



*Every Child, Every Chance,
Every Day*

Thameside In-touch!

Edition 38: 4th April 2025

Facebook: @ThamesidePrimary



Dear Parents and Carers,

The end of another term – I cannot believe how fast this year is going. It has been lovely to see some sunshine coming through this term, which means we have been able to enjoy our wonderful field, and our gardening club have started their planting ready for the summer! Seeing the daffodils as I drive into work each morning certainly does bring a little sparkle to our wonderful school site!



This term we have enjoyed celebrating several important awareness events including World Book Day, Neurodiversity week; the Trust Science Fair final and Eid, all of which are an important part of ensuring that children experience a wide range of enriching opportunities as part of their time at Thameside. A huge thank you to Mrs Shiraz and Mrs Adeel for leading our Eid



Celebration Day which was such a wonderful celebration of kindness across our school. Thank you also to Andreia Costa and Alex Richardson for coming to speak to our Year 5 and 6 children all about neurodiversity – Alex talked about living with autism and I know we were all so impressed with the interesting questions that our children asked. Our termly Citizenship awards ceremony also took place yesterday, with Beth Taylor (Vice Chair of the Cambrian Trust board) coming to give out the awards. It was a very special celebration and we are very grateful that she was able to join us.



Trust Inclusion Review feedback

We also welcomed the trust Inclusion Lead, SEND lead and another trust SENCO to Thameside this term – they were all incredibly positive about our offer for children with SEND, vulnerable pupils and those in receipt of Pupil Premium, both in the classrooms; our work with outside agencies and also the wider opportunities we provide.

We were delighted with this feedback and look forward to sharing some key comments once we receive the report. This is testament to the whole team and their hard work – well done!

Staffing updates

As mentioned in my piece in the last newsletter, we sadly say goodbye to Miss Cross at the end of April who is retiring– we will miss her hugely, but we are really glad that she will still be at Thameside for the first week of next term so that we can ensure a smooth transition for her class and say our proper goodbyes. We welcome Mrs Kerry White who has already spent time in school with the class and to complete a handover with Miss Cross. Mrs White is an experienced teacher and is looking forward to getting to know the Thameside family next term!

We are also delighted to welcome Mrs Colette O Connor to Thameside as our new Home School Link Worker – Colette has lots of experience in working with families as a safeguarding nurse so brings a wealth of skills and knowledge, as

well as a passion for supporting families. She is really looking forward to getting to know all of our families.

We also welcomed Miss Gaby Lee as an additional teaching assistant this term – Miss Lee has recently completed her teacher training and has already settled in brilliantly to the team!

We hope that you enjoy the latest edition of Thameside in Touch. The children have had a very special last day with an Easter Egg hunt in the sunshine – thank you to our wonderful PTA for making this happen!

Wishing you all a restful Easter and we look forward to seeing everyone back at school on **Tuesday 22nd April!**

Laura Youngman

Headteacher



In this edition:

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Our stars of the Term

Year 6: Jenson

Year 5: Alfie-George

Year 4: Allanah

Year 3: Sarah

Year 2: Aashitha

Year 1: Jasmine

Reception: Killian

Headteacher Star: Tiarna (Year 1)

Miss Polley's Kindness Star: Mason (Year 6)



Introducing our new staff!

Miss Gaby Lee – Teaching assistant

1. Favourite chocolate bar: Kinder Bueno
2. Place of birth: Hong Kong
3. Favourite place in the world: Tokyo, Japan
4. Favourite book: *The Mountain Is You* by Brianna Wiest
5. Favourite film: *The Parent Trap*
6. Favourite song: *Pick Up the Phone* – Henry Moodie
7. My last meal on Earth would be: Anything made by my Granny – nothing beats her cooking!
8. When I was little, I wanted to be: A pastry chef (I've always loved to bake!)
9. Unlikely interesting fact about me: I fall asleep immediately whenever I'm on a plane– usually before take-off!



