
5th May 2026



Kirkstall Valley Primary School



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Dear Kirkstall Valley Primary School Families,

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

Apologies that I missed last week's newsletter – I was very unusually off school on Monday and Tuesday last week with a really unpleasant virus and then played catch up all week with more pressing demands! This week, although we missed Monday due to the Bank Holiday, I wanted to make sure I got a newsletter out to you – so here it is!

This term always feels like a very quick half-term due to Bank Holidays and the amount of things going on. There are still so many things to cram in between now and year end that time will no doubt fly again this year.

As always, if you have anything you'd like to discuss, you are most welcome to come and talk with me.

Best wishes,

Phil Robertson - Headteacher

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 via our local partner, Truman Books in Farsley. The new wishlist link is up and running: <https://trumanbooks.co.uk/recommended-reads-for-kirkstall-valley>

Diary Dates

Monday 11th May
Year 6 SATs Week begins

Friday 22nd May
Year 6 depart for residential

Friday 22nd May
Break for Half Term

Attendance to date:

YR – 94.5% ↑

Year 1 – 94.9% -

Year 2 – 95.4% ↓

Year 3 – 92.4% ↓

Year 4 – 91.5% ↑

Year 5 – 94.3% ↓

Year 6 – 95.5% ↑ 👑

School = 94% - (Target = 96%)

Robertson Recommends: The Skull

By Jon Klassen



Over the long bank holiday weekend, I had the absolute pleasure of sitting down with my ten-year-old to read *The Skull* by Jon Klassen. I must admit, it has been a while since a book caught us both off guard quite like this one, and we found ourselves laughing a great deal!

Based on a traditional Tyrolean folktale, the story follows a brave young girl named Otilia who runs away into the dark, snowy woods and stumbles upon a seemingly abandoned castle. Inside, she finds it is inhabited solely by a talking skull. What follows is a wonderfully deadpan, unexpected friendship as they drink tea by the fire, explore the castle, and team up to face a night time threat.

Klassen has an extraordinary knack for balancing a slightly spooky, macabre atmosphere with genuine, laugh-out-loud warmth. The illustrations are stark and atmospheric, but it is the wonderfully dry dialogue between Otilia and the skull that truly makes it shine. It is a brilliant example of a story that does not talk down

to its audience, leaning into the slightly darker themes that older primary children often love, while keeping the overall tone firmly rooted in friendship and bravery.

If you are looking for a relatively quick, incredibly engaging read that will appeal to both you and your Key Stage 2 children, I cannot recommend this highly enough.

Coast to Coast: Back in the Saddle



That pesky virus that put a sudden stop to my recent ride in North Yorkshire certainly lingered much longer than I had hoped! Being unable to train for a full ten days definitely put a bit of a dent in my preparation plans, but these things are sent to try us.

However, I am delighted to report that I was finally back to it this weekend with a very successful 40-mile local route. It felt absolutely brilliant to be out on the bike again. Over the coming weeks, the mileage will steadily increase, right up until I start to taper my training ahead of the main event on the 6th of June. It is suddenly feeling very close indeed, but the preparations are officially back on track!

Thank you, as always, to everyone supporting my fundraising for Parkinson's UK. If you would like to contribute as we move closer to the main event, my page is here: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/phil-robertson-2>.



Lifelong Learning: Ticking Over

As I mentioned earlier, the last couple of weeks have been a bit of a juggling act between recovering from that lingering virus and the usual busy demands of school life. Because of this, my Greek studies have understandably had to take a bit of a back seat.

I have managed to keep things ticking over with five minutes of practice here and there, but I certainly haven't made any grand strides recently. And you know what? That is absolutely fine. It is a great reminder for us all—and exactly what we tell the children—that learning isn't always a perfect, upward trajectory. Sometimes, life simply gets in the way, and just maintaining what you already know during a busy patch is a success in its own right. I am looking forward to giving it a bit more focus again next week!



Year 4 have been thoroughly enjoying their recent English lessons, where they have been learning how to write persuasive letters. The children have shown great enthusiasm as they explore different techniques to convince their reader, using strong arguments and formal language. It has been wonderful to see their creativity and confidence grow as they take on the role of persuasive writers. Some notable topics they have chosen are no homework, extra break times, and no school on Fridays, so they will need to be very convincing!

Assembly Music

Music of the Week: The One and Only by Chesney Hawkes

Our Music of the Week has been the undeniable 90s anthem, The One and Only by Chesney Hawkes. Seeing the children enthusiastically bop along to it in the hall was an absolute joy, though I must confess I had a sudden moment of feeling very ancient when I realised this track is now an incredible 35 years old! Despite the passage of time, its powerful message of self-belief and celebrating our individuality remains just as fantastic today as it was back then, and it set a brilliantly energetic tone for the week ahead.

