

20th March 2026

Headteachers Update

What a lovely week it has been here at Belsay! It has been fantastic to finally enjoy some brighter, milder weather, and even better to see the children making the most of it. The field has been full of energy and excitement, and it's been great to see classes heading outdoors for their learning too—whether that's science work or time spent in Forest School. With the daffodils starting to bloom around school, it really does feel like spring is on its way and, hopefully, here to stay!

This week, we were also pleased to welcome visitors from NDAS, who delivered a series of workshops tailored to each age group. Our younger children explored feelings and emotions, while our older pupils focused on important themes such as staying safe online and understanding the risks associated with the digital world. These are such valuable sessions, particularly as children grow and begin to navigate technology more independently.

Today brought a splash of colour to school as we marked Red Nose Day. It was wonderful to see so many children coming in non-uniform, proudly wearing red in support of such an important cause. Thank you so much for your generosity—your donations really will make a difference to those less fortunate than ourselves.

Looking ahead to next week, we have a couple of key events taking place. Our Book Fair will be open, and we also have Parents' Evenings scheduled for Monday and Tuesday. If you haven't already done so, please make sure you have booked your appointment. As a gentle reminder, we ask that you arrive just before your allocated time and wait outside the classroom. Teachers will have books ready to share with you, and appointments are scheduled for around 10 minutes to ensure everything runs smoothly and on time for all families, as well as allowing staff to finish at a reasonable hour.

It has also been fantastic to return to our Hot Chocolate celebrations and Celebration Assembly this week following the success of last week's residential. Well done to all of our winners—it was a brilliant way to recognise the many achievements across school.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support. I hope you all have a wonderful weekend, and we look forward to seeing everyone again next week.

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 NINTENDO SWITCH 2

Nintendo launched its Switch 2 games console in early June 2025 – its first new console in eight years. While it builds on the original's success by remaining compatible with certain existing games, it also adds powerful hardware and new features like GameChat and a USB-C camera. As more children look to upgrade, it's important to understand how this new console might affect their play and safety.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

EASIER TO ACCESS MATURE CONTENT (18 CRYSTAL)

Despite Nintendo's reputation for family-friendly titles, mature games like Cyberpunk 2077 and Hitman have been released onto the platform. With the Switch 2's improved performance, developers will be able to port even more mature-rated games. These may appeal to children due to their popularity, but they contain content that is highly unsuitable for young audiences.

GAMECHAT & REAL-TIME VOICE COMMUNICATION (DANGER)

GameChat enables live chatting with up to 12 people, even across different games, with optional video and screen-sharing. Though children under 18 are restricted to chatting only with approved friends, the sheer interactivity could raise privacy concerns or create pressure to remain online longer.

CAMERA COMPATIBILITY & PRIVACY CONCERNS

The optional USB-C camera supports video calling and focus overlays in games; however, this also poses the risk of spy-blogging or the unwanted sharing of personal images. The camera can be disabled, removed or covered, and parental controls are essential to manage how and when it is used.

POWERFUL PULL OF FAMILIAR CHARACTERS

Nintendo's mascot, Mario – along with Pikachu, Donkey Kong and others – remains hugely appealing to younger audiences, especially after the success of the recent film, 'The Super Mario Bros. Movie' (2023). These beloved icons are central to Nintendo's branding and other features in merchandising, adverts and in-game promotions, creating strong emotional attachments in children and a sense of urgency to keep up with their peers.

IN-APP & GAME STORE PURCHASES

The Nintendo eShop enables purchases with just a few taps. If payment details are saved and PIN protection is disabled, children may unintentionally make costly purchases – including game add-ons, downloadable content or in-game currencies – without parental approval.

UNRESTRICTED ONLINE PLAY IN SOME GAMES

While GameChat is one feature, Switch 2 also connects to the broader Nintendo Switch Online service. Many free-to-play titles like Fortnite or Splatoon 4 allow voice or text chat with strangers unless chat settings are adjusted, meaning children could encounter inappropriate language or unwanted contact.

Advice for Parents & Educators

CHECK RATINGS & USE PARENTAL CONTROLS

Every Switch and Switch 2 game comes with a PEGI age rating. Before buying one, ensure the content matches your child's age. Use the Nintendo Parental Controls app to monitor gameplay, set screen-time limits and manage friend requests.

REVIEW FRIEND LISTS AND CHAT PERMISSIONS

Child profiles are restricted to chatting with approved friends only, but it's good practice to regularly check their friend list and communication settings. Use the Parental Controls app to switch off voice or video chat if necessary.

REMOVE OR RESTRICT PAYMENT METHODS

Avoid accidental spending by unlinking credit cards from the device. Instead, consider loading funds via prepaid gift cards or registering a PIN for purchases. Some leading apps can also be set to approve transactions manually.

