

20th April 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 and that you all enjoyed a wonderful, restorative Easter break.

It is an absolute pleasure to welcome you back for the start of the summer term. There is always a distinct and exciting shift in energy when we return at this time of year; the longer, lighter days seem to bring a renewed sense of optimism and purpose to the classrooms. As we look ahead to the next few months, I am incredibly excited to see what our children will achieve and the new learning journeys we will embark on together.

Please note, I have added the 26/27 academic calendar to the bottom of this newsletter for your information.

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 20th April
Start of Summer 1 term

Thursday 23rd April
Ugly Bug Ball

Monday 4th May
Bank Holiday – School Closed

Monday 11th May
Year 6 SATs week

Monday 11th May
Mental Health Awareness Week

Friday 22nd May
Year 6 Residential

Friday 22nd May
School breaks up for half-term

Attendance to date:

YR – 94.3% ↓

Year 1 – 94.8% ↓

Year 2 – 95.9% ↓ 🏆

Year 3 – 92.5% ↓

Year 4 – 91.2% -

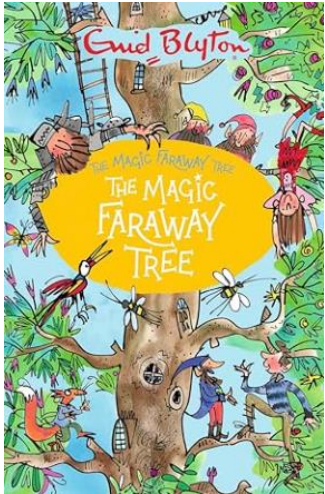
Year 5 – 94.6% -

Year 6 – 95.5% -

School = **94.1%** - (Target = 96%)

Robertson Recommends: The Magic Faraway Tree

By Enid Blyton



Over the Easter break, I had the absolute pleasure of enjoying some truly uninterrupted time with my daughter, which included a trip to the cinema to see the wonderful movie adaptation of *The Magic Faraway Tree*. The film was so captivating that it immediately prompted us to pull our well-loved copy off the bookshelf as soon as we got home and reread the original story together.

For those who might not have visited the Enchanted Wood recently, the story follows three children who discover a colossal tree whose highest branches reach into the clouds, leading to an ever-changing rotation of magical lands. Alongside unforgettable characters like Moon-Face, Silky the fairy, and the clattering Saucepan Man, it is a world of pure, unadulterated escapism.

Revisiting this timeless classic was a brilliant reminder of the sheer power of imagination. In a modern world that often provides us with constant, ready-made digital entertainment, there is something deeply restorative about a book that asks children to build entire, impossible worlds in their own minds. It is a wonderful exercise in creativity and a testament to the profound connection that happens when we simply sit down and share a story.

Whether you manage to catch the film on the big screen or simply curl up with the book, I highly recommend introducing—or reintroducing—your children to this masterpiece. It is well worth both a watch and a read, and a genuinely joyful way to spend an afternoon.

The Annual Ugly Bug Ball

On a wonderfully exciting note, we are delighted to invite our children to the return of our annual Ugly Bug Ball!

Taking place on Thursday 23rd April, from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm, this promises to be a fantastic evening. There will be plenty of refreshments available, as well as prizes for the best costumes. Whether your child wants to come as a beautiful butterfly, a spooky spider, a lovely ladybird, a buzzy bee, or any other kind of creepy-crawly, absolutely all insects and bugs are welcome!

To ensure the evening runs smoothly and safely, please take note of the following important details:

- Entry: £2 per child (please pay on the door).
- Attendees: This event is exclusively for Kirkstall Valley Primary School children.
- Supervision: All children in EYFS and KS1 must be accompanied by someone over the age of 18 (preferably a parent or carer).
- Capacity Restrictions: Due to strict health and safety capacity regulations, we can admit a maximum of two carers per child.
- School Boundaries: The main school building will be strictly out of bounds during the event, with the exception of the toilets.

