



# SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

September 2025 Edition 25

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Recruitment for School Caretaker  
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Welcome & Goodbyes



## Together, We Cann

By Shane Baker, Headteacher



Welcome back—and a warm welcome to all our new pupils and their families. I hope you all had a wonderful summer holiday. Learners have returned well to their new classes, and our teams are focusing on building strong relationships to support learning throughout the year. It was fantastic to open the first assembly of the year by launching elections for our new School Council representatives and House Captains. We look forward to sharing the results soon.

### A Sense of Belonging

I want to begin this year's newsletter by discussing belonging. At Cann Bridge School, there is a strong sense of belonging for our learners. Belonging means knowing our pupils well and adapting our provision and curriculum to meet their individual needs. The impact is evident in high levels of engagement and excellent attendance. Cann Bridge is a special school, and this shines through daily in the way pupils and staff interact and in the ethos that permeates the school.

### School Development Plan

We have returned to our first full week well-prepared and with a clear focus on the year ahead, following our welcome back and the sharing of our new School Development Plan, available on our website under **Key Documents**.

This year, we are beginning to see the full impact of the rapid developments made over the last three years—progress I hope you are noticing in your child's experiences and achievements.



### Teaching, Learning and Curriculum

We continue to drive up the standards of teaching, learning, and assessment. On average, pupils made more progress last year than in the year before. This success is thanks to our collaborative, aspirational, progressive, and learner-focused approach.

The launch of our reviewed curriculum in September 2024 was impactful. This year, we invite you to attend a Curriculum and Assessment Update on Thursday 25th September at 2pm (before Parents Evening). This will be an opportunity to hear where we are now, ask questions, and share feedback on how we can develop our curriculum further. At Cann Bridge, we never stand still—we are always looking for ways to improve.

We are also prioritising:

- Computing & AI: With rapid technological advancements, we want to ensure pupils are well-prepared for the future while staying safe. Princess Yachts has kindly donated additional laptops and tablets to support this.
- Writing and Music: Exciting developments are planned to further strengthen our writing and music curriculum.
- Healthy Schools: This will be a key focus, with more information to follow throughout the year.

### Building & Facilities

During the holidays, alongside Holiday Club and Summer Club, we completed several projects, including:

- A new reception area to improve security as part of our lockdown procedures.
- Relocation of our foyer doors to improve safety and create more space for showcasing House Points, Enterprise projects, and awards (to be completed this term).

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.







## Wrap-Around Provision

We remain committed to exploring wrap-around provision, as some families have expressed interest. As previously shared, this is not something we can prioritise within the current tight school budget, and costs to parents may outweigh the benefits for some.

However, we continue to apply for funding, though bids to date have been unsuccessful. We are now in early discussions about new opportunities, and Nikki will be sending a survey to gather further information from families to support future funding applications. While we cannot guarantee provision, your feedback is essential to this process.

## Communication with Families

- Bromcom MCAS App: All school communication will now be sent via Bromcom MCAS (My Child At School), available as both an app and browser login. Each parent/carer has their own account. If you've not yet signed up, please contact reception for support. Please also take a moment to check your details are correct so our records remain accurate. All lunches and contributions towards trips will also now be collected through Bromcom.

- Home-School Books: New communication books have been launched from EYFS to Key Stage 4, with two styles and waterproof bags. These were developed in consultation with families to keep all communication in one place. We value your messages, as they help us support pupils by knowing about their interests, hobbies, and any changes at home. We will also be exploring digital systems for home-school communication later this year.

On Friday you should have received your child's class timetable and class newsletter.

## Uniform & Equipment

It's wonderful to see so many pupils in uniform—thank you for the effort made at the start of term. Our new Year 7s were especially proud to show off their smart black uniforms as they entered secondary education.

Uniform does not need to be branded and can be purchased from supermarkets and high street shops. If you need help, we have a stock of preloved items available. We also understand that reasonable adjustments may be needed for some learners and will work with you.

Please ensure all items—wet weather gear, PE kits, spare clothing, and bottles—are labelled. With over 250 people in the building, lost property builds up quickly. Over the summer, we donated four sacks of unclaimed items to charity.

## Staffing & Leadership

- Karen Hunter, Deputy Headteacher, will move into a new role in January as Director of Teaching, Learning and Assessment. Recruitment for her successor is underway.

- We are also recruiting a dedicated, full-time School Caretaker, reflecting our growth in pupil numbers, staffing, and facilities. This is a positive step to maintain our high standards across the school site.

## EHCP Annual Reviews

We recognise that annual review paperwork can sometimes feel lengthy and outdated when the final EHCP is not updated by the local authority. Jennie Ferrett has been working hard to improve the process to ensure reviews are accurate, reflective, and up to date. We are confident families will value these changes and welcome your feedback.



