

**16th January 2026**

## **Headteachers Update**

What a lovely end to another week at Belsay Primary School. Although it has felt like a slightly quieter one in terms of events, what has really shone through is the children's fantastic attitudes to learning. Across the school we are seeing excellent engagement, positive behaviour choices and a genuine enthusiasm for doing their very best, which is exactly the culture we strive for every day.

In our Monday assembly this week we spent time learning about Dr Martin Luther King Jr, whose birthday is on 15th January. We talked about the important role he played in standing up for fairness and equality and how life in the past was not always respectful or fair, particularly when it came to race. This linked closely to our work on the protected characteristics and our core value of respect. The children spoke thoughtfully about how everyone deserves to be treated kindly and fairly, no matter their background or race, and it was wonderful to hear how well they understand that equality is not just something we talk about but something we live every day in school.

We were also pleased to welcome visitors from Pele Trust this week, who came in to review our behaviours, attitudes and attendance. They were blown away by the pupil voice sessions, so a huge thank you to all of the children who spoke so confidently and proudly about life at Belsay. Trust leaders commented on how happy the children feel in school, how clearly they know and can explain our core values and the fantastic culture that exists across our whole community – something we are incredibly proud of.

One area we will be focusing on going forward is attendance. We know that illness before Christmas has had an impact, but we are also seeing a small number of term-time holidays. Although we do not take a heavy-handed approach, it is really important that we work together to ensure children are in school as much as possible so they can maximise their education. Research consistently shows that children with higher attendance go on to achieve better SATs, better GCSEs and improved life chances in the long term and even the difference between 100% and 95% attendance can have a significant effect.

It has also been lovely to bring back our celebration assemblies this week, along with our ever-popular Hot Chocolate. After such a cool week, it was a perfect way to recognise the children's achievements and start 2026 on a positive note.

We hope you all have a wonderful weekend. Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

**Mr Shaw**



## Safeguarding

Belsay Primary School is committed to keeping all children safe. Our staff regularly participate in safeguarding training and are fully aware of how to keep our pupils safe and what signs to look out for. Our pupils know they can share any concerns and we have robust policies and procedures in place which underpin safeguarding. It is our paramount priority to keep all children healthy and safe. Remember our Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) in school are **Miss Dixon, Miss Houghton and Mr Shaw.**

### What Parents & Educators Need to Know about GROUP CHATS

On messaging apps, social media and online games, group chats are one of the most popular ways that children connect. Group chats allow messages, images and videos to be shared in one place and help friendships flourish; however, they also come with a number of risks.

#### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

#### TEASING AND BULLYING

Children of all ages are keen to fit in socially, and group chats can sometimes contribute to that process. While group chats can foster connection, they can also give way to mean comments or jokes at someone's expense, especially when others join in for laughs. When bullying happens publicly, in front of friends and classmates, it can intensify the emotional impact – adding to embarrassment, anxiety and feelings of isolation for the child being targeted.

#### INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some group chats may include inappropriate language or imagery. Even if a child isn't actively participating in the conversation, they may still be exposed to this content simply by being part of the group. Some apps have disappearing messaging features, where content is only available once or for a few seconds, which makes it harder for children to report something they've seen.

#### UNKNOWN MEMBERS

Children often can't control who is added to a group, which can lead to privacy concerns. Sharing personal details in group chats can be dangerous, and children have no control over what others do with the material they send. Some members of the chat might even decide to use such information maliciously.

#### EXCLUSION AND ISOLATION

Exclusion in group chats is common and can take several forms. Sometimes a new group is created specifically to leave one child out on purpose. In other cases, the chat may happen on an app that a child doesn't have access to, making it impossible for them to join in. This can cause feelings of being left out – even unintentionally.

#### PEER PRESSURE

Children may feel they have to constantly stay engaged just to be included and keep up with the conversation. In some cases, they might partake in inappropriate behaviour – like sharing explicit photos, jokes or teasing – just to fit in. Group settings can also encourage children to act in ways they normally wouldn't, or stay silent when they know something is wrong, out of fear of being excluded. Some children may find it difficult to leave toxic group chats.

#### VIDEO AND LIVE CHATS

Many popular apps allow children to engage in live streaming with interactive chats or have group video chats. Anyone can be added to these streams, and often children tag peers in the comments and have conversations which are unmoderated. There's a risk of being exposed to inappropriate or violent content and offensive language, either in the group videos or via the group chats.

### Advice for Parents & Educators

#### CONSIDER OTHERS' FEELINGS

Group chats can become an arena for children to compete for social status. Help children consider how people might feel if they behave inappropriately. If a child does upset someone, encourage them to reach out, show empathy and apologise for their mistake.

