

ASHTON HAYES PRIMARY SCHOOL

Weekly Newsletter • Friday 25 September 2026

Aspire to be Amazing

Back to normal - and another busy week!

It has been lovely to return to something resembling a normal school week after welcoming our Ofsted visitors into school last week! There has certainly been no slowing down though, and it has been another busy week full of learning and activity across school.

Friday also brought school photograph day, and I have to say how incredibly smart all of the children looked. They were a real credit to their families and to the school, and we look forward to seeing the finished pictures!

As you will see from the class updates below, there has been a huge amount happening again this week - from dictated writing in Kestrels and exploring continents in Sparrowhawks, to inventing toys in Owls, creating portal narratives in Peregrines and writing about fairground trespassers in Buzzards.

Attendance - a brilliant start to the year

Our whole-school attendance this week was 96.09%, with our cumulative attendance since the beginning of the school year standing at a fantastic 97.47%.

A huge well done to Peregrines, who achieved a perfect 100% attendance this week! This takes them into the lead for our best attendance so far this year, with a brilliant 98.38%. It is very close at the top, though: Kestrels are hot on their heels with 98.19%, and Sparrowhawks are not far behind at 97.84%.

Every day in school really does matter. Good attendance gives children the best opportunity to keep up with their learning, develop friendships, take part in the wider experiences we offer and feel fully part of their class and school community. Thank you to all our families for working with us to make attendance such a priority.

Class	This week's attendance	Cumulative attendance
Kestrel	98.53%	98.19%
Sparrowhawk	92.06%	97.84%
Owl	94.44%	95.96%
Peregrine	100%	98.38%
Buzzard	95.63%	97.51%
Whole school	96.09%	97.47%

Free School Meals - please let us know if you are eligible

If you have recently received a letter from Cheshire West and Chester Council confirming that your child is eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals, please could you send a copy of the letter to the school office. This is important even if your child is in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2 and already receives a free meal through the Universal Infant Free School Meals scheme.

Registering for benefits-related Free School Meals does more than provide a free lunch. It can also generate additional funding for our school through the Pupil Premium, which we can use to provide additional support, resources and opportunities for children. If you think you may be eligible but are unsure, please speak confidentially to the school office and we will be very happy to help.

Our Year 6 Leaders

A huge congratulations to some of our Year 6 children who have recently been selected to take on special leadership roles across our school.

Bella and James are our Head Girl and Head Boy, with Ella and Miles as our Deputy Head Girl and Deputy Head Boy. Daniel, Eveline, Isla and Chloe have been appointed as our School Ambassadors, while Will and Connie will be taking on the important role of Junior Road Safety Officers.

We are also in the middle of electing our new School Councillors. This year, we want our children to play an even bigger role in helping us to make Ashton Hayes the very best school it can be. We want them to know that their ideas and opinions matter and to have genuine opportunities to contribute to decisions and improvements across school.

Well done to all of our new pupil leaders - we know you will represent Ashton Hayes brilliantly!

New at Ashton Hayes This Year - Ready Steady Read Together

Following on from the information I shared a couple of weeks ago about our new approach to handwriting, I wanted to tell you a little more about another development in school this year: some changes to our reading curriculum.

We have introduced Ready Steady Read Together from Year 2 to Year 6. This gives us greater consistency across our English curriculum, linking closely with the approaches we already use for spelling, handwriting and writing.

In simple terms, it provides a clear and carefully sequenced approach to teaching children how to understand and discuss what they read. Children enjoy high-quality fiction, non-fiction and poetry while being explicitly taught the skills that confident readers use - for example, understanding new vocabulary, retrieving information, making inferences, predicting, summarising and explaining their ideas.

The approach also places a strong emphasis on fluency: helping children to read accurately, confidently and with expression. Because the learning is mapped carefully from Year 2 through to Year 6, children build these skills progressively as they move through school, while teachers have a consistent framework for identifying what children can do and what they need to learn next.

Ultimately, our aim is simple: to develop confident, thoughtful and enthusiastic readers who enjoy books and can use their reading skills successfully across the whole curriculum.

Helping to Keep Our Children Safe - Discord

Our online safety focus this week is Discord, a hugely popular communication platform where young people can chat, play games and join online communities based around shared interests.

Although Discord can be an enjoyable way to communicate with friends, there are also risks that parents should be aware of. These can include contact with strangers, inappropriate content, harassment, spending money online and gaming or socialising becoming a distraction from everyday life. Discord has a 13+ age restriction (with a 17+ app rating on some stores), so it is particularly important that younger children understand why age restrictions exist.

