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# 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025

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## Kirkstall Valley Primary School

Argie Road, Leeds LS4 2QZ

www.kirkstallvalley.org.uk T: 0113 887 8982



### Diary Dates

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December  
End of term

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> January  
Start of Spring 1 term

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Dear Kirkstall Valley Primary School Families,

How are you? I hope this newsletter finds you well!

What a week it was last week! Six performances over three days! A brilliant end to the calendar year for KVPS celebrating in bucket-loads our three values of courage, compassion and commitment. I was so proud – more to follow below!

This will be my final newsletter of 2025. I hope you have enjoyed receiving them this year – thanks for reading!

May I take this opportunity to wish you, your families and friends near and far a restful break from school and all the very best for 2026!

If ever you want to get in touch, please don't hesitate to do so – my door is always open.

Best wishes,

*Phil Robertson – Headteacher*

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### Attendance to date:

YR – 94.8% ↓

Year 1 – 93.7% ↓

Year 2 – 95.7% ↑ 👑

Year 3 – 92.9% ↓

Year 4 – 93% ↑

Year 5 – 95.1% ↑

Year 6 – 95% ↑

**School = 94.3% (Target = 96%)**

### Donate a book!

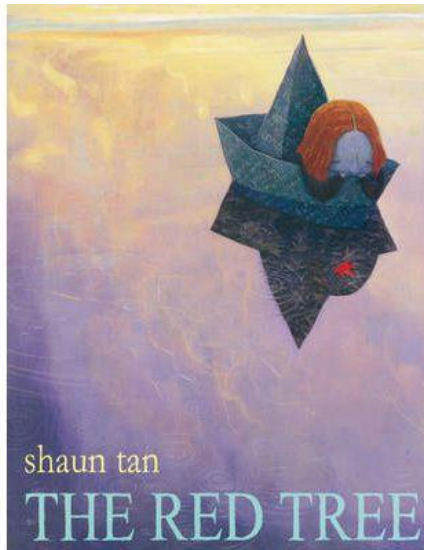
Our library is a wonderful place but it takes a lot of time and money to keep it looking so good. If ever you felt like donating a book, you can do

so easily through our website or by visiting

<https://www.anewchapterbooks.com/shop?Wishlists=Kirkstall+Valley+Primary+School>

Please note: In the New Year, we look forward to transitioning our wishlist to our local partner, Truman Books in Farsley.

### Robertson Recommends



This week, I am delighted to recommend a personal favourite: **The Red Tree** by the incredible Australian author and illustrator, Shaun Tan.

While many might consider picture books to be solely for our younger readers, Shaun Tan is a master at creating works that transcend age. *The Red Tree* is a stunning piece of visual storytelling that addresses feelings we all encounter but sometimes struggle to articulate—loneliness, anxiety, or the sense of simply having a 'bad day'.

The story follows a young girl wandering through a world of surreal, often overwhelming imagery, representing those moments when life feels confusing or bleak. However, the true power of the book lies in its ending. Amidst the darkness, a small, bright red leaf begins to grow, eventually blooming into a magnificent red tree standing right in the centre of her room.

#### Why I recommend it:

- **Visual Literacy:** For those who, like me, appreciate the power of visual art, the illustrations are masterful. They are complex and dreamlike, inviting children to look closer and interpret the mood for themselves.
- **Emotional Resilience:** It aligns beautifully with our school value of **courage**. It teaches children that difficult feelings are temporary and that hope—symbolised by the red tree—is always waiting to bloom, even when we cannot immediately see it.
- **Compassion:** It is a wonderful tool for opening up conversations about mental health and empathy in a gentle, accessible way.

If you are looking for a book to share with your child that is as thought-provoking as it is beautiful, I cannot recommend this enough. It is a poignant reminder that dark days do pass, and light will return.



There were some beautiful skies last week!

## Spotlight on Learning

Year 1



In Year 1 this week, we are finishing our moving greetings cards that have been the focus of our design and technology lessons this term. The children have loved learning the science behind levers and sliders, especially moving our bodies to reinforce the differences in both mechanisms. Children have adopted the role of designer, thinking about product, person and purpose – they have had free rein and been ambitious with their creations. Ranging from birthday cards, Eid cards, thank you cards and Christmas cards, it has been a delight to see their creativity at work. They have shown true commitment and resilience, enhancing their cutting, folding and hole-punching skills. They have really enjoyed this unit and it has been wonderful to see transferable skills being demonstrated independently in our creative corner too.