Mrs Kerry White – Year 3 teacher

1. My favourite chocolate bar is a caramel bar
2. I was born in Bedford
3. My favourite place is riding a rollercoaster with my family
4. My favourite book is a tough one because I love reading, but I really enjoyed reading *The Lost Whale* by Hannah Gold last year.
5. My favourite recent film is *Wonka*
6. My favourite song is "Do your thing" by Basement Jaxx
7. My last meal on earth would have to be teriyaki chicken noodles
8. When I was little, I wanted to be a nurse, or a teacher.
9. An unlikely fact... I can tap dance!



Mrs Colette O Connor – Home School Link Worker

1. Favourite chocolate bar? (important things first!) Mint Aero
2. Place of birth? Brent London
3. Favourite place in all the world? On the beach in Ireland
4. Favourite book? Little people big dreams books - Dolly Parton
5. Favourite film? Sing 1
6. Favourite song? Cold heart by Elton John and Dua Lipa
7. Last meal on Earth is likely to be? Thai curry
8. When I was little, I wanted to grow up to be a vet... However I became a nurse looking after humans!



Kindness Shout out!

One of our core school rules at Thameside is 'show kindness' – we see children modelling this each and every single day in their interactions but we wanted to give a special shout out to a couple of children who have really gone above and beyond!

Harvey in Year 3 decided that he wanted to donate some of his pocket money to a local church after a visit and Mason, pictured below, wrote a little book for the children in our Acorn Room; he received a special award at our Star of the Term assembly too!.

Really well done – kindness really does make the world go round!



Attendance Update



The Department for Education tracks attendance carefully and we aim to have an attendance figure in excess of 96%.

Our attendance figure to date is **93%** so we do still have some work to do to meet that target. **However, your hard work and support is appreciated as the progress we have made as a school together in partnership with parents and carers this year was recognised externally this week through an Oxfordshire County Council audit– thank you!! Let's get to at least 96% by the end of the year!**

Regular attendance is very important for children to achieve the best they can. If children are absent from school, it not only affects their education but they will miss out on the social side of school which affects their ability to make and keep friends; it can also impact their confidence to attempt new work and work alongside each other.

We appreciate that attendance levels can be affected by illness, particularly colds, tummy bugs and chickenpox. We would therefore encourage all parents to send their children into school wherever possible. However, if they have been ill with sickness and/or diarrhoea, please keep them off school until they have been symptom free for a minimum of 48 hours to prevent the bug spreading throughout the school community as this has a significant, adverse effect on attendance levels of both staff and children.

Just a couple of reminders:

Holidays and Absence in Term Time

Absence will not be authorised during term time except in exceptional circumstances. It is very important that all parents and carers understand that children with unauthorised absences, including holidays, and unexplained absences are at risk of receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice from Oxfordshire County Council - further details can be found on our website.

Medical Appointments

We request that, where possible, routine medical and dentist appointments are arranged outside school hours as these appointments will affect your child's percentage attendance. We do understand that some appointments, such as hospital consultations are not always possible to arrange outside of school hours.

Thank you again for your continued support with this.

Class learning reviews

To find out more about what each year group is learning, please do check out our updated parent curriculum overviews on the class pages of our website!

[Thameside Primary School - Class Pages \(thamesideschool.co.uk\)](http://thamesideschool.co.uk)

Nursery

What a term it has been in nursery! We have been learning about Spring and how the world has been changing around us. Fitting in with this perfectly, we have started Forest School sessions with Miss Higgins. We have been for bug hunts, adventures, natural painting, teddy bear's picnic, building shelters, tree climbing as well as much more. We have really enjoyed meeting Marvin the Mole and are looking forward to some more sessions next term!



We have also been thinking about farm animals and adult and baby names. He have enjoyed making animals out of recycled materials and thinking about where each animal lives and what it likes to do.



This term we have celebrated Beep Beep day (road safety), Eid and Easter. These festivals have fitted in well with our Maths focus topic of patterns.

Reception



This term, Reception class have had so much fun learning all about plants and different life cycles.

The children have loved working hard outside in our gardening area to get it ready for our plants and seeds. The children have already spotted



that their sunflower seeds have started to grow!

Reception have been exceptionally lucky to have had a special visitor in to work with them to create their own firework flowers and seed balls which are going to be planted in the new park! The children worked together to put all the soil, seeds, clay and water together to then get their hands stuck in and super messy to mix it all together!