#### SET SOME GROUP CHAT RULES

Discuss safe group chat practices, such as asking a peer for consent before adding them to a group chat, or leaving a group chat if it's stronger in nature, but children that if they're added to a group they didn't agree to before hand, it's OK for them to leave immediately.

#### BLOCK, REPORT AND LEAVE

If a child encounters inappropriate content or feels uncomfortable in a group chat, encourage them to block and report the sender and leave the group. Make sure children know it's OK to leave a group chat if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

#### SUPPORT, NOT JUDGEMENT

Group chats are an excellent way for children to connect and feel like they belong. However, remind them that they can confide in you if they feel bullied or excluded. Instead of reacting to the person who's upset them, validate their feelings and empower them by discussing how they'd like to handle the situation. You can also encourage children to speak up if they witness others being bullied.

#### PRACTISE SAFE SHARING

It's vital for children to be aware of what they're sharing and also might potentially see it. Encourage them to understand the importance of not revealing personal details – like their address, their school, or photos they wouldn't like to be seen widely. Remind them that once something is shared in a group, they can't be certain where it might end up or how it might be used.

#### SILENCE NOTIFICATIONS

Being bombarded with notifications from a group chat can be an irritating distraction – especially if it's happening late in the evening. Explain to children that they can still be part of a group chat while disabling notifications. In fact, it would be healthier for them to do so, helping them avoid the pressure to respond immediately.



## Attendance

As parents and carers we want to share our attendance figures because it is you who can make the big difference. Our children are entitled to a full and balanced education and at Belsay we feel we provide one of the best experiences possible.

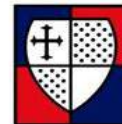
**Current Whole School attendance is 94.94%.** Our **NEW** target for Whole School Attendance is 95%.

Class	Weekly attendance	Annual attendance
Willow	100%	95.8%
Maple	100%	95.4%
Alder	97.6%	93.7%
Oak	100%	97%

Days of school add up to lost learning						
Days in school	190	186	180	175	171	170
Percentage attendance	100%	98%	95%	92%	90%	<90%
	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Caution	Cause for concern	Serious concern

Absence Procedures if your child is ill, please keep them at home until they are well enough to return to school. Please notify us by phone call or email before 9.15am if your child is to be absent, and continue to inform us on a daily basis if they continue to be ill.

We have a continual focus on attendance and punctuality and this is of the utmost importance in your child's education. Please remember that our school gate closes at 8.55am as this is when our lessons begin. Anyone arriving after this time is classed as late and will miss valuable learning opportunities which take place immediately after registration, such as phonics.

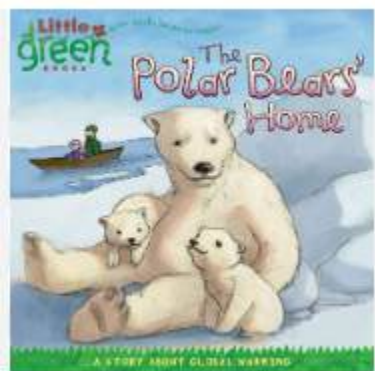


## Classroom updates - Willow Class

Another fantastic week here in Willow class! Every week just seems to be getting better and better!

In Maths, our focus has been the number 6. The children have been exploring this number through counting activities, matching games and practical tasks that help them understand quantity and order. We have been practising recognising the numeral, representing it with objects and spotting it in our everyday environment. This hands-on approach helps to make number learning fun and meaningful.

We have read the story *The Polar Bear's Home*. This is a story about polar bears and how we can help to take care of them and the world we are living in. We have been learning interesting facts about polar bears, their habitats and how they survive in the Arctic. Our 'make a fuss' words this week have been habitat, survive and environment. Ask your child what they can remember about these important words. One of the highlights of the week was making igloos out of sugar cubes which encouraged creativity, problem-solving and teamwork.



We continue to celebrate every child's effort and progress as we encourage them to be the best that they can be. This week, we have seen children showing resilience in new activities, being kind and supportive to their friends, and demonstrating curiosity in all areas of learning. Recognising and celebrating these small achievements helps children feel proud and motivated to keep trying their best every day. It was great to share this with our Pele Trust visitors this week and they were very impressed with everyone in Willow class. What a team!

Thank you for your continued support in helping your child enjoy their learning journey. Have a wonderful weekend!

**Miss Houghton**



## Classroom updates - Maple Class

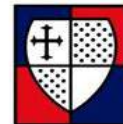
This week in Maple Class, we have been very busy in English and Art. In English, the children worked hard to write clear instructions for how to pack for a long journey, inspired by the story Lost and Found. We focused on using time words, bossy verbs and conjunctions to make our writing easy to follow. In Art, we explored the work of Piet Mondrian, carefully responding to his use of bold shapes and primary colours.

In PSHE, we learned all about eating a healthy and balanced diet. We used the Eatwell Guide to discuss the different food groups, how much we should eat of each and why. We then used our knowledge of healthy foods to plan a healthy meal.