## Celebrating Achievements

- **Library Opening:** Our new library officially opened during the first week back. Although we were unable to secure an author to open it, we didn't want to miss the chance to celebrate this milestone. Thanks to the incredible voluntary fundraising efforts of Wendy Fisher, over £16,000 was raised from 12 charitable trusts. A further £5,000 has been invested in resources, transforming an underused cupboard into a vibrant library space, with dedicated reading areas in all classrooms. Thank you, Wendy, for your lasting impact on our school.
- **Radio Cann Bridge:** Following last year's purchase of DJ decks, learners are now fundraising £7,250 to launch our own school radio station. With £2,500 already secured and Wendy once again leading fundraising, the portable station will enable all classes to get involved—whether reading stories, sharing favourite songs, performing, or interviewing guests. This project showcases our aspirational values and builds pupils' communication, interaction, and performance skills.

## Outdoor Spaces

We are continuing to improve our outdoor learning environments:

- The Lower School Shared Playground has been completed and received fantastic feedback.
- We are currently developing outdoor classroom spaces and actively applying for charitable funding to support these.
- Our long-term goal is to redevelop the Upper School Playground, estimated at £150,000–£160,000. Designs are being prepared and we welcome feedback.

Friends of Cann Bridge are already planning fundraising events, including a Spring Ball, and we are delighted that a local recruitment agency will also be running the Plymouth Half Marathon to support us. If you or anyone you know can help, we would be very grateful.

## Parent Engagement

- **Evisense:** A great way to keep up to date with your child's learning. If you've not signed up, please contact reception or note it in the home-school book.
- **Website & Calendar:** The school website has been updated with new information and photographs. Our Family Calendar has also been published under **School Term Dates**, helping you plan for events across the year.

## Free School Meals

If you believe your child may be entitled to Free School Meals, please apply—even if you don't intend to take them. Applications bring additional funding into the school, which allows us to invest in enhanced provision such as our Family & Learner Support Advisor, Positive Behaviour Support Lead, private Occupational Therapist, additional Educational Psychology input, and soon external Speech and Language Therapy.





## Staff Development

We are proud of the commitment our staff show to their professional development:

- Several Teaching Assistants are nearing completion of Level 3 Apprenticeships with Argyle.
- Others are completing Level 2 Supporting Teaching & Learning qualifications with Achievement Training, and Level 4 HLTA qualifications, with some starting Level 5 Specialist Teaching Assistant programmes.
- Some middle leaders are currently working on their NPQSL final assessments, and I wish them good luck.
- Last year, I personally completed my NPQH!

As a school, we value continuous professional development and invest in our staff so we can provide the very best for our learners. During our September Professional Development Days (INSET) we completed safeguarding, health and safety, behaviour, medical and Training in Systematic Instructions.

## Parent and Learner EHCP Annual Review Survey Results

Throughout the last academic year, we introduced a Parent Carer and Learner Survey to capture your views and support our ongoing development. We greatly value your positive feedback.

One of the main areas highlighted was the importance of pupils and parents understanding EHCP outcomes, targets, and next steps. In response, we have made significant improvements through the introduction of Personalised Learning Goals (PLGs)—small, achievable steps that build towards yearly outcomes and, ultimately, the long-term outcomes set out in each EHCP.

These were shared with families during the summer term Parents' Evening, alongside progress data from our assessment system and phonics updates. We hope these discussions with teachers helped you gain a clearer understanding of the progress your child has made.

We will continue to record progress towards PLGs on Evisense and update you at each Parents' Evening.

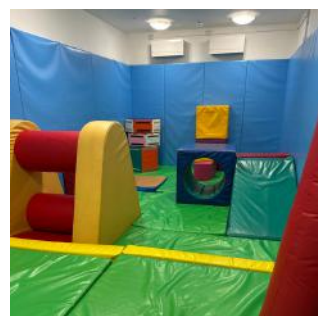
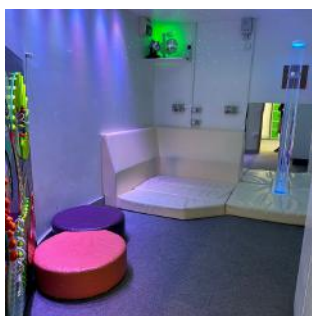
## Final Thoughts

I hope you find these newsletters informative and reassuring about the work we are all doing. I am incredibly proud of our achievements, and I hope you are too.

Thank you, as always, for your support.