### A Week of Theatrical Magic

I am absolutely bursting with pride following a truly spectacular week of performances. From the heart-warming and adorable storytelling in **Shine Star Shine** (EYFS) to the festive musical treats in **Bethlehem Bake Off** (Years 1, 2

& 3) and the polished, high-energy pantomime of **Aladdin Trouble** (Years 4, 5 & 6), the hall was simply filled with joy.

Watching the children perform with such confidence and clarity, it was genuinely hard to remember just how young they are; they showed such immense courage and commitment to their roles. It was particularly wonderful to see how inclusive the productions were, ensuring every child had their moment to shine. A massive, heartfelt thank you must go to the grown-ups in school—the teachers and support staff—whose tireless work behind the scenes made this magic possible. I hope you enjoyed watching these special moments as much as we enjoyed creating them.


Assembly Music

**Piece:** *The Sleigh Ride* (Winter Night) **Composer:** Frederick Delius (1862–1934)

After a week delightfully disrupted by our festive performances, we are returning to our regular assembly rhythm. To match the season, we are listening to a piece that captures the crisp, sparkling energy of winter: **The Sleigh Ride**.

This choice is particularly special because **Frederick Delius** was a local composer, born just down the road in **Bradford**. It is a wonderful opportunity for the children to hear how a boy from West Yorkshire grew up to write music that is now played by orchestras all over the world.

If you listen to this at home, do encourage the children to listen out for the sleigh bells in the percussion section—it really does paint a picture of a journey through the snow!

Did you know...?	<div>The word 'school' </div>
<p>The word 'School' actually comes from the Ancient Greek word <i>scholē</i>, which surprisingly translates to 'leisure' or 'spare time'. In the ancient world, having the time away from manual labour to sit, think, converse, and learn was considered the ultimate luxury. It is a lovely reminder that education is, at its heart, a privilege!</p>	

Focus on	<div>Sustainability Leaders </div>
<p>Our dedicated Sustainability Group are meeting after school today to review the impact of the recent 'Switch Off' project and to formulate exciting new strategies for the New Year. It is incredibly inspiring to see these pupils showing such genuine <b>commitment</b> to making our school more eco-friendly. I look forward to seeing the fresh ideas they develop to help us protect our planet in 2026—watch this space for their new initiatives next term!</p>	

# A note of thanks to our school governors



Following on from last week's insight into the work of our Governors, I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank our own Governing Body for their incredible work this term. It is important to remember that they are all volunteers who generously give their time, energy and expertise to ensure our school is the best it can be. Their **commitment** to our children and their unwavering support for the staff team is often unseen, but it is completely invaluable. We simply could not achieve what we do without their wisdom, challenge and dedication behind the scenes. I am sure you join me in wishing them a well-deserved rest over the break.

## A note on Times tables...

We know that learning times tables can sometimes feel like a hurdle for both children and parents. However, recall of these facts is the foundation for so much of the Maths curriculum in Key Stage 2, from fractions to area.

### The Road to 12x12: What to expect when?

It is important to remember that learning times tables is a marathon, not a sprint. We do not expect a Year 1 child to know  $7 \times 8$ ! The curriculum is designed to build courage and confidence year on year.

Here is the national expectation for each age group, so you know exactly which tables to focus on at home:

- Year 1: Counting in steps of 2, 5, and 10. (e.g., "10, 20, 30...").
- Year 2: Recalling the 2, 5, and 10 times tables securely.
- Year 3: Introducing the 3, 4, and 8 times tables.
- Year 4: The Big Aim! By June of Year 4, the national expectation is that children can recall all tables up to  $12 \times 12$ .
  - Note: This coincides with the statutory 'Multiplication Tables Check' (MTC) administered by the government.
- Years 5 & 6: Focus on fluency and application (using these facts to solve division, fractions, and percentage problems).