This week's #WakeUpWednesday guide, shared below, gives parents practical advice including using Discord's Family Centre, reviewing privacy settings together, talking openly about suspicious or uncomfortable online behaviour, checking spending controls and agreeing sensible expectations around screen time.

As with so much of online safety, regular, open conversations are one of the most important things we can do.

Taking an interest in the apps and games our children use, talking about who they interact with and making sure they know they can always tell a trusted adult if something worries them can make a real difference. Please take a few minutes to look through the guide.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about DISCORD

AGE RESTRICTION
13+
(with a 17+ app rating on app stores)

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

A CHANNEL FOR EVERYTHING

While Discord is strongly associated with video games, it also hosts communities for almost anything you can imagine, such as books, music, influencers, cooking and sport. Some large servers focus on popular games like Minecraft or Fortnite, but many are private, invite-only spaces where friends or communities with shared interests can chat across phones, computers, and gaming consoles.

REAL-LIFE DISTRACTION

Like many social platforms, Discord can become a real time-sink. Although it does not rely on endless scrolling in the same way as some apps, constant messages, group chats, and voice channels can keep young people engaged for long periods, especially in larger servers. As Discord is closely linked to gaming, it may also increase the time they spend playing games.

STRANGER DANGER

Users can choose to stay within private servers with only people they know, but joining public servers will most likely bring them into contact with strangers. Many users are just friendly enthusiasts, yet others could have harmful intentions, including grooming, extortion, or radicalisation. In these types of environments, anyone can claim to be another teenager, which can make it harder for young people to judge who is safe to talk to.

A HARASSMENT RISK

There is also a risk from people a young person already knows in the real world. Bullying in the real world can continue online, and Discord servers can make this feel more intimidating, especially if someone uses anonymous or multiple accounts to carry out threatening behaviours. Because Discord works across computers, phones, and gaming consoles, unwanted contact can follow young people into online spaces that should feel safe and private.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

This huge amount of choice can help young people "find their tribe", especially when they have niche interests. However, because users can create servers around almost any topic, younger users may still encounter unsuitable or distressing content. Even in spaces linked to child-friendly games, Discord cannot directly control every conversation, image, or video shared by other users.

A MONEY DRAIN

Discord is free to use, but users can still spend real-world money on it. This may include Discord 'Nitro', a monthly subscription that unlocks customisation features and larger media uploads, or purchases through the 'Shop' for profile cosmetics and game-related items. Small purchases can add up quickly, especially if spending controls are not in place.

Advice for Parents & Educators

USE FAMILY CENTRE

Parents and carers should make use of Discord's 'Family Centre', which gives an overview of a younger user's activity while respecting their privacy. Messages are not shared, but adults can view an activity feed and receive weekly email summaries. Discord says this is designed to support conversations about online behaviour, rather than be about constant monitoring.

CHECK, TALK, REPORT

Review Discord's privacy settings together, including who can send them friend requests or private messages. Use this as a chance to talk to them about strangers, privacy, and personal information, making sure young people know to question suspicious behaviour, such as requests to keep conversations secret. Show them how to block and report these kinds of users and reassure them that asking for help will not get them into trouble.

MANAGE TIME ONLINE

Agree clear expectations around when and how Discord can be used, especially during homework, bedtime, and family time. Encourage young people to turn off unnecessary notifications and leave servers that feel overwhelming. If Discord is mainly used alongside gaming, discuss healthy limits for both activities so that schoolwork, sleep, and offline friendships are not affected.

REVIEW SPENDING CONTROLS

Talk openly about paid features such as Discord Nitro, profile cosmetics, and in-game purchases. Make sure the young people in your care understand that digital items still cost real money. Check payment settings on the device they use, avoid storing card details where possible, and consider adding approval requirements for purchases, particularly for younger or more impulsive users.

Meet Our Expert

Alan Martin is an experienced technology journalist who has written for the likes of Wired, TechRadar, Tom's Guide, The Evening Standard, and The New Statesman.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

See full reference list on our website

@wake_up_weds

/www.thenationalcollege

@wake.up.wednesday

@wake.up.weds

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 23.09.2023

Ashton Hayes Primary School - Weekly Newsletter - Aspire to be Amazing

This Week in Our Classes

Kestrels

Another gorgeous week in Kestrels, and we really are beginning to see just how much these little people are capable of!

One of our biggest moments this week has been beginning our dictated writing. We have taken all of those sounds we have been learning in phonics and discovered that we can use them to actually write words! The children have been listening carefully for the sounds they can hear, having a go independently and taking such pride in what they can already do. Their confidence after only a few weeks in school is just wonderful to see.