We cannot wait to see all the brilliant costumes and look forward to a thoroughly enjoyable evening!

! Important Health Notice: Measles, Chickenpox, and Shingles

Just a reminder regarding a pupil in our school who is currently receiving chemotherapy. As this treatment significantly suppresses their immune system, they are at serious risk if exposed to measles, chickenpox, or shingles. We are asking for your full cooperation in notifying the school office immediately if you suspect your child, or anyone in your household, has contracted or been exposed to any of these illnesses. Please read the forthcoming letter carefully when it arrives. We rely heavily on the compassion and commitment of our entire school community to help protect this child, and we thank you in advance for your vigilance and support.

Coast to Coast: A Bump in the Road

With the Easter break giving me a bit more time to train, I headed out on Saturday for a big planned ride. Unfortunately, like many of us in schools at the start of a holiday, I came down with the classic 'teacher holiday lurgy'.

About halfway through the route, I started feeling genuinely unwell and had to make the frustrating decision to pull the plug. By the time I made it back to the start, I was running a fever and feeling pretty dreadful. I am hugely grateful to the friend I was riding with, who completely stopped his own training to make sure I got back safely. It was a brilliant bit of looking out for a mate when I really needed it.

I am feeling a lot better today. While I was gutted not to finish the ride, I know it was just a virus scuppering my plans rather than a lack of fitness. June 6th is definitely starting to feel very close now, but it is time to get back to the plan. Onwards!

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: From the Living Room to the Real World

Having a bit of dedicated time over the Easter break has been a wonderful opportunity to truly immerse myself in my Greek studies. I am delighted to say I have finally reached that crucial first milestone in any language journey: I feel I can just about make myself understood!

However, as any language learner will attest, it is a profoundly humbling experience to realise there is a vast difference between confidently reciting vocabulary in the comfort of your own living room and actually deploying it in the country itself. The real world certainly doesn't come with pause buttons or helpful flashcards!

Over the coming weeks, my focus is shifting towards the finer details of the language—specifically, improving my fluency and refining my pronunciation. For our children in school, this mirrors a vital stage in any learning process. Getting the basics right is a fantastic achievement, but it is the continued hard work and commitment to refining those skills that eventually leads to true mastery.

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).



Year 6 worked really hard to create some outstanding writing last half term, all linked to the short film 'Alma'. Their aim was to write a spooky story for children aged 9-11. The children used 'The Haunting of Aveline Jones' by Phil Hickes as their model text, identifying features (such as show not tell, short sentences and rhetorical questions) that they could use to create a spooky atmosphere. The children have typed up their spooky stories, and will be placing them in our library for other children to read during their library slot.

Here's a sneak preview of one of our pupil's stories for you to enjoy...

La Quête d'Alma

Ville-hauntée wasn't like other French villages, as Intrépides would soon find. The narrow, cobbled streets twisted into an inescapable maze as the squall tore through the alleys like a stampede of agitated bulls. A paralyzing chill swept across the wind and down her spine, coming to a rest as a large sheet of pitch-black ice, blanketing the long, lonely road ahead.

Finally, after what felt like weeks...years of lonely sorrow, Intrépides took her first step onto Rue des Âmes Perdues. As she trembled further, a cold darkness encased her in a tomb of despair; she felt trapped in a gloomy, never-ending nightmare, where the snow cut deep into her pale skin like daggers and everything felt scarily real. Every strike of lightning was another strike to her sanity. "I swear this place feels even stranger than before," she whispered to herself, her footsteps echoing far louder than they should have through the piercing silence.