### A Note on Compassion:

We know children learn at different rates. If your child is in Year 4 and still finding the 2s tricky, we will support them where they are, rather than panicking about where they "should" be. Please speak to your class teacher if you are worried.

### Parent Guide: Supporting Times Tables at Home

Here is how you can support your child using our values of Courage, Compassion, and Commitment.

#### 1. Compassion: Reduce the Pressure (The "Low Stakes" Approach)

Maths anxiety is real. If a child feels panicked, their working memory shuts down, and they cannot learn.

- Don't quiz them when they are tired. Avoid the "spot check" immediately after school.
- Use a "Cheat Sheet". When practising homework, let them have the times tables written out in front of them. It builds confidence to see the answer, rather than guessing and getting it wrong. Over time, they will need the sheet less and less.
- Focus on what they DO know. If they are stuck on 7 times 8, remind them they might already know 8 times 7.

#### 2. Courage: Tackle the Tricky Ones (Concrete & Visual)

Some children struggle to just "memorise" numbers. They need to see what the maths looks like.

- Pasta Arrays: If they are stuck on the 4x table, get some dried pasta or Lego bricks. physically make 4 piles of 3, then 4 piles of 4. Seeing the "groups" helps the numbers stick.
- The "Seven" Wall: The 6, 7, and 8 times tables are notoriously the hardest. Encourage your child to show courage by picking one tricky fact (e.g.,  $7 \times 8 = 56$ ) and sticking it on the fridge or the bathroom mirror for a week until it is conquered.

### 3. Commitment: Little and Often

Deep learning happens through "spaced repetition"—lots of short bursts rather than one long session.

- The Car Journey: Choose one table to chant on the way to school.
- Ad Break Challenges: "How many times can you write out the 5x table before the TV show comes back on?"
- TTRS: A commitment of just 3 minutes a day on Times Tables Rock Stars (Garage Mode) is proven to be more effective than 30 minutes once a week.

### Try These "No-Screen" Games at Home

#### 1. Multiplication War (Card Game)

- Remove the Jacks, Queens, and Kings from a deck of cards.
- Split the deck between two players.
- Both flip a card at the same time.
- The first person to multiply the two numbers and shout the answer wins both cards.
- Note: If this is too hard, keep one card face up (e.g., a 5) and just flip one card to multiply by 5.

#### 2. The "Buzz" Game

- Count up from 1 as a family (taking turns).
- Choose a "forbidden" times table (e.g., 4).
- Every time you hit a multiple of 4 (4, 8, 12, 16...), you must say "BUZZ" instead of the number.
- If you say the number, you are out!

#### 3. Supermarket Estimates

- "These yoghurts are in packs of 6. If we bought 4 packs, how many would we have?"
- Real-world context helps children see why we learn this.

Every day, every single person:



Safe



Ready



Respectful



Courage



Compassion



Commitment

## School calendar academic year 2025-2026

Holiday	Schools close			Schools open		
Summer break				Tuesday	2 September	2025
Autumn mid-term	Friday	24 October	2025	Tuesday	4 November	2025
Christmas break	Friday	19 December	2025	Tuesday	6 January	2026
Spring mid-term	Friday	13 February	2026	Monday	23 February	2026
Easter break	Thursday	2 April	2026	Monday	20 April	2026
May Bank Holiday	Friday	1 May	2026	Tuesday	5 May	2026
Summer mid-term	Friday	22 May	2026	Monday	1 June	2026
Summer break	Friday	17 July	2026			

### Bank Holidays include

Christmas	25 & 26	December	2025
New Year's Day	1	January	2026
Good Friday	3	April	2026
Easter Monday	6	April	2026
May Day	4	May	2026
Spring Bank	25	May	2026
August	31	August	2026

### Teacher Training Days - School Closed

Monday	<u>1 September</u>	2025
Monday	<u>3 November</u>	2025
Monday	<u>5 January</u>	2026
Monday	<u>20 July</u>	2026
Tuesday	<u>21 July</u>	2026





School uniform:



You can buy a new school jumper or a school cardigan at the office.



Or you can buy pre-used uniform that other families have given to school.



Pre-used uniform



A small book bag: £5.00



A large book bag: £7.00



Children come to school in PE clothes on days they have PE