



# Hilltop School Newsletter

Issue 4 2025-26

Happy New Year! It seems late saying it, but this is our first newsletter of the year. We are in fact swiftly approaching February half term which is the midway point in the school year. We will be reviewing the children's progress in the coming weeks and sharing this information with parents during formal parent- teacher meeting in the weeks after half term. Bookings will go live Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February.



You may be aware that The National Literacy Trust, in partnership with the Department for Education, have designated 2026 as the **National Year of Reading**. This country-wide campaign is the biggest of its kind in a generation, designed to help more people (re)discover the joy of reading and make it part of their

everyday lives. The campaign aims to use existing passions and interests as a springboard into reading for pleasure and a wide range of organisations have added their support. As a school we have joined the campaign and will be engaging in some of the activities on offer to schools throughout the year. There are a number of ways where parents and carers can get involved too.

Let's begin by setting the scene. We are already committed to every child becoming a confident reader because this means that reading is more likely to become a pleasurable activity. We have prioritised reading within school and incentivise reading at home through our **reading badge** award programme. I was delighted that 70 children in KS1 and KS2 earned their bronze badge last term. Badges are earned by reading with a home adult four times a week for ten weeks.

We know that there are a number of children who, for a variety of reasons, do not have the opportunity to read outside of school and would love to hear from any **volunteers** who might be able to make a regular time commitment to read with one or two children during the school day.

Over recent years we have been exploring ways to incorporate high quality texts into the children's learning. Each topic is enriched by **well-chosen picture and chapter books** which the classes enjoy through the week. In many cases these stories deepen the children's understanding of a historical context or allow them to explore a lived experience outside of their own, allowing for learning which is deeper than just the subject specific content. We are also slowly building up class sets of books so that children can explore these texts both independently and whilst listening to the adult read.

Towards the end of last year, the Minister for Education shared the government priority for every primary school to have a **school library**. We made this a priority a number of years ago, and together with the support of our Hilltop Friends PTA, commission earned from Book Fairs and donations from past and present families, we have developed a library we can be proud of.

Our Autumn book fair raised **£300 in commission**. Over the years, we have purchased a good range of picture, chapter, comic, and non-fiction books. Our **Amazon library wish list** includes a range of books should any families wish to make a donation to the school.

[https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/3SC1JQFEM802Q?ref=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/3SC1JQFEM802Q?ref=wl_share)

Please do remember to include your child's details if you wish for them to be acknowledged on the donation book plate which will be stuck in the front of the book.

All classes **visit the library weekly** and are able to exchange their books if they have been returned. Please encourage your child to keep their library book in their bookbag once you have read it together so that it is ready in school for library day. Please also encourage them to **look after our library books**. We are grateful when parents don't allow younger pre-school siblings to handle school books and discourage children from folding back the corners of pages to keep their place.

We would very much like to be able to **open the library**, initially for KS2 pupils, a few times a week during lunchtimes for Children to visit and enjoy the books. We are looking for individuals who may be interested in **volunteering** for half an hour on a weekly basis. Ideally, we'd want a little team of adults sharing the role so that there is some flexibility. If you are interested, please contact the school office.

One of the ways we are unlocking reading for the children is through audio books. We have purchased a number of Yoto players for use in classrooms and the main school sensory



room. We are in the process of building up our Yoto **audiobook library** and have also added a number of story cards to a separate Amazon library wish list:

[https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/365KIPHHRO18B?ref=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/365KIPHHRO18B?ref=wl_share)

Looking ahead to upcoming reading and story events, we will be participating in National Story telling Week activities next week.



We also have **Book Day** to look forward to in March. As usual we will be celebrating **Books at Bedtime** and children are invited to wear pyjamas to school on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March. Closer to the time we will share details about our Big Book Swap and our plans to invite parents in to read with the children on that day.

A few years ago, we compiled a list of **frequently asked questions in relation to listening to children read** at home. This list can be found on the Learning Updates page on the school website:

<https://www.hilltopfirst.co.uk/learning-updates>

If you are having difficulties in engaging your child in reading, please do speak to the class teacher.

A big thank you to all of the KS2 parents who came along to our **Pantry summer menu tasting** last Friday. Unfortunately, we are not able to run the event for KS1 parents alongside this Golden Time but we will look at a date for next term. Early Years parents are invited to come to the hall after their Golden Time visit on 6<sup>th</sup> February to taste items from the new menu which will be in place after half term. As soon as the weather warms up, the children will be able to begin picnicking a few times each week.

Please do check your child's menu choices for after half term, particularly if you have booked ahead. A big request to please remember to **cancel meals that are not needed**. This is particularly relevant for children entitled to free lunches as the school is still required to pay for ordered meals even if they have not been taken up.

As I shared in my recent letter to parents, we are having to look closely at our **attendance** data across the school. This is becoming a big concern as we are dropping below both local and national averages. The target for every child is 95%.

**Good attendance means...**  
being in school at least 95% of the time or 180 to 190 days



Please remember that the DfE attendance expectation for each child is 95%. Once it drops below 90% it is categorised as persistent absence. Please remember that if a child arrives after registers close, they are classes as absent for the morning session. The government has produced some **helpful advice and guidance for parents**:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/01/improving-school-attendance/>

I know that most of our absences are related to children's ill health and there have been some nasty bugs going round. I am hoping that as the weather begins to warm later on this term, we will begin to see a positive change. Later this week, we will be sharing attendance details with all parents whose child's current attendance is below 95%. I will also be sharing regular attendance updates in our whole school newsletters.

Attendance to date	
Nursery	87.9%
Reception	89.4%
Year 1	94.5%
Year 2	92.3%
Year 3	93.8%
Year 4	93.5%
Whole school	93.7%

Thank you for your support in addressing this whole school concern.

#### Dates for the diary

Fri 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 2:15pm – KS1 Grown-ups in Golden Time  
w/c 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb KS1 & KS2 Art Week  
Fri 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 2:15 – FS Grown-ups in Golden Time (11:15 for morning only children)  
Thurs 12<sup>th</sup> Feb – end of term 1pm pick-up  
Fri 27<sup>th</sup> Feb – FS & KS1 Planetarium visit  
Fri 6<sup>th</sup> Mar – World Book Day

*Lynn Bima*  
January 2026

[www.hilltopfirst.co.uk](http://www.hilltopfirst.co.uk)