



January 2026
16.01.26



Welcome back and Happy New Year! I trust that you all had an enjoyable Christmas break with family and friends. It has been lovely to hear all of the children's news, especially about their snowy activities last Monday and Tuesday. Wasn't it great that we were not in school on those days?! The children were able to enjoy time outdoors and we did not have to drive on the icy roads. Mr Mackenzie and I were actually in The Highlands, at the foot of Ben Nevis last Monday morning - not that we could see the mountain due to the weather! Reggie definitely couldn't go out as the snow was deeper than him!

What an action-packed eight days we have already had in school, from a theatre visit to ice skating, and even the opportunity to meet a lioness! This week, we have also seen a number of extra-curricular clubs up and running again ... it's not too late to join up ... as well as a range of exciting activities taking place in The Ark.

Ice Skating

Hawthorn and Oak had a smashing time ice skating last Friday. There was much excitement as we buckled our boots, and every single child was able to confidently take that first step onto the ice. We discovered some natural skaters and were hugely impressed by the speed and control many achieved by the end of the session.



For many of us, it was a lesson in digging deep. There were a few tears, but they were matched by gritty determination and a great deal of laughter! Falling over and getting back up provided a wonderful opportunity for the children to experience the importance of never giving up. Though some were tempted to stop, everyone stuck it out for the full hour—leaving them keen and excited for their next time on the ice.

Mr Heathcote



News from Elder

What a way to start 2026 for Elder! Christmas cobwebs and New Year fears were banished on only our second day back as we journeyed to Manchester's Lowry Theatre to see an incredible stage production of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Everything about the performance was of the highest quality and it really gave Elder a taste of the magic of the theatre. The children (and staff!) were certainly blown away by the production and haven't stopped

talking about it in school. The visit has also inspired lots of fun and enriching art, drama and writing back in school which the children have thrown themselves into with their usual enthusiasm and effort. *Mr Thomas*

News From Birch

Birch have been very excited this week as they have been given their own recorder for the term. As part of our music curriculum, they will be learning about looking after their instrument, the patience and dedication it takes to practice and playing as part of an ensemble. After practising how hard to blow using a tissue, they learnt their first note. Next week they will be playing their first melody together and the children will be bringing their recorders home to play ... sorry adults! *Mrs Savage*



Sporting News

During Tuesday's assembly, former Lioness Jess Clarke, who has represented England at the highest level of women's football and played for top clubs in the Women's Super League, spoke to the children about the importance of health and wellbeing. She explained that being healthy is not just about physical fitness but also about the positive impact it can have on learning and concentration in school. Drawing on her own experiences as an elite athlete, Jess highlighted how exercise supports focus, confidence and mental wellbeing.

Jess also led each class in a range of fun fitness activities, ensuring all pupils were actively involved and encouraging them to find joy in moving their bodies. We would also like to thank parents and carers for their generous donations, which will be reinvested into new break time equipment to further support active and healthy play. *Mr Fowles*



Ark News

Our new themed sessions began in the Ark this week, with 'Escape Room Challenges' being a firm favourite so far. The children had great fun working in small teams to complete various tasks, eventually freeing 'Biscuit the guinea pig' from a cage after he'd been pig-napped from Mrs Winnington's desk! We have also enjoyed being scientists, magicians and musicians, ending the week hiding kind notes and positive messages, ready to be discovered by children on Monday. *Mrs Winnington*

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Science Explorers	Fun with Illusions	Music Club	Escape Rooms	Kindness & Community

School Sleepover

As we have held a sponsored event this week, we thought it best to move our next school sleepover to the 13th March. As last year, children from Y2 upwards are invited to come to school for a whole night! The children can return to school at 6pm dressed in their pyjamas, bringing with them a camping mattress or blow-up bed, along with a sleeping bag and pillow. The evening will begin with a Friday night feast and there will be games and a film, before settling down altogether in the hall (teachers as well) to sleep for the night. The children will need collecting promptly at 8am the following morning. To do this, they will need to pay £30 each. Last year, we ran this as a sponsored event as for many children sleeping away from home was a challenge; therefore, if you would like to do this again, sponsorship forms will be sent out next week. Once again, there will be a prize, along with extra treats on the night, for the child who raises the most money. All monies raised will be going into the PTA pot.

Safeguarding

As many of you are on the playground and around the children each day, we all have a duty to ensure that our children are safe. In addition to this, many will spend time with Whitegate children from other families as part of playdates, birthday parties and sleepovers. If you are concerned about a child, please speak to me as the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Mr Fowles, who is the Deputy Safeguarding Lead. Any concerns about online safety should be directed to Mr Thomas.

Our safeguarding policy can be found on the school website under the 'Our School' tab, then 'Our Policies and Procedures'. In there, you will find a wealth of information, including in the appendices, the signs of different categories of abuse.

Dates

Tuesday 20th January	pm	Y5/6 Quicksticks Hockey Tournament <i>Invitation Only</i>
Monday 26th January	All Week	Assessment Week
Tuesday 27th January	pm	Y5/6 Netball Tournament <i>Invitation Only</i>
Friday 30th January	am	Y5 Escape to Safety Presentation
Friday 30th January	pm	Elder's Canal and Rivers Trust workshop
Monday 2nd February	pm	Y5 attending a Candlemas service at St John's, Hartford
Wednesday 4th February	12:30pm	Senior Friends Lunch
Friday 6th February	pm	Y3/4 Girls Football Tournament <i>Invitation Only</i>
Monday 9th February	pm	Athletics event <i>Invitation Only</i>
Tuesday 10th February	pm	Y3/4 Netball Tournament <i>Invitation Only</i>
Thursday 12th February	3:15pm-5pm	Hogwarts in the Hall Harry Potter party at The Ark
Friday 13th February	2pm	Y6 Public Speaking Competition <i>Parents are warmly invited</i>
Friday 13th February	3:15pm	Finish for the half-term break

Thank you for your continued support

C Mackenzie