Year 1

Year 1 have shown their adventurous sides this term with some amazing activities about explorers. They really enjoyed a visit from Mr Kirkham, head of the Duke of Edinburgh expedition team at Larkmead School, who came to share his experiences of exploring and camping. The children especially enjoyed hearing about how to cook when you don't have a kitchen and really liked going in the tent! They then came up with some brilliant descriptions of their own imaginary explorers.

Just last week, we had a creative project based on 'This Book Will Make you an Artist'. The children chose their favourite artists and made some amazing pictures, before writing their own instructions. The work was so amazing, we've entered it into a national competition - 'Our Class Loves this Book', run by the UKLA. Hope we win!



Year 2

This term, we have had a fantastic time experimenting with different food combinations, learning how to cut and prepare various vegetables, and revisiting our understanding of a balanced diet. All of this hard work definitely paid off when we created our healthy wraps!

The design brief was to make a delicious wrap that children would enjoy as part of their lunch. Each wrap needed to include a protein, carbohydrate, vegetables, and dairy. I was truly amazed by the imaginative flavour combinations the children came up with and their enthusiasm for trying such a wide range of new and different foods. The entire class worked incredibly hard and demonstrated great maturity in creating their delicious wraps. Hopefully, they will be offering to make some for you at home soon!

In stark contrast to these tasty creations, I have also been horrified by some of the bizarre and frankly dangerous combinations the children came up with for their "disgusting sandwich" recipes! As part of our English learning this term, we have been writing sets of instructions explaining how to make the most revolting sandwiches possible. The children carefully planned their ingredient and equipment lists before crafting clear, detailed instructions using imperative verbs, fronted adverbials, and some truly disgusting adjectives.

For your own safety, I hope none of the children ever attempt to make these sandwiches at home—best to stick to the wraps instead!

Year 3

Year 3 have had a great time this term cooking seasonal vegetable tarts as part of our DT lessons. First, we looked at different vegetables and where they came from. We thought about food miles and how using locally produced vegetables was cost effective and good for the planet. Next, we tasted lots of different vegetables. We were surprised that the tomato puree did not taste like ketchup!



Making the tarts was great fun. We had to chop, peel and grate different ingredients before adding them to our puff pastry slice.

The best part of the lesson was eating them. They tasted delicious!





Year 4

Year 4 have been extremely busy this term, we enjoyed visiting Trinity Church to learn about Easter, Miss Bourne's tour of Abingdon Abbey with a workshop at Abingdon museum, World Book Day - bookshop and library tour, swimming and adapted a biscuit recipe. Mrs Youngman and Miss Polley really loved them!



Year 5

Year 5 have had an absolutely fantastic half term. They have continued to show resilience and determination through all of their work, ensuring they follow school rules and demonstrate the 5R's.

During this half term, the children completed the Primary Playmaker Scheme programme by visiting the Oxford Playhouse to watch plays written by the children that had been included in the scheme. This was a fantastic experience that all the children thoroughly enjoyed. In English, we have been learning about different women in science and their contributions to many discoveries across a range of different fields. The children enjoyed researching and writing a biography about the scientist Marie Curie and her discovery of radiation.

In DT, the children designed and modified a recipe which resulted in them successfully preparing and cooking a spaghetti Bolognese. A massive well done Y5 for all of your hard work this half term!

Year 6

Such a busy six weeks, with lots of determination and resilience being shown by children and staff alike! Although we have been working hard towards SATs, practising skills and learning how to apply them in all areas of the curriculum, we have still found time for some fun and treats along the way. We were very lucky to experience a variety of animals when Radley Zoo came to visit us - some very brave children conquering their fears, however Mrs Russell was not so brave with the scorpion! DT challenged us all this term, creating a three-course menu with ingredients we were not used to using, but creativity and careful planning helped us make tasty choices.

Hopefully our learning in PSHE - Mental Health - will help us all stay calm and focused next term, but until then, I am sure there will be plenty of chocolate and sunshine to help us recharge over the Easter break!

Acorn Room

Within the Acorn room we've all found fun in learning and have had some wonderful wow moments this term! Books are always easily accessible and the bigger the book the better! We have also enjoyed working together to solve maths problems and having lots of fun whilst we learn. Everyone is using

the picture communication cards especially the now/next boards with ease, making our time at school fun with continuous communication and learning.