MindMate Support Team

We are really pleased that we are engaging the services of this team for some of our children currently. The team will also be spending some time in school next week as part of Mental Health Awareness Week. Here is some more information about this team:

The MindMate Support Team is a Mental Health Support Team (MHST), part of a nationwide programme that brings mental health practitioners into education settings to support the emotional wellbeing of children and young people.

We work alongside existing services, as well as school staff and parents or caregivers, to provide evidence-based interventions for children experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties, such as worry, anxiety, and low mood.

We also offer workshops for staff, young people, and parents or caregivers to help support children with a range of challenges, including worry, exam stress, managing emotions, coping with transitions, and building resilience.

Our practitioners can support you in identifying and accessing additional services where needed, and we provide resources to help school staff support children and young people within their education setting.

We value the views of parents and caregivers and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to share more information about our service.

Focus on



The Big Seed Sow

A huge thank you must go to Mrs. Draper, who expertly leads our wonderfully popular Nature Club, for organising our recent 'Big Seed Sow'. This was a fantastic, hands-on initiative that ensured absolutely every single child across the school had the opportunity to get their hands a little muddy and plant their very own seed. As we settle into the warmer, lighter weeks of the summer term, it is going to be incredibly rewarding for the children to watch their tiny seeds sprout and grow. It is a brilliant, practical way to teach them about patience, nurturing, and the natural world right here on our own school grounds, and we cannot wait to see our flowerbeds and pots flourish!

Did you know...?

The Magic in the Mud



Following on from Mrs. Draper's wonderful 'Big Seed Sow' this week, you might be pleased to hear that there is a brilliant scientific reason to let your children get their hands dirty!

As parents, our natural instinct is often to spot a muddy puddle or a patch of dirt and immediately steer our children in the opposite direction. However, did you know that playing in the soil can actually make your child happier?

Healthy soil contains a naturally occurring, harmless microscopic bacteria called *Mycobacterium vaccae*. When children play in the dirt, they inhale or ingest tiny amounts of this bacteria. Scientists have discovered that it actually stimulates the brain to release serotonin—often referred to as the 'happy chemical'. Serotonin helps to regulate mood, decrease anxiety, and can even improve focus and concentration.

In short, getting a little muddy acts as a natural mood-booster! So, if your child comes home from Nature Club or a weekend trip to the park with dirt under their fingernails and mud on their knees, try not to despair about the laundry. It is actually doing absolute wonders for their mental wellbeing—which is incredibly fitting as we look ahead to Mental Health Awareness Week next week!

Special Assemblies

If your child is up for an award at one of our special assemblies, I will send an invite by email on a Thursday. Please do check your emails (including junk folders).

Payments

A reminder that we no longer use ParentPay. All payments should be made through the Arbor app. Any issues with this please let the office know.



Jargon Buster

We know that education is one of the worst institutions for using technical jargon and acronyms. In this section over the next term, I'll try and explain a few!

SATs: Statutory Assessment Tests You will undoubtedly hear this acronym, particularly if you have a child in Year 6. These are national assessments taken in May to measure educational progress in English and Maths. While they provide us with useful data to support your child's learning, we always remind the children that SATs do not measure everything that makes them unique and special—such as their creativity, their resilience, or how kind they are to their friends!

Transition In everyday life, this simply means change, but in 'teacher-speak', it refers specifically to the process of a child moving from one phase of their education to the next. This could mean moving from Nursery into Reception, stepping up into a new year group, or our Year 6 pupils preparing to leave us for high school. During this summer term, you will hear us talk a lot about 'transition activities'—these are all the carefully planned visits, meet-ups, and conversations we organise to ensure your child feels completely confident and excited about their next step.

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



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Head Teacher: Mr Phil Robertson
Chair of Governors: Mrs Colleen Jackson

School calendar academic year 2026-2027

Holiday	Schools close	Schools open
Summer break		Wednesday 2 September 2026
Autumn mid-term	Friday 23 October 2026	Tuesday 3 November 2026
Christmas break	Friday 18 December 2026	Tuesday 5 January 2027
Spring mid-term	Friday 12 February 2027	Monday 22 February 2027
Easter break	Friday 2 April 2027	Monday 19 April 2027
May Bank Holiday	Friday 30 April 2027	Tuesday 4 May 2027
Summer mid-term	Thursday 27 May 2027	Monday 7 June 2027
Summer break	Thursday 22 July 2027	

Bank Holidays include

Christmas	25 & 28	December	2026
New Year's Day	1	January	2027
Good Friday	26	March	2027
Easter Monday	29	March	2027
May Day	3	May	2027
Spring Bank	31	May	2027
August	30	August	2027

Teacher Training Days - School Closed

Tuesday	1	September	2026
Monday	2	November	2026
Monday	4	January	2027
Friday	28	May	2027
Friday	25	June	2027



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