as parents. If you can offer any suggestions or have advice for us as a school regarding how we can improve attendance or even tips for other parents then please do share these.

If you are having difficulties as a family then please do come and speak to us. We will always try to help.

E-safety

I am quite sure that many of our pupils were lucky enough to be given tablets, smartphones, games consoles and laptops for Christmas. For some pupils this will be their 'first ever' piece of tech and although they may quickly become experts in using their device, the skills to stay safe and make sensible choices online need to be prompted by us as parents, carers and educators.

Children are not born knowing instinctively how to stay safe online and so this is where we need to step in.

Mrs McGovern is running an e-safety session for parents and pupils after school on 7th February. Please attend, if you have any questions or concerns related to e-safety please ask. If we don't know the answer we will always find out!

Advice for parents of infants

Age is normally one of the most important things of all when it comes to any advice, and this month we want to give advice for parents of younger, infant-aged children.



We work to a principle that I call 'safe, smart and social'. This is just a way of tailoring specific advice and guidance to different age groups so that I can keep things clear, particularly for parents when I'm talking at parents evening.

Safe, smart and social is very loosely based on 3 age ranges:

Safe - 0-6 years

Smart - 7-11 years

Social - 12+

Concentrating on 'safe'; for very young children we keep them as safe as possible, not allowing them to get into any risky situations at all, e.g. taking them swimming and putting armbands on, crossing the road and holding their hand, not allowing them to roam the streets with their friends etc.

The principle is exactly the same online; for older children we have to accept (although not necessarily like) that they need to take risks to build resilience, understanding and experience, but not younger children.

The world wide web was not designed with children in mind, and that's true of many of the online services such as YouTube, social media, many games etc.

At such a young age it is vitally important that any access they have is carefully managed.

The advice in regards to the access would slightly differ depending on the device, but we know that one of the most common devices is the iPad or other type of tablet. It isn't very common for such a young child to own their own tablet such as an iPad, which means it it's one owned by an adult, it may not have the parental restrictions set up.

Principally (and very basically), this would be my advice:

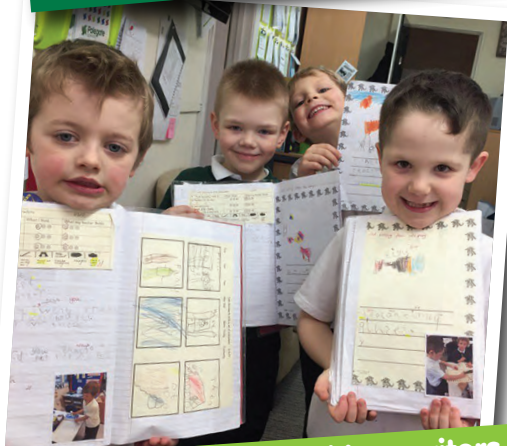
- Never allow young children unsupervised access; sit, explore and have fun with them.
- If they're Youtube fans, use Youtube for kids, which is a dedicated, free app.
- Pick half a dozen websites that your child can access; fun and educational stuff.
- Use www.commonsensemedia.org to get advice and guidance related to age ratings of games and apps.

We also have lots of links on our school website to resources you may find helpful:

<http://polegateschool.co.uk/our-community/e-safety/>



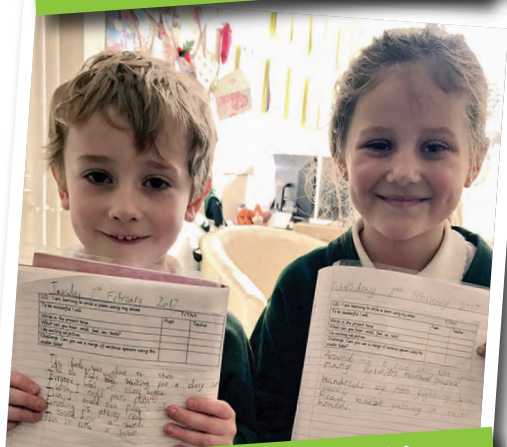
Great Work



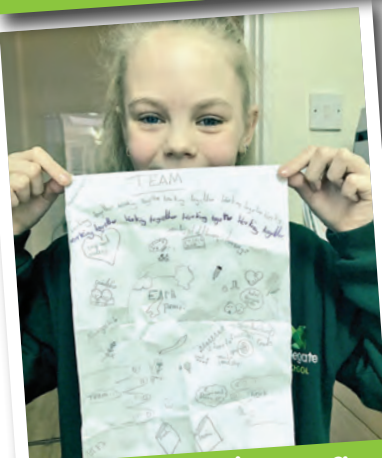
The most hard working writers in 1A today - all boys!



Alfie has been working hard in Homework Club.



These 2B poets are writing powerful poems about Tudor wars. Great handwriting too!



Michaela has drawn a design of the Earth to promote world peace.

Attendance Class figures

Overall school attendance is currently at 96.1%. Our school target this year is 97%.

How well is your child's class doing so far this year:

RJ = 95%

RP = 97%

RH = 94%

1A = 96%

1N = 96%

2M = 96%

2B = 96%

3B = 97%

3W = 95%

4M = 97%

4EM = 96%

5R = 98%

5GK = 97%

6M = 95%

6O = 95%

Diary Dates

Friday
10th February
INSET DAY

Archive



You can read all the previous newsletters on our website.

Twitter

Be the first to hear the news.
Follow us on Twitter.
We now have 726 followers!



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Feedback

We'd love to hear your feedback and any new ideas you have. Please send us your thoughts via the contact us page on the school website:

www.polegateschool.co.uk