TTRockstars and Times Tables at home! Numbots at home!

We have been really proud of all of our children and how brilliantly they have engaged with Numbots and TTR this term – this is celebrated every week in celebration assembly. Keep it up!

Remember that 5 minutes a day can make a huge difference. We are looking for the next Rock Hero so do keep practising over the Easter break! Keeeeeepppp calculating!

If you are looking for more Maths games to play over the break there are some suggested links below:

- **[Learn to Count with fun Counting Games for KS1 Children](#)**

- [25 Fun Maths Games For Kids To Do At Home](#)
- [Maths at Home | NRICH](#)
- [Free KS2 Maths teaching resources | Page 1 of 8 | Oak National Academy](#)

Learning at home resources

Please do check out our website which is continuing to grow! We have included lots of new information about our curriculum and resources to help support you at home on the following pages:

[Thameside Primary School - Keeping Safe \(thamesideschool.co.uk\)](http://thamesideschool.co.uk)

[Thameside Primary School - Families and Learning at home \(thamesideschool.co.uk\)](http://thamesideschool.co.uk)



PE Update!

Great Athlete Event

The children had a fantastic afternoon taking part in their Great Athlete sponsorship event!

The school was a buzz of excitement as each class completed circuits with international sprinter Lesley Owusu. There was then also an opportunity to ask her questions in assembly. A massive thank you to all of



you who sponsored your child, the money raised will go towards buying new PE and playtime equipment. The children will receive their wristbands and posters in assembly very soon.

Football

Mr Ponting (our Afterschool Football coach) is really pleased with how well the children are progressing at football club. They are playing more as a team and seem to be really enjoy attending each week. Being part of the club is a great opportunity to socialise, work collaboratively and of course develop football skills! Some members of the club will be taking part in a Football Tournament at John Mason School after Easter. We are also arranging a Thameside Football Tournament in May, for our children in Years 4-6, more details to follow shortly.

Library Corner



OUR THAMESIDE 100 READING CHALLENGES!

Just a reminder about our 'Thameside 100' reading challenge – we have already awarded some badges this term and Easter is a great opportunity to read lots of fabulous books!

We have chosen 100 wonderful, diverse books which we would love the children to enjoy while they are at Thameside. They are

split into four categories - bronze, silver, gold and platinum - based on interest level and how easy/hard they are to read.

To complete a challenge, the children need to read twenty of the books on that list. We will read some in class. Others they can share at home during story time with a grown-up or - when they are more confident - they will be able to read by themselves. There's no time limit on the challenge: we all read at different speeds!

Everyone is welcome, right from Nursery up to Year 6, and the staff will be joining in too 😊 For each challenge completed, our pupils will get a lovely certificate, badge and their names in the T100 book of fame!

We will send home a paper copy of the challenges, but you can see the covers in colour and get more details on our website:

[Thameside Primary School - Thameside 100 Reading Challenges!](#)

Reading over the Easter break

We have also included some top tips for using technology to support reading in the poster on the next page, but there are some fabulous new books recommended at the following link too to explore:

[New children and teen books we love in March 2025 | BookTrust](#)

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators USING TECHNOLOGY TO BOOST READING SKILLS

The way we engage with text has changed dramatically over the years. Whether reading captions on social media, instructions in a video game or an e-book on a digital device, technology plays a major role in modern literacy. While traditional books remain invaluable, digital tools can enhance reading skills by making text more accessible, interactive and engaging.

1 CHOOSING THE RIGHT TYPE OF TEXT

Before integrating technology, consider the types of text that a child engages with. If they need help on occasion, digital reading pens can assist by scanning and reciting words or sentences. These tools are especially useful for students with reading difficulties, and can even be used in exams if they're part of their routine learning process. Proper training and practice are required, but they can be a great help when tackling printed text.

2 READING ON SCREEN

Many devices now allow users to customise text for better readability. Adjusting font type, size and background colour can significantly enhance comprehension. For many readers, white text on a black background is the easiest to see, whereas other styles – such as dyslexia-friendly fonts – are designed to help those who are struggling. Teaching children how to personalise text settings on their devices empowers them to read more comfortably and with greater confidence.