Warm regards,

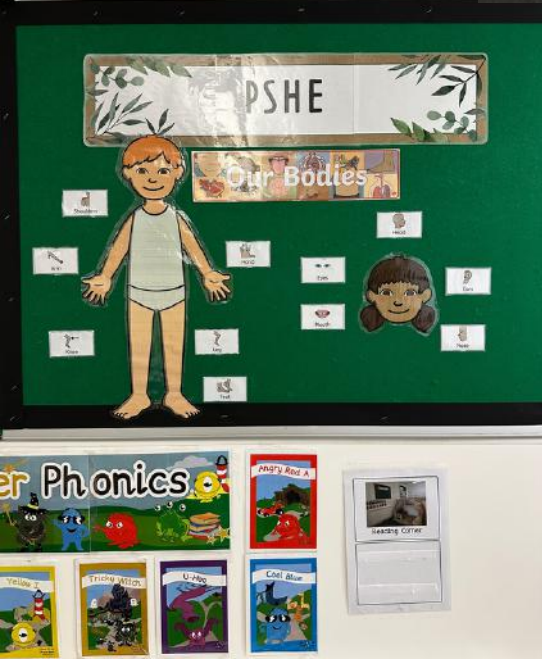
*S. Baker*







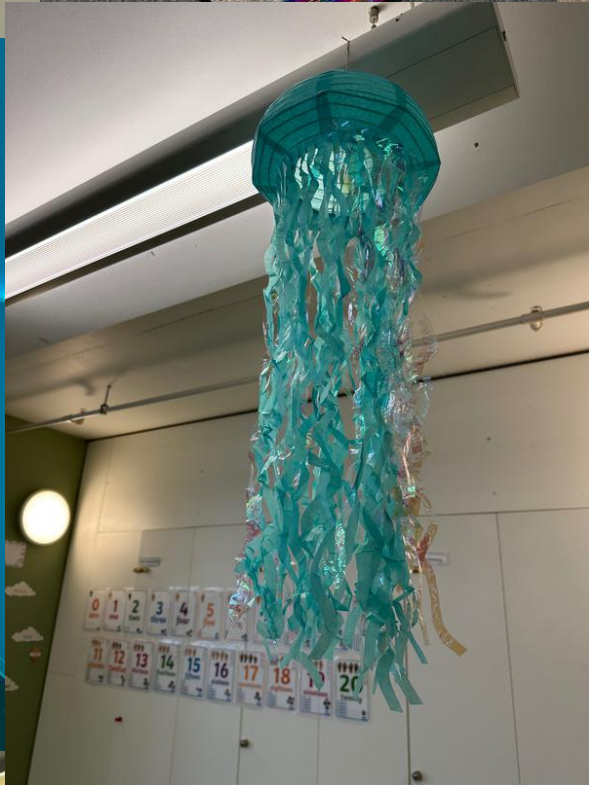


















# School Term Dates 2025/26

	<b>September 25</b>					<b>October 25</b>					<b>November 25</b>					<b>December 25</b>				
Monday	1	8	15	22	29		6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24		1	8	15	22	29
Tuesday	2	9	16	23	30		7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25		2	9	16	23	30
Wednesday	3	10	17	24		1	8	15	22	26	5	12	19	26		3	10	17	24	31
Thursday	4	11	18	25		2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27		4	11	18	25	
Friday	5	12	19	26		3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28		5	12	19	26	

	<b>January 26</b>					<b>February 26</b>					<b>March 26</b>					<b>April 26</b>				
Monday		5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23		2	9	16	23	30		6	13	20	27
Tuesday		6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24		3	10	17	24	31		7	14	21	28
Wednesday		7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25		4	11	18	25		1	8	15	22	29
Thursday	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26		5	12	19	26		2	9	16	23	30
Friday	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27		6	13	20	27		3	10	17	24	

	<b>May 26</b>					<b>June 26</b>					<b>July 26</b>					<b>August 26</b>				
Monday		4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29		6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	31
Tuesday		5	12	19	16	2	9	16	23	30		7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	
Wednesday		6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24		1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	
Thursday		7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25		2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	
Friday	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26		3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	

## The school year comprises:

Teaching days (statutory)	190
Professional development days <sup>1</sup>	5
Occasional days <sup>2</sup>	5
<b>sub-total</b>	<b>200</b>
School holidays	53
Bank holidays	8
Saturdays and Sundays	104
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>

## School terms:

term	start	end	days
1	8 Sep 25	24 Oct 25	35
2	3 Nov 25	19 Dec 25	35
3	6 Jan 26	13 Feb 26	29
4	23 Feb 26	2 Apr 26	29
5	20 Apr 26	22 May 26	24
6	2 Jun 26	23 Jul 26	38
<b>Total</b>			<b>190</b>

## Notes:

1 Professional Development Days (INSET Days)

2 Occasional Days

## What's coming up...

3rd-5<sup>th</sup> September - Professional Development Days (Closed to pupils)  
 8<sup>th</sup> September - Pupils return to school  
 11<sup>th</sup> September - Grand opening of the new school library 10-11.30  
 12<sup>th</sup> September - Class Newsletters and Timetables will be sent home  
 25<sup>th</sup> September - Friends of Cann Bridge Meeting 9.30 at School  
 25<sup>th</sup> September - Family Workshop - Curriculum Overview & Update 2-3.30  
 25<sup>th</sup> September - Parent & Carers Evening 3.30-6.30  
 2<sup>nd</sup> October - Harvest Festival  
 10<sup>th</sup> October - Family Workshop - SoSAFE! & RSHE 1-2.30  
 24<sup>th</sup> October - Wear it Pink Day  
 24<sup>th</sup> October - School Disco

Further details  
 about Family  
 Training/ Workshops  
 & Family Café  
 dates are sent  
 separately





## EHCP Annual Review Parent Carer Questionnaire Survey Responses Academic Year 2024/25

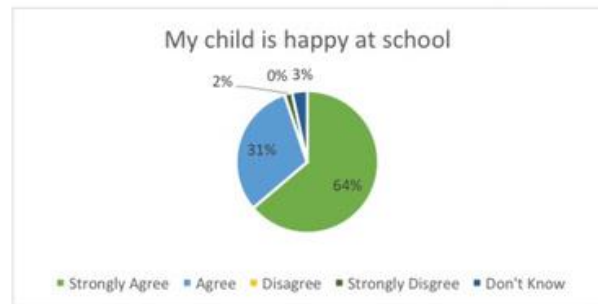
This survey was completed either before or during each learner's EHCP Annual Review and marks the first year of implementing this approach. The overall return rate was strong, ensuring that the findings are representative of the wider school community, although some questions were left unanswered and some parents/carers chose not to complete or return the survey.