ENCOURAGE OPEN CONVERSATIONS

Teach children how to block, report and capture any harmful or content that makes them uncomfortable. The console's built-in tools allow them to create screenshots or video clips, which can aid in reporting any issues. Keeping an open dialogue helps children feel supported and safe.



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	94.3%	96.9%
Maple	97.8%	95%
Alder	95%	94%
Oak	93.8%	97.6%

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.

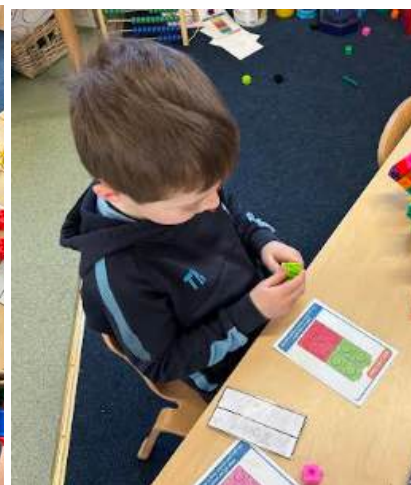
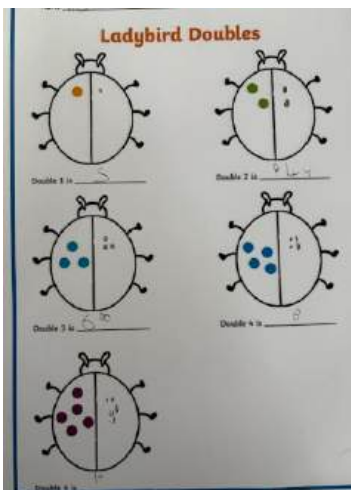
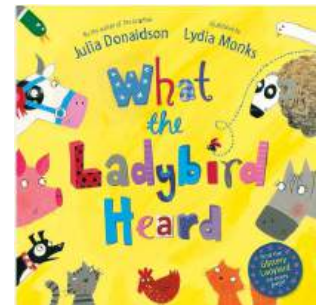
We have a continual focus on attendance and punctuality and this is of the utmost importance in your child's education. Please remember that our school gate closes at 8.55am as this is when our lessons begin. Anyone arriving after this time is classed as late and will miss valuable learning opportunities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



Classroom updates - Willow Class

This week has been full of exciting learning and creativity in our classroom. We have enjoyed celebrating Reuben and Theo turning 5!

Our focus story this week has been *What the Ladybird Heard*. The children have enjoyed listening to the story, talking about the characters, and exploring the events that take place on the farm. To support their storytelling skills, the children created a story map. A story map is a visual way of retelling a story using pictures, symbols and simple marks instead of writing sentences. This helps children organise their ideas, remember the sequence of events, and practise telling the story in their own words. It builds confidence with storytelling and prepares them for writing stories independently in the future.



In maths we have been learning about doubles. The children have been exploring what happens when we add the same number together, such as double 1, double 2 and double 3. We used practical resources, counting games and lots of discussion to help the children recognise and remember these number facts.

We also enjoyed celebrating Red Nose Day. The children took part in fun activities while learning about helping others and raising money for important causes. Thank you for your support in helping us take part in this special day.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support. I hope you have a lovely weekend.

Miss Houghton



Classroom updates - Maple Class

In Maths, Year 1 have been developing their skills in counting in 10s and 5s, building confidence and fluency. Meanwhile, Year 2 have been applying their knowledge of step counting to solve multiplication and division problems. It has been fantastic to see how quickly the children are becoming at recalling their times table facts! In English, we took inspiration from *We're Going on an Egg Hunt* and wrote imaginative diary entries from the perspective of one of the bunnies. The children worked incredibly hard to include exciting vocabulary, conjunctions to join ideas, and a range of sentence types to make their writing engaging.

In Science, we began planning a class enquiry to investigate why apples turn brown and which liquids might prevent this change. The children showed great teamwork as they discussed which liquids to test and how to ensure a fair experiment. They wrote thoughtful scientific predictions, giving reasons for their ideas, and even ranked the liquids in order of which they thought would cause the apples to brown the quickest.

We also enjoyed a special visit from the Northumberland County Council team, who helped us learn more about our feelings and the Zones of Regulation. It has been a busy and exciting week full of curiosity, creativity, and collaboration!



Miss Dixon



Classroom updates- Alder class

Another great week this week in Alder Class. In English, we have been researching fact files ahead of writing one about the Vikings, combining knowledge from our class text and history lessons to summarise our learning.

