

Newsletter 16

Friday 12th January 2026

In this issue:

Happy New Year

National Year of Reading

Attendance and punctuality

Wellingtons, coats and boots

Sentence starters

Reception places 2025

Children's Commissioner

Forthcoming dates

Care and Learning Centre



Welcome back to school. I hope you all had a restful and relaxing break and are feeling full of energy and enthusiasm for the year to come. On behalf of the staff I would like to wish you all a very happy and prosperous 2026.

We begin the year with the wonderful news that Monkfield Park has been awarded the prestigious Primary Quality Mark for our teaching of Geography. Special thanks must go to Miss McSweeney, our Geography Leader, who carefully gathered all the evidence for the assessors and has been responsible for raising the profile of Geography across the school and helping to build children's love and enthusiasm for the subject.

Year wishes.

Mrs Howell



2026 Is The Year of Reading

As someone who loves reading and has been fortunate enough to have had my imagination inspired by incredible books throughout my childhood, I was delighted to learn that the Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson, has declared 2026 to be the National Year of Reading. Sadly so many children spend their time on screens and social media but the Department for Education in collaboration with the National Literacy Trust is hoping to change this. The campaign aims to address the steep decline in reading amongst children, young people and adults. Working in collaboration they are striving to position reading as a powerful contemporary activity, engage new audiences in reading and change the national reading culture for good. Reading is central to the Government's Plan for Change as we know it supports success in school, work and in life, boosts wellbeing, brings people together and increases empathy. I am always so pleased to see how well our library is used in school. There is never a minute across the day when a child isn't in the library choosing their next book to enjoy. Research has shown that when parents take the time to read with their children early on, they lay the foundations for strong literacy skills, helping children to succeed. By making reading a daily habit, even just 10 minutes a day, we can help give our children the best start in life. Sharing a story is such a wonderful thing to do so why not kick start your reading year by sharing a story this evening?



National Year of
Reading 2026

Attendance and Punctuality

Research shows that there is a close link between school attendance and a child's achievement. Your child will achieve better when they go to school every school day. Children learn better, they make friends, they are happier, they have a brighter future. We want to work with all our families to make sure that poor school attendance is not a limiting factor for any child at Monkfield Park.



In the UK, parents have a legal duty to ensure their child receives an appropriate education and attends school regularly unless there is a justifiable reason, such as illness or a school-approved exceptional circumstance. Schools have a statutory duty to monitor attendance and every month we analyse the attendance data for each child. The percentage attendance figure is calculated for the school year to the end of the previous month i.e. for this year to date, this will be from 3rd September 2025. Schools are required to ensure that parents are informed of any attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity, therefore you will receive an initial communication from us if your child's attendance falls below 96%. This initial letter will be to simply make you aware of your child's attendance level. If concerns persist and your child's attendance continues to deteriorate then the school will contact you again to inform you of our concerns and to offer a supportive meeting with Mrs Walsh, our Family Support Worker, to explore the reasons for the absences and discuss what help can be put in place to increase attendance. This is a voluntary and supportive process and Mrs Walsh is on the playground every morning to help if your child is feeling anxious about coming into school. If a child's attendance falls below 90% they will be classified as a persistent absentee. Schools are legally obliged to provide support and intervention for pupils which will take the form of school-based interventions, and the offer of support from outside agencies and professionals. As a school we are very keen to identify the barriers to attendance that families face and will welcome opportunities to support you and overcome these barriers together. We know that all the evidence shows that even a few days of missed school can have a significant impact on a child's education, their future prospects and their emotional health and wellbeing.

Term Time Leave: The guidance from the Local Authority and the Department for Education does not allow the school to authorise absences in term time other than in very exceptional circumstances. We are still receiving requests from families who wish to take holidays or travel abroad in term time to visit family members. We would urge you to adhere to the school holiday dates when planning holidays and family events. The term dates are available on the school's website and are included in this newsletter.

Coats and Boots

In view of the very cold weather we are currently experiencing, please can you make sure that your child has a warm, waterproof coat, hat and gloves and wellingtons in school each day as we will be playing outside. Research has shown that playing outside, whatever the weather, is vital to build children's immunity, increase resilience, reduce stress and protect their mental health.

The children spend approximately 70% of their time in school sitting in the classroom, so playing outside throughout the year is essential for overall health and wellbeing. To preserve our carpets, the children will still need to come to school in their school shoes which they will need to wear inside the school buildings, changing into their wellingtons at break times.