The outcomes are highly positive and demonstrate consistently strong levels of parent/carer satisfaction with the quality of education, care, and support provided. Feedback indicates that parents/carers feel their child is well cared for and making good progress, with 95% stating they would recommend the school to another family. Importantly, these results are in line with — and in some areas exceed — those from the annual Parent/Carer Survey, where the completion rate was 26.7% compared to 52% for this survey, giving greater confidence in the reliability and representativeness of the findings.

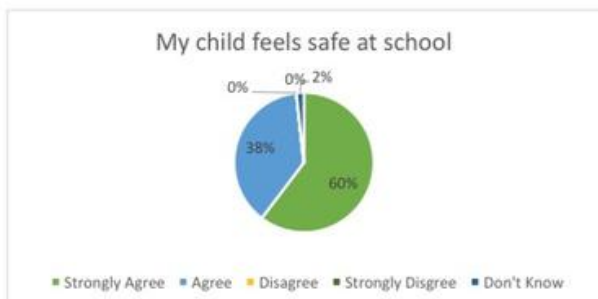
Alongside these strengths, the findings highlight a key priority for further improvement: ensuring that EHCP Outcomes are clear, explicit, and regularly reviewed. All families are actively involved in co-producing these outcomes, and it is essential that they remain relevant and closely aligned to each learner's Personalised Learning Goals. Plans are already underway to strengthen the EHCP Annual Review process so that review paperwork provides a clear, up-to-date, and accurate representation of each learner's needs and progress. This is particularly important given that updates to final EHCP plans can take considerable time to be processed by the local authority, which can sometimes lead to confusion for families.

These insights provide a strong foundation for driving continuous improvement and demonstrate our ongoing commitment to ensuring that the voices of learners and their families remain central in shaping the development of our provision.

My child is happy at school				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
37	18	0	1	2



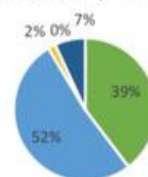
My child feels safe at school				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
35	22	0	0	1





My child makes good progress				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
23	30	1	0	4

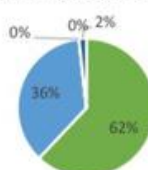
My child makes good progress



Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Don't Know

My child is well looked after at school				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
36	21	0	0	1

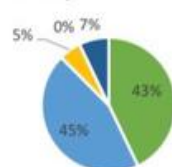
My child is well looked after at school



Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Don't Know

I am aware of my child's EHCP Outcomes				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
24	25	3	0	4

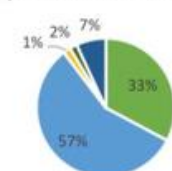
I am aware of my child's EHCP Outcomes



Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Don't Know

Pupils are well behaved				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
19	33	1	1	4

Pupils are well behaved



Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Don't Know

Behaviour issues are addressed effectively				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
27	28	2	0	1

Behaviour issues are addressed effectively



Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Don't Know



The school is well led and managed				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
29	24	2	0	2

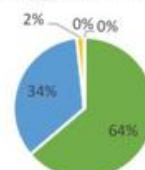
The school is well led and managed



Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Don't Know

I know who to go to if I have concerns				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
37	20	1	0	0

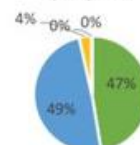
I know who to go to if I have concerns



Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Don't Know

I receive valuable information about my child's progress				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
27	28	2	0	0

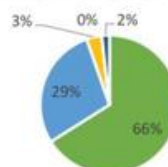
I receive valuable information about my child's progress



Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Don't Know

I would recommend this school to other parents				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
37	16	2	0	1

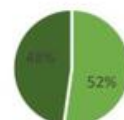
I would recommend this school to other parents



Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Don't Know

Completion Rate	
Completed	Non-completion
58	53

Completion Rate



Completed Non-completion





## EHCP Annual Review Learner Questionnaire Survey Responses Academic Year 2024/25

This survey was completed either before or during each learner's EHCP Annual Review and marks the first year of implementing this process. Responses were gathered directly from pupils wherever possible, with parents, carers, or staff acting as advocates where additional support was required. The overall return rate was very strong, ensuring the findings are representative of the wider school community.