Assembly Focus: The Value of the Struggle

In our assembly this morning, I spoke to the children about a concept that is absolutely fundamental to how we approach education here: the idea of 'learning as a struggle'. As parents and educators, our natural instinct is often to step in and rescue children the moment they feel frustrated or stuck. However, I explained to the children that true learning—the kind that genuinely stretches our abilities—should actually feel like a challenge. When a maths problem seems impossible or a new concept just isn't clicking, it is not a sign that they are failing; it is the exact moment their brains are working the hardest. Navigating that discomfort requires tremendous **courage** and a steadfast **commitment** to keeping going. By helping them reframe that initial frustration as a necessary, productive part of the process, we equip them with the resilience to tackle the inevitable challenges they will encounter, both inside and outside the classroom.

Assembly Music

Music of the Week: Lovely Day by Bill Withers

Our Music of the Week has been the timeless, feel-good classic *Lovely Day* by Bill Withers. As we settle down into the rhythm of the new summer term, with the mornings finally feeling a little brighter and warmer, this incredibly uplifting track felt like the absolute perfect choice to welcome the children into the hall.

The famously long, held vocal note at the end of the chorus certainly provided a brilliant, slightly breathless challenge for those who tried to sing along! Beyond the fun, the song's joyful, optimistic message served as a wonderful reminder to approach our learning and our interactions with one another with a positive, sunny mindset. It was a fantastic way to set a warm and energised tone for the week ahead.

Did you know...?

The Green Reset Button!



As the evenings finally begin to stretch out, it is the perfect time to encourage our children to spend a little more time outside. We are incredibly fortunate that, despite living in a vibrant, built-up community, we have some truly phenomenal green spaces right on our doorstep.

Psychologists refer to a concept called 'Attention Restoration Theory'. A typical school day requires a huge amount of 'directed attention'—the deliberate, focused mental effort needed to listen to a lesson, solve a maths problem, or write a story. Over time, this type of attention becomes depleted, leading to mental fatigue, a lack of focus, and sometimes, typical after-school crankiness.

However, engaging with nature triggers something called 'soft fascination'. Nature holds our attention effortlessly, allowing the brain's directed attention reserves to rest and replenish.

So, if your child comes home feeling particularly frazzled, the most effective intervention might not be a quiet room or a screen. Taking twenty minutes to wander around the magnificent grounds of Kirkstall Abbey, spotting the wildlife along the Leeds Liverpool Canal, having a quick run-around in Burley Park, or even visiting the green spaces at the Kirkstall Valley Community Farm can act as the ultimate cognitive reset button, leaving them much calmer and emotionally regulated for the evening ahead.

Focus on

Digital Leaders



Last half term, our Digital Leaders were once again called into action to assist with computing lessons. These young leaders always show such enthusiasm and compassion during the lessons, listening carefully to the younger children and being patient as they work through the challenges set for them. Looking ahead, our Digital Leaders will be promoting our upcoming 'Digital Detox Week' across school and thinking about spreading information on online safety to all classes.

We really appreciate their contribution to promoting the safe and healthy use of technology, both in school and at home.

Residential Trip Payment Reminder

- Please could we remind parents of children in Year 6 that the £50 deposit for the residential trip should already have been paid, as this was due at the end of September. The next instalment of £65 was due in November and then one was due by February half term.
- The final payment is due by the end of April.

Thank you for your support in helping us keep payments on track.

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!

EYFS: Early Years Foundation Stage You will frequently hear this acronym used when we talk about our youngest learners. The EYFS is the statutory framework that sets the standards for the learning, development, and care of children from birth to age five—which, for us, means our Nursery and Reception classes. Rather than formal desk-based learning, the EYFS focuses heavily on learning through play, exploration, and building essential early communication and social skills.

Pupil Premium This is a term you will often see in our school policies or government documentation. Pupil Premium is additional funding provided to schools by the government to help improve the educational outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. We use this money in various ways—such as funding extra support staff, subsidising school trips, or providing additional resources—to ensure that every child, regardless of their background, has an equal opportunity to thrive. (As a quick reminder, if you believe your circumstances might qualify your child for this funding, please do speak to the office in complete confidence!)

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