There have been lots of opportunities to spot, read, build and write words throughout our days, not just when we are sitting together for phonics. A beautiful moment happened when the children were in the school corridors and one noticed the sound 's' in a word on the wall. They all got involved, spotting sounds all over the place! We're readers!!

As always, our learning has spilled into every corner of Kestrels, exploring number and pattern in Maths, creating, talking, signing, singing some more (sorry for the ABBA mania I have caused!), sharing stories and having plenty of uninterrupted time to investigate our own ideas. We are noticing children becoming braver with their thinking, more independent in their choices and increasingly confident to explain what they know.

Our favourite thing to see is how much they are becoming a little team. They help each other, notice each other and are beginning to understand that everyone might do things slightly differently ... and that is exactly how it should be.

Another week of tiny steps that are already adding up to something pretty amazing.

Sparrowhawks

Sparrowhawks have been busy this week continuing their learning. In literacy they have been retelling the story of The Girl at the Front of the Class. They have also been looking at the 'plural rule' and finding out when to add ES or just S.

In Maths they have been continuing to explore numbers, finding out which is greater / smaller, ordering numbers and discovering Zero. They have also been learning the words to match the numerals.

In Science we have continued our work on materials. They have been using some fantastic scientific language to describe different materials; opaque, translucent, hard, soft, shiny, bumpy, smooth...

In Art we have been looking at the way people's faces change to show different emotions and enjoyed a gorgeous book called The Grand Hotel of Feelings as a starting point for our work.

In Geography we have been continuing to learn about the different continents, looking at the shape of them and where they are in the world.

We have been learning and revisiting new sounds in our phonics; ou, ea, ay and ie.

Owls

Another busy week in Owl Class! In English, we have been developing our writer's knowledge, including noun phrases, joining words and other important writing features. The children have worked really hard to spot these in our example text and think about how writers use them.

In Maths, our Year 3s did very well in their first review of the year and have now started their new topic of addition and subtraction. Our Year 2s have also completed their review, and we have been very impressed with the work they have produced throughout our place value topic.

In Science, we explored our school grounds in search of an amazing leaf! We looked closely at our finds and learnt about the different parts of a leaf. In History, we discovered how toys have changed over time, thinking about changes in materials, safety legislation and how toys work. The children then became inventors and designed their own toy of the future!

In Computing, we identified different IT devices around our school and explained what each one does and why it is useful. Finally, in Spanish, we continued learning about Las cuatro estaciones - the four seasons.

Peregrines

What a fantastic week of learning we have had in Peregrines! In English, we have begun writing our very own Portal Narratives, inspired by Leon and the Place Between. The children have been developing their storytelling skills and creating exciting

descriptions of their own magical worlds. I have been particularly impressed with the use of expanded noun phrases and fronted adverbials to add detail and atmosphere to their writing.

In Maths, our Year 4 children have completed their Place Value topic and have tackled their first review. They have had a fantastic opportunity to show off all the knowledge and skills they have developed, and it has been wonderful to see their confidence growing when working with numbers.

Our Geography learning has taken us on a journey across the UK and Europe as we explored a range of capital cities. The children researched populations, housing, businesses and impressive cathedrals, comparing the different features of each city.

In DT, the children have put their designing skills into action by creating their first prototypes of their steady hand games. There was lots of creativity, problem-solving and careful thinking as they began to bring their ideas to life.

Finally, during PSHE, we have been exploring the idea of the Learning Pit. The children discussed what it feels like when learning becomes challenging and, importantly, shared strategies for helping themselves and each other when they find something difficult. It has been lovely to see such supportive teamwork and a willingness to encourage one another.

Well done, Peregrines, on another brilliant week!

Buzzards

It's been a busy week in Buzzards with lots of learning to celebrate! We've been working on planning and writing trespass narratives about animals who break into a fairground after closing time. The children have had such creative ideas and Mrs Collins and I have been wowed by the children's stories so far. We have also started a new guided reading text all about the Lionesses and it's proving to be a popular text with the football fans!

In Maths, Year 6 have been tackling some tricky multiplication, focusing on both mental and written methods.

Our afternoons have been filled with Science, Art, PSHE and Computing. In Science, we explored shadows more deeply, using fair testing. We investigated how the distance between a light source and object affects the height and width of the shadow cast.

In Art, we completed an artist study, focusing on L.S. Lowry. The children put their perspective drawing skills to the test, attempting to sketch buildings from Lowry's famous paintings and they also practised drawing his distinctive 'matchstick' people.

Have a lovely weekend, everyone.

Martin Bell

Headteacher

Aspire to be Amazing