In Maths, we have completed a short-week long unit on measuring area. We have explored how to measure the area of shapes and how to compare different areas of shapes. It has been great to see the children using their mathematical vocabulary in their reasoning and problem solving work this week. We have also continued our morning focus on times tables. Thank you for your support in learning these at home too through Times Table Rock Stars and our homework. We are really noticing the difference in fluency and confidence.

In Geography, we have looked at earthquakes and how they happen. We explored what happens to the tectonic plates when an earthquake occurs and the potential damage that it can cause. We were fascinated to learn about the technology that some countries use to make their buildings more earthquake resistant. Next week, we will expand this to discover why some areas in the world have more catastrophic earthquakes than others.

In Science this week we have begun our second biology topic this year which focuses on living things. We learnt about invertebrates and found a wide variety of organisms on the school field. It was fantastic to hear how much of our previous topic the children had remembered.

On Thursday afternoon, we enjoyed a workshop from Northumberland County Council focusing on our self-esteem and all of the things that we are great at. The children loved making fortune tellers full of their talents to share with each other and you at home.

Have a lovely weekend everyone. We look forward to seeing you next week.

Mrs Aynsley and Mrs Rutter





Classroom updates - Oak class

What a brilliant week we've had in Oak Class with lots of new learning, great attitudes and some fantastic progress across the board!

In English, we have begun our new unit on Suspense Stories with Mr P. The children have started by identifying key features of this genre, including how authors build tension through atmosphere, powerful vocabulary, pacing and withholding information. There have been some great discussions around what makes a story gripping, and we're really looking forward to seeing the children begin to craft their own suspense writing over the coming weeks.

In Maths, we've been working hard on our understanding of fractions. Year 6 have been focusing on multiplying and dividing fractions by integers and by other fractions, developing both fluency and confidence in applying key methods. The progress this week has been excellent, with children showing increasing independence and accuracy. Year 5 have been exploring functions with fractions, beginning to understand how we can add and subtract from mixed numbers too.

In Science, we have been learning about Carl Linnaeus and his important work in classification. The children have explored how living things are grouped and why classification is so important in helping scientists understand the natural world. There were some brilliant discussions and thoughtful questions throughout the lesson.

In Geography, we've had two really engaging lessons focusing on natural disasters. We explored how disasters can have huge impacts on people and places, using case studies such as the Haiti earthquake and Mount Etna. We then built on this by investigating why some areas of the world are more vulnerable than others, linking this to location and physical geography. The children showed great curiosity and really started to think like geographers.

In RE, we began our new unit on the Kingdom of God, starting by exploring how Jesus did not meet many people's expectations as a leader. The children engaged thoughtfully with this idea and began to consider how different people might have viewed Jesus at the time.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support. It really does make a huge difference.



Mr McLeod & Mr Pritchard



Little Listeners: Orchestra Unpacked

Boiler House, Newcastle University

Sat 21st March, 2:30pm

A family-friendly concert for all ages

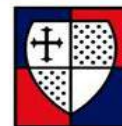
A treasure hunt with a tuneful twist! The Orchestra of Opera North needs your help finding some hidden musical gems. Discover different "Tuneful Treasures" as you go, collecting them all in time for the grand finale.

In this relaxed, interactive concert, singing and movement is not just encouraged - it's expected! Join us to experience the magic of orchestral music up close, whatever your age

More information and booking:

<https://www.operanorth.co.uk/whats-on/little-listeners/book/780201/>





Dates for your Diary

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

Date	Time	
Monday 23rd March	All week	Scholastic Book Fair in school
Monday 23rd March	Various times	Parents evening
Tuesday 24th March	Various times	Parents evening
Tuesday 31st March	All day	Maple class MITNE trip
Tuesday 31st March	All day	Alder class MITNE trip
Wednesday 1st April	All day	Oak class MITNE trip
Thursday 2nd April	All day	Willow class MITNE trip
Thursday 2nd April	3.15pm	School closes for Easter
Monday 20th April	8.45am	School opens for Summer 1
Thursday 23rd April	9am	Class photos
Monday 4th May	All day	School closed for bank holiday
Monday 11th May	All week	SATs week
Wednesday 13th May	TBC	Reception vision screening
Friday 22nd May	3.15pm	School closes for half term
Monday 1st June	8.45am	School opens for Summer 2
Wednesday 17th June-Sunday 21st June		Year 6 France trip
Tuesday 7th July	1pm	Sports Day
Friday 17th July	1pm	School closes for the summer holidays



Friday Flyer

BELSAY



BABY & TODDLER GROUP

Every Monday (during term time)
in the school hall • 10am - 11am

Come along to a relaxed
and friendly group

EVERYONE WELCOME

£2.50 PER FAMILY