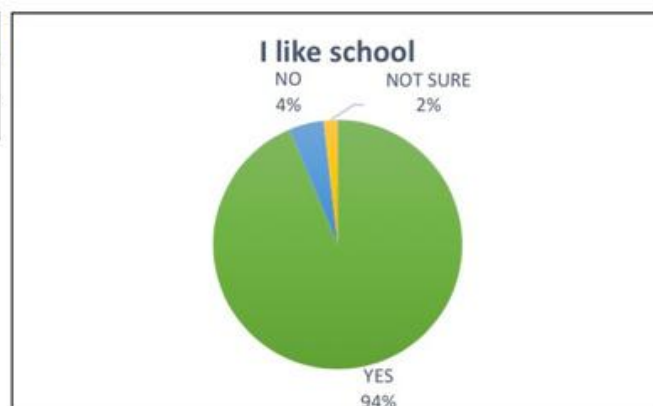
The outcomes of the survey are highly positive and demonstrate consistently strong levels of pupil satisfaction with the quality of education and care provided. Feedback shows that learners feel safe, supported, and well cared for, and that the school is effectively fostering both personal and academic development.

Alongside these strengths, the findings identify a key priority for further improvement: to ensure that Personalised Learning Goals and next steps in learning are communicated more explicitly to learners so that they have a clearer understanding of their progress and future targets.

The survey also highlights the need to make more explicit how we are supporting learners to lead healthy, balanced lives through the impact and continued development of our Healthy Schools initiatives, which are now embedded across the curriculum and wider school life. Key developments include improved nutritional choices at school lunches, the continued success of the Nurture Breakfast programme, the promotion of physical health and wellbeing through high-quality PE and mindfulness activities, and increased learner participation in structured routines such as toothbrushing. Our ongoing delivery of PSHE and the SoSAFE! programme continues to strengthen pupils' understanding of personal safety, healthy relationships, and independence.

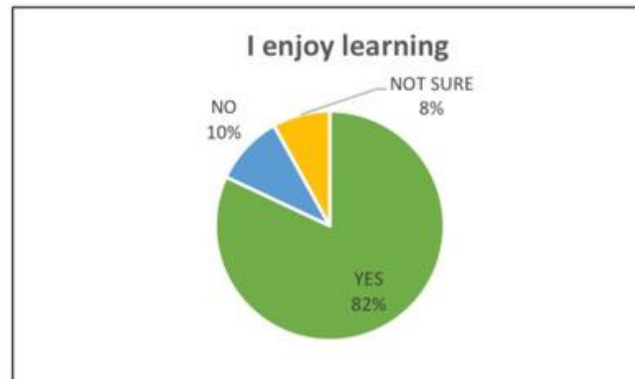
These insights provide a strong foundation for driving continuous improvement and ensure that the voice of learners and their families remains central in shaping the ongoing development of our provision.

I LIKE SCHOOL		
YES	NO	NOT SURE
104	5	2

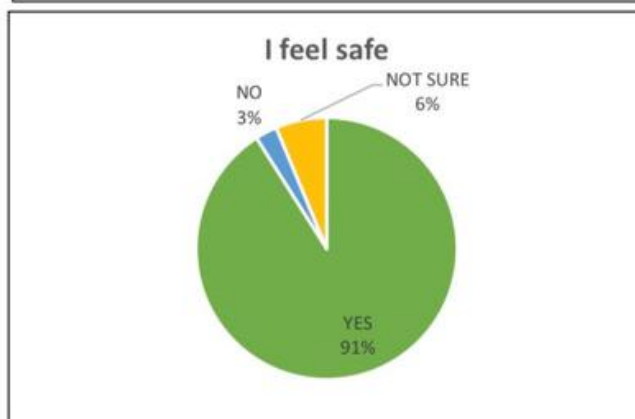




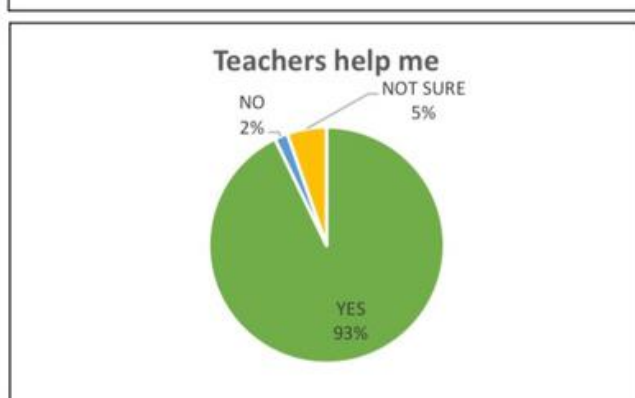
I ENJOY LEARNING		
YES	NO	NOT SURE
91	11	9