3 ACCESSIBILITY TOOLS

Most modern devices include built-in tools designed to support readers. These features can be found in Settings under Accessibility and may include text-to-speech, speech-to-text and screen magnification functions. Enabling these tools can make digital reading more user friendly, especially for children with learning difficulties or visual impairments, who might have an easier time with spoken language than the written word, or who might simply require a closer look at the text.

4 INTERACTIVE READING PROGRAMMES

Many digital reading devices, such as Kindle and other e-readers, offer features like word highlighting, adjustable text speed and built-in dictionaries. These tools help learners to break down complex words and phrases while maintaining an appropriate reading pace. Some programmes even allow users to track their progress, making reading a more structured and motivating experience.

5 VIDEO GAMES AND READING SKILLS

Many video games require players to read instructions, character dialogues and mission objectives, making them an unexpected but effective literacy tool. Games that involve storytelling, puzzles or problem-solving often include large amounts of text – encouraging children to read these texts aloud or discuss them can improve their comprehension and vocabulary in a fun, engaging way.

6 SUBTITLES AND CLOSED CAPTIONS

Watching videos with subtitles or closed captions is an effective way to enhance reading skills. As children watch their favourite shows or online videos, they can follow along with the text, gaining a better understanding of how written words sound when spoken aloud. This is particularly beneficial for reluctant readers, as it exposes them to words in a familiar, engaging context. Repeatedly watching content with subtitles reinforces word recognition and comprehension.

7 USING AUDIOBOOKS

Audiobooks are an excellent way to develop listening and reading skills simultaneously. Children can follow along with the text while listening to a narrator, reinforcing word recognition and fluency. For struggling readers, listening to an audiobook before attempting to read the text independently can boost their confidence and comprehension.

9 TEXT-TO-VOICE TECHNOLOGY

Text-to-voice software reads digital text aloud, making it easier for learners to follow along. Most smartphones, tablets and computers come with this function built in. When enabled, users can highlight a passage or sentence and press Play to hear it read aloud. This tool is particularly helpful for auditory learners and those who struggle with decoding written words.

8 VOICE-TO-TEXT FOR WRITING AND READING

Voice-to-text tools allow users to dictate words, which are then transcribed into text. This feature helps children see the connection between spoken and written language. By using text-to-voice to have their dictated words read back to them, learners can identify mistakes and improve their reading and writing skills simultaneously.

10 SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARENTAL CONTROLS

While social media provides opportunities for reading, most platforms have age restrictions of 13–16 years old, making parental guidance essential. Many social media videos include captions and comments that can encourage reading. However, it's important to use the platform's parental controls (such as time limits and content filters) to create a safe and educational online environment for children. Encouraging responsible social media use can ensure a balanced and productive approach to digital literacy.

Meet Our Expert

Catrina Lowri is a qualified special needs teacher and experienced SENCO. She recently launched her own site, Neuroteachers, which offers a library of short, 'how-to' and explanation videos for educators. Catrina also writes and delivers online training and events for multi-academy trusts, businesses, schools and training organisations.



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Key Diary dates for next term

[Thameside Primary School - Term Dates \(thamesideschool.co.uk\)](http://thamesideschool.co.uk)

We will add new dates to the online calendar on our website as well – so please do check regularly!!!

- Start of Term 5 – Tuesday 22nd April
- Phonics Check workshop (Year 1) – Friday 25th April
- Year 6 SATs week – Monday 12th May
- Year 6 Junior Citizenship trip
- Mental Health Matters Clothes Swap – Thursday 15th May (after school)
- End of Term 5 – Friday 23rd May (normal time)

Provisional dates for term 6 – these will be confirmed next term and please note that they are subject to change.

- Sports Day Years 1-6 – Tuesday 24th June (TBC)
- Year 6 productions – Tuesday 8th and Wednesday 9th July (times TBC)
- Swaps Day (new classes) – Thursday 10th July
- Reception graduation – Monday 14th July (time TBC)
- Nursery graduation – Tuesday 15th July (time TBC)
- Year 6 leaver's party – Wednesday 16th July (exact time TBC)
- Year 6 leaver's assembly – Friday 18th July am (time TBC)

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