Sentence starters

Ask your Reception child if they would like to visit Antarctica and explain their answer.

Ask your Year 1 child to tell you about toys from the past.

Ask your Year 2 child to tell you what a riddle is and give you an example.

Ask your Year 3 child to explain how the ancient Egyptians used the River Nile.

Ask your Year 4 child to explain why the Vikings invaded Britain.

Ask your Year 5 child to tell you what influences their identity.

Ask your Year 6 child to explain the 5:8 miles to kilometres conversion ratio.

Reception 2026 Tours



We appreciate that selecting the right school for your child is not an easy decision to make. Each parent and carer is looking for a school that will make the educational experience as motivating and rewarding as possible for their child. To help you make this important decision we would like to welcome parents and carers into school to see at first hand what makes Monkfield Park such a special place to learn. We are offering a number of parent tours so that you can see the school in action and talk with the Headteacher and staff.

Please join us for one of our parent tours which can be booked by contacting the school office on 01954 273377 or by email: office@monkfieldpark.cambs.sch.uk The final tour date before the submission deadline on 15th January is **Tuesday 13th January 2026 at 10.00 am**

Please note that applications received after 15th January deadline will not be considered until the second round of allocations in May.

We very much look forward to welcoming you to our wonderful school and hope you will join us for one of the tours. If you are unable to make this date, please contact the school office and we will be happy to arrange a convenient date for you to visit the school and meet Mrs Howell, the Headteacher.

A Guide For Parents and Carers on Managing Digital Lives

Many of you have told us about the difficult decisions you face in working out how to balance protecting your children from online harm with enabling access to spaces that are now central to learning, socialising and play. The Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza, has recently published a new guide for parents which aims to help adults to manage their children's digital lives. This very useful guide can be accessed by clicking on the link here: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/what-i-wish-my-parents-or-carers-knew-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers-on-managing-childrens-digital-lives> Alternatively, you can find a copy on the school's website under online safety.



FORTHCOMING DATES Spring Term 2026

13th January—Weekly swimming lessons begin for Year 4

23rd January—Columba Class assembly

23rd January—Girls' football tournament at Swavesey Village College

26th January— Greater Cambridge Local Plan workshops for Years 5 and 6

28th January—Reception and Y6 height and weight checks

28th January—Y6 English Challenge

30th January—Y3 Bikeability Level 1

4th February—Y4 WOW Day

5th February—Y1 WOW Day

5th February—Network CB23 Maths Challenge for Y3 and Y4

6th February—NSPCC Number Day

6th February—FOMP School Discos

9th to 13th February—Children's Mental Health Week

10th February—Reception vision screening

11th February—Y3 WOW Day

13th February—School breaks up for half term

16th to 20th February—Half Term

23rd February—Children return to school

26th February—Y5 WOW Day

2nd to 6th March—International week

6th March—Mid term reports to parents

6th March—Cygnus Class assembly

13th March—Violet Class assembly

16th March—Y2 WOW Day

17th March—Parent Consultation Evening

19th March—Year 5 and Year 6 Rugby tournament

19th to 24th March— Book Fair in Main Hall

20th March—Green Class assembly

26th March—Parent Consultation evening

27th March—School breaks up for Easter holiday

13th April—Children return to school for Summer term

13th to 17th April— STEM week

For general queries regarding the Care and Learning Centre, please contact the school office by e-mail on: clcoffice@monkfieldpark.cambs.sch.uk or by telephoning 01954 273377.

To speak with a member of the Care and Learning Centre staff please telephone 01954 273301

Happy New Year!

A very Happy New Year to all of our CLC families! We hope you have had a restful break and that those of you celebrating Christmas had a wonderful time. This term, we welcome 8 new children and their families to our setting. On Tuesday, the staff went to visit each of the children in their homes and later in the week, the children have attended short sessions at preschool. They are doing so well at building up their confidence to part from their parents and have been enjoying exploring all the resources and activities that we have on offer at CLC.

Staff News

We would also like to give a very warm welcome to Miss Danelle Dunlop, who joined the CLC team at the very end of the Autumn Term. Miss Dunlop will be sharing the role of Deputy Pre-School Manager and Out of School Club manager with Mrs Brown. Miss Dunlop brings a wealth of early years experience to the team and has really enjoyed getting to know all the children and supporting them in their play and learning.



Best wishes
Jane Turner
Early Years Teacher & Pre-School Manager