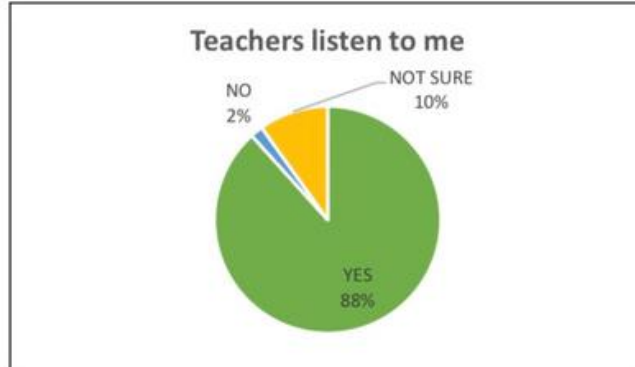
I FEEL SAFE		
YES	NO	NOT SURE
101	3	7



TEACHERS HELP ME		
YES	NO	NOT SURE
103	2	6



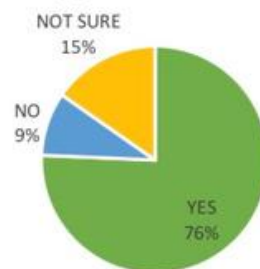
TEACHERS LISTEN TO ME		
YES	NO	NOT SURE
98	2	11





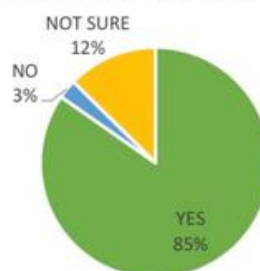
SUPPORTED TO BE HEALTHY		
YES	NO	NOT SURE
84	10	17

### I am supported to be healthy



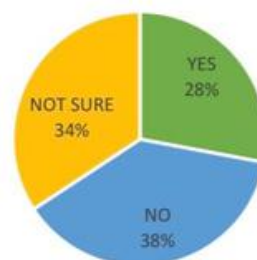
SCHOOL HELPS ME BE KIND		
YES	NO	NOT SURE
94	3	14

### School helps me to be kind



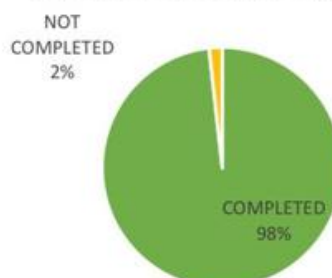
I KNOW MY TARGETS		
YES	NO	NOT SURE
31	42	38

### I know my targets



PUPIL SURVEY COMPLETION RATE	
COMPLETED	NOT COMPLETED
111	2

### Pupil survey completion rate





# Friends of



## CANN BRIDGE SCHOOL

The Friends of Cann Bridge brings together families, staff, and the local community to raise essential funds to support the work of Cann Bridge School. Our efforts range from fundraising for large appeals to funding smaller educational resources and opportunities. Can you help us to make a difference? You can also use our QR code to donate today.

**LEARN MORE**



[www.cannbridgeschool.co.uk/families/friends-of-cann-bridge](http://www.cannbridgeschool.co.uk/families/friends-of-cann-bridge)



Cann Bridge School Fund Charity Number 288503



# Our Mantra, Vision & Values



## We Cann...

Together, we aspire to create a nurturing school community by being aspirational, learner focused, collaborative and progressive.

We develop each learner's communication and independence through their school journey to prepare them for the wider world through creative and personalised learning, actively contributing to society, leading to healthy and fulfilled lives.

### Together, 'We Cann...' be

**Aspirational**

**Learner  
Focused**

**Collaborative**

**Progressive**

Our Behaviour Values at



# We Cann...





# Our Safeguarding Team



To safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people, working together with other agencies to ensure adequate arrangements within our school to identify, assess and support those children and young people who are suffering harm.



**Karen Hunter**  
Designated  
Safeguarding Lead  
(DSL)  
Deputy Headteacher



**Shane Baker**  
Deputy Designated  
Safeguarding Lead  
(DDSL)  
Headteacher



**Jen Ferrett**  
Deputy Designated  
Safeguarding Lead  
(DDSL)  
Assistant Headteacher



**Nikki Burrage**  
Deputy Designated  
Safeguarding Lead  
(DDSL)  
Family & Learner Support  
Advisor



**Jackie Carter & Michelle Prue**  
Link Governors for Safeguarding

**Safeguarding  
is everyone's  
responsibility**

Our Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and Adult Safeguarding Policy and protocol are available on our website.  
Report any concerns and incidents through CPOMs or directly to the Safeguarding Team.  
You can make contact with governors by emailing [cbclerk@torbridge.net](mailto:cbclerk@torbridge.net).  
Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH): 01752 668000, or 01752 346984 out of hours. [mash@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:mash@plymouth.gov.uk) for allegations of abuse to children.  
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 01752 307569 or [LADO@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@plymouth.gov.uk) for allegations of abuse made by staff, visitors or volunteers.

Call 999 if the child is in immediate danger

***Safeguarding is everyone's  
responsibility***



# Top Tips for Nurseries on Understanding EYFS REFORMS ON FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION

The upcoming EYFS reforms, set to take effect in September 2025, will introduce significant changes to food safety practices in early years settings. The reforms impact food handling, staff training, and allergen management, as well as nutritional requirements and menu development. As with all aspects of the EYFS, these changes are to ensure children's health and safety – but what do they mean for your setting?

## SAFER EATING



The reforms introduce new requirements for safer eating practices. It's advisable to address each area of food safety in your setting's policies and demonstrate that appropriate actions have been taken for each. Some changes directly affect your kitchen, while others focus on mealtime supervision and staff training, such as on allergens, allergies and nutrition.