We have also been developing our skills in Computing by practising dragging and dropping using the trackpads on our Chromebooks. In PE, we are thoroughly enjoying our dance unit with Mr Smith, where we have been practising a range of moves and steps to the K-pop song Soda Pop.



Miss Dixon



## Classroom updates- Alder class

It has been a busy week for Alder Class. In English, the children started drafting their letters to a pet expert, asking for advice on how to care for a bearded dragon. We focused on using adjectives, conjunctions and relative clauses to make our writing more detailed. We worked hard on adding a formal tone to our letter. The children have all worked hard to get the structure and layout of their letters correct. We are looking forward to reading the final drafts next week.

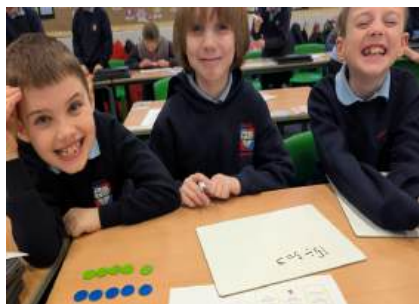
In Maths, we have been continuing our focus on individual times tables, using songs, actions and manipulatives to support our learning. Thank you for all the work that you are doing at home on TTRS - please continue to keep up the good work!

In Science, we have been learning the acronym MRS GREN to help us remember the seven key characteristics of living organisms. In PE, we continue to enjoy our dance unit with Mr Smith and our time swimming.

In History, we are continuing with our Viking topic. This week, we have learnt about how the Vikings explored the world to raid, plunder and trade goods with different nations. We were surprised at how far they travelled in the small longboats. We started our new RE topic this week, looking at what it is like to be a Hindu in Britain today. We learnt about dharma and considered the different duties that we have in our lives.

Have a great weekend Alder Class. Don't forget your double Bookwork points for all of your reads this weekend too! We look forward to seeing you all again next week.

**Mrs Aynsley & Mrs Rutter**





## Classroom updates - Oak Class

It's been another packed and purposeful week in Oak Class, with the children throwing themselves into learning across the curriculum and showing real maturity in how they approach their work.

In English, we've been developing our writing by focusing on opinions written as direct speech. The children have worked hard to choose appropriate reporting clauses and to move them around within sentences to improve flow and effect. It's been great to see pupils becoming more confident and adventurous with how they present dialogue.

In Maths, both year groups have been tackling the formal written methods of division. Mr Mc's Year 6s and Mr P's Year 5s have been working carefully through the steps, focusing on accuracy, place value and explaining their thinking clearly. The resilience and concentration shown have been excellent, particularly when problems required several steps.

In Science, Mr P's class explored inheritance and how we inherit features from our parents. Pupils learned that characteristics such as eye colour, hair type and facial features can be passed down, while also understanding that everyone is unique.

Our History lessons have continued with the dramatic story of the Spanish Armada. The children learned why Elizabeth I was such an important figure in England's victory and how her leadership helped shape the outcome of this significant event.

In PSHE, we've been talking about stress and recognising that it's a normal part of life. Pupils explored practical ways to manage stress, including talking to others, taking breaks and recognising when support is needed.

Finally, in RE, pupils learned about the Islamic belief of Iman and what faith means to Muslims. They explored how belief can influence actions and attitudes in daily life.

A big thank you for the brilliant homework coming in. The effort and pride being taken is really noticeable. Thanks for all your continued support, and we'll see everyone on Monday.



Mr McLeod & Mr Pritchard



## Dates for your Diary

*Events could be subject to change and will be communicated if required*

Date	Time	
Monday 26th January	3.30pm	Parents SATS Information Session
Thursday 29th January	PM	Year 5/6 attending a performance at the Theatre Royal
Thursday 12th February	3.30pm	Newby Wiske Information evening
Friday 13th February	3.15pm	School closes for half term
Monday 23rd February	All day	School closed for teacher training day
Tuesday 24th February	8.45am	School reopens
Tuesday 10th March	PM	Shakespeare performance at Northern Stage
Wednesday 11th March	All day	Newby Wiske residential
Thursday 12th March	All day	Newby Wiske residential
Friday 13th March	All day	Newby Wiske residential
Monday 23rd March	All week	Scholastic Book Fair in school
Monday 23rd March	Various times	Parents evening
Tuesday 24th March	Various times	Parents evening
Thursday 2nd April	3.15pm	School closes for Easter

**Happy Birthday to:**

**Edward (Oak)**

**Sebastian (Oak)**

🎉 Wishing you both a fantastic day! 🎂



Details on local clubs in the area - great opportunities for pupils to learn, stay active, and have fun beyond the school day

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# Friday Flyer

# BELSAY



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