## ALLERGY MANAGEMENT



The proposed changes enhance allergy and anaphylaxis management in early years settings, requiring robust policies that identify children with allergies and address their needs. Staff training is essential to recognise allergic reactions and anaphylaxis – it should also cover emergency responses and adrenaline auto-injector (AAI) use. Anaphylaxis UK advocates for a comprehensive allergy awareness approach across the entire setting, promoting safety for all children.

## INDIVIDUAL HEALTHCARE PLANS



As part of the reforms, settings will be required to have an individual healthcare plan (IHP) for each child with a known allergy. IHPs must clearly outline the child's specific allergen(s), their allergy symptoms, an emergency response plan, and their emergency contacts.

## EMERGENCY PREPARATION



Settings should maintain spare AAIs for emergencies and conduct regular drills to review their procedures. Continuous staff training is vital, ensuring they can recognise anaphylaxis symptoms and properly administer AAIs. Settings may choose any government-approved training body that meets the standards for paediatric first aid, as there's no mandatory provider. This flexibility allows for tailored training that suits each setting's particular needs.

## INTRODUCTION OF SOLID FOODS



The reforms place greater focus on the introduction and preparation of solid foods, requiring an individualised approach based on each child's developmental stage rather than just their age. Ongoing discussions with parents are crucial to understanding each child's readiness for solid foods, keeping both parties informed about the types of food at home and in the setting.

## CHOKING PREVENTION MEASURES



Children must always be within sight and earshot of staff when eating in order to prevent choking incidents. Staff should monitor children for signs of distress and worrisome eating habits, ensuring they document any choking incidents to help them recognise patterns. A valid paediatric first aid certificate is a requirement for adequate meal supervision. Additionally, settings must follow specific kitchen safety practices to minimise choking risks and manage allergens effectively.

## NUTRITIONAL AWARENESS



The changes to early years nutrition help settings understand the importance of menu planning for childhood development. Menus should support development, feature food items that enhance brain function and immunity, and include a colourful, balanced variety of foods. The reforms prioritise cultural relevance and require snacks that provide 10% of a child's daily energy needs. The changes also address health trends, choking awareness, allergy management, and the long-term impact of nutrition on children's development.

## Meet Our Expert

Louise Mercieca is a nutritional therapist and award-winning author dedicated to educating people on the link between food and health. As an early years nutrition consultant, she helps nurseries and catering providers with menu development and staff training on nutrition for child development.



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Source: <https://www.tosf.org.uk/>



# 10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

## SUPPORTING CHILDREN GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

Returning to school after the summer holidays can be both exciting and daunting for children of all ages. Different routines, classes, schools, and academic pressures can cause anxiety or uncertainty. Parents play a vital role in easing this transition. This guide will help you support your child emotionally, mentally, and practically as they return to school.

### 1 RE-ESTABLISH ROUTINES



Gradually shift back to school-time routines a week or two before term starts. Regular bedtimes, wake-up times, and mealtimes can help children feel more secure and reduce the shock of change when school begins. Having a routine creates predictability and stability, helping to reduce anxiety while improving sleep and concentration.

### 2 TALK ABOUT FEELINGS



Encourage open conversations with children about their feelings. Ask them how they feel about returning to school, such as what they're looking forward to and anything they might be feeling unsure or worried about. Validating their emotions can help reduce anxiety and show them it's okay to talk about their emotional wellbeing.

### 3 SUPPORT WITH SLEEP



Children need adequate sleep for concentration, brain function, memory, and emotional regulation. Establish a wind-down routine without screens at least an hour before bed, and encourage relaxing activities like reading or listening to calming music.

### 4 LOOK OUT FOR SIGNS



Some children hide their anxiety. Watch for changes in their behaviour, such as withdrawal, stomach aches, and irritability. If worries persist, speak with their teacher or the pastoral team early to ensure your child receives support.

### 5 REFRESH SOCIAL CONNECTIONS



Help children reconnect with school friends by arranging playdates or video chats in the week before school starts. Familiar faces and social interactions help the transition and provide emotional comfort on that first day back.

### 6 CREATE A CALM MORNING



Mornings set the tone for the day. Plan ahead with a consistent morning routine that allows time for breakfast, getting dressed, and talking calmly about the day. Avoid last-minute rushing to reduce stress for everyone.

### 7 FOCUS ON POSITIVES



Talk about the fun and interesting parts of school - seeing friends, favourite subjects, or exciting activities. One simple but powerful change parents can make is swapping "How's your day been?" for "What's been good about your day?" This invites more of a positive, open response. Focusing on positives can help shift children's anxious thoughts and reframe school as a safe and engaging place.

### 8 VISIT OR VISUALISE SCHOOL



If possible, encourage visits to the school grounds before the first day, especially if it's a new school. Walking the route or even looking at photos of classrooms and teachers can make the environment feel familiar. The school website is always a great go-to place for this. This is particularly helpful for younger children or those with additional needs.

### 9 PLAN AHEAD TOGETHER



Involve children in preparing for school - buying supplies, packing their bag, or choosing lunch options. This gives them a sense of control and builds excitement. Use checklists or calendars to prepare together, helping reduce last-minute stress.

### 10 STAY POSITIVE AND PRESENT



Children pick up on your outlook. Stay calm, positive, and present, especially during drop-offs. Avoid lingering goodbyes, and let them know you'll be there at pick-up. A consistent, reassuring presence builds their confidence and resilience.

## Meet Our Expert

This guide was created by Jo Morton-Brown, an Emotional Health Practitioner with nearly 15 years' experience supporting children and young people's mental health. She produces uplifting YouTube content for pupils and trains adults to better support young people's wellbeing, with a mission to help every child feel valued and understand their emotions.



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# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about TECHNOLOGY ATTACHMENT

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

In today's digital age, children are increasingly forming emotional and habitual attachments to their devices. With 96% regularly accessing the internet and nearly half engaging in live streaming or content sharing, their online presence is greater than ever. This guide explores the phenomenon of technology attachment in young people and offers expert advice on fostering healthier digital habits.

### WIRED FOR REWARD

Children's brains are particularly sensitive to reward-based stimulation, and some digital platforms, especially those offering quick-hit content like short-form videos, are designed to exploit this. The instant gratification of likes, comments, and rapid scene changes triggers dopamine releases, making these interactions highly addictive. Over time, this may contribute to changes in attention patterns and a reduced inclination towards activities that involve prolonged focus or delayed gratification, such as reading, problem-solving, or creative play.

### NIGHT-TIME TECH HABITS

Screen use late into the evening can disrupt natural sleep patterns by suppressing melatonin, the hormone that regulates sleep. Children engaging with stimulating content may experience delayed bedtimes, lower sleep quality, and increased fatigue during the day. Additionally, fear of missing out (FOMO) on online interactions can cause anxiety and resistance to logging off, creating a cycle of late-night engagement and tired mornings.

### SHAPED BY SCREENS

For many children, digital spaces have become a key arena for identity exploration and expression. Social media encourages them to curate their image carefully, with likes, comments, and shares serving as social validation. This environment can tie self-esteem to online feedback, making children vulnerable to comparison, self-doubt, and pressure to present a perfect version of themselves, even when it doesn't reflect reality.

### DIGITAL WORLD DANGERS

The internet can expose children to unfiltered content, some of which may be inappropriate, misleading, or harmful. Cyberbullying, exposure to idealised lifestyles, and online predators are all risks children face, often without fully understanding the consequences. Misinformation can shape distorted worldviews, while constant comparison to others can erode self-confidence. Without guidance, children may internalise these digital dangers, impacting their emotional and mental health.

### DIGITAL DEPENDENCY BUILDS

Devices often become digital comfort blankets. In moments of boredom, anxiety, or loneliness, children may instinctively reach for screens to self-soothe. This reliance on digital distraction limits their ability to develop healthy coping mechanisms, such as mindfulness, conversation or physical activity. As the habit builds, their dependency may displace real-world experiences and emotional resilience.

### FRIENDSHIPS & FILTERS

Technology transforms how young people socialise, often replacing face-to-face interaction with text-based or image-based communication. While messaging apps and social media enable connection, they may also limit emotional expression and the development of essential interpersonal skills, such as tone recognition, empathy, and reading body language. As a result, some children may become less confident with exchanges in person and more reliant on digital personas to navigate friendships.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### READ THE ROOM

Pay attention to behavioural changes that may signal unhealthy tech attachment. This includes mood swings, increased secrecy about online activity, withdrawal from family time or hobbies, and visible distress when separated from devices. These cues can indicate deeper emotional reliance or even exposure to distressing content. Early recognition allows for proactive support and meaningful conversation.

### DON'T WAIT, REACH OUT EARLY

If a child's relationship with technology starts affecting their emotional wellbeing, school performance, or social connections, don't hesitate to seek help. Open up discussions with teachers, pastoral staff, or digital wellbeing professionals. Early intervention is key, and a supportive network can provide tools, resources, and reassurance for both children and adults navigating this evolving digital landscape.

### SHAPE DIGITAL BOUNDARIES

Create a balanced digital environment with clear guidelines on when and how devices can be used. This includes screen-free zones (e.g. bedrooms, dining tables), app restrictions, and time limits. More importantly, involve children in these decisions and explain the reasoning behind them, even reflecting upon your own digital use so they can see it's something we all have to manage. Turning boundaries into a dialogue, not just directives, helps build trust and encourages self-regulation.

### SET THE STANDARD

Children often model the behaviour they see. When adults demonstrate healthy digital habits, such as prioritising face-to-face conversation, balancing screen time with other activities, and using devices with purpose, children are more likely to follow suit. Share your own positive uses of technology and invite children to do the same. This collaborative approach helps demystify tech use and encourages responsible engagement.

## Meet Our Expert

Philippa Wraithmell is an award-winning educator, author of *The Digital Ecosystem*, and founder of EdRuption and Digital Bridge. Digital Bridge supports the relationship between families and technology, empowering everyone to be balanced and digitally well. With over 15 years in digital education and wellbeing, she supports families, schools, and governments to build balanced and safe digital cultures.



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