

Petherton Park School Newsletter

March 2026

School Leadership Message

As we reach the end of another busy and inspiring term, we want to take a moment to celebrate the incredible achievements of our pupils. Every day, our pupils show determination, kindness, courage, and growth and this term has been a shining example of what makes our school community so special. Across classrooms, outdoor learning spaces, therapy sessions and beyond, our pupils have been true ambassadors of the **HEART values** that guide everything we do.

H – Honesty

Our pupils have demonstrated honesty in their relationships, their learning, and their self-reflection. From sharing their thoughts and feelings openly to taking responsibility for their actions, they have shown maturity and integrity that make us incredibly proud.

E – Effort

This term has been full of moments where pupils pushed themselves to try something new or persevere when things felt challenging. Whether working through a tough learning task, practising communication skills, or building independence, the level of effort across the school has been outstanding.

A – Aspiration

We have seen pupils setting goals, dreaming big, and believing in their potential. From personal progress milestones to taking part in enrichment activities, they have shown ambition and a growing confidence in themselves.

R – Respect

Respect has been at the heart of daily school life; for one another, for our team members, for the environment, and for our community. Our pupils continue to show empathy, patience and kindness, creating a safe and supportive place for everyone.

T – Teamwork

Collaboration is one of our greatest strengths. This term, pupils have embraced teamwork in group projects, celebration events, outdoor learning and social activities.

A special thank you to our families and carers for your ongoing support, communication, and partnership. Together, we make Petherton Park a place where every pupil can nurture, flourish and grow.

Wishing you all a restful and happy break

Beccy, Laura, and Vicky

April – Key Dates

- 2 End of Term @ 12.00
- 2 World Autism Awareness Day
- 3 Good Friday (bank holiday)
- 5 Easter Sunday
- 6 Easter Monday (bank holiday)
- 20 Term 5 starts

Safeguarding

~ Is everyone's responsibility ~

If you have any safeguarding concerns about any child (not just a child within our setting), please contact our Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL):

Zoey Shelley 07725 406993

zshelley@phoenixschools.org.uk

or

Beccy Wainwright 0330 1358 200

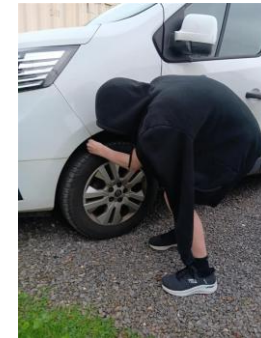
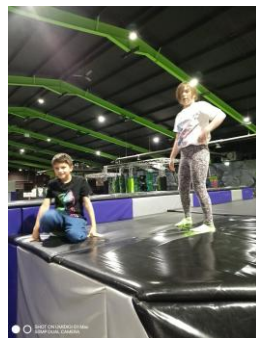
beccy.wainwright@phoenixschools.org.uk

Alternatively, contact our Operations Director responsible for Safeguarding Governance:

Darren Jackson

djackson@plcl.org.uk

Pupils' Gallery



March has been a month full of activity and fun. We ended term on a high – literally, at Go Ape with the high ropes and zip lining in the tree tops. Earlier in the month, pupils shone and grew in so many ways: Jake with competition winning cake design, Kai with superb social media safety design using Canva, Finnley learning life skills with vehicle safety checks, and Joel and Keysha making friends and being active together.

Spotlight on Science

Celebrating Science Week 6-15 March

Engineering the Future with Rubber Band powered cars

This year's Science Week saw a burst of creativity and engineering prowess as pupils across different classes took on the Rubber Band Powered Car Challenge. The goal was simple but demanding design and build a vehicle powered solely by the potential energy of a rubber band. What followed was a showcase of diverse design thinking and practical application of physics principles.

A Gallery of Innovation

The collection was filled with a fascinating array of prototypes, each reflecting a unique approach to overcoming friction and maximizing propulsion:

The "Formula 1" Aesthetic and Minimalist skeletal frame design by **Avon**: Avon class went for a standout design (labelled "Marlboro") which utilized a sleek, low-profile body reminiscent of a professional racing car, focusing on aerodynamics and weight distribution. Avon also designed the lightweight, skeletal structure using simple wooden dowels and large wheels, prioritizing a high power-to-weight ratio.

The Robust Block Builders by **Ivel** and **Brue**. Both classes opted for designs which featured solid, blocky chassis, suggesting a focus on structural integrity and stability during high-speed runs.

Creative Customization by **Frome**: Frome took their design to another level, creating a design inspired by the framework of a Pokémon. A bright yellow racer with vibrant hand-painted patterns. Pupils didn't just engineer, they personalized their creations, proving that science and art go together.

John Abah, Science Lead



Therapies Team

Using 'Acceptance' in the PACE Approach

What is Acceptance?

Acceptance means showing a child that they are valued, safe, and understood as they are. It communicates that their feelings, intentions, and lived experiences make sense, even when their behaviour may need support or boundaries.

Acceptance does not mean approving unsafe behaviour. It means seeing the child's needs, emotions and communication underneath the behaviour, and responding in a way that protects both the child and the relationship.

Using Acceptance means recognising that:

- Children express feelings in different ways and can be influenced by their history, nervous system, and neurotype.
- Behaviour is communication, not defiance or manipulation.
- A child's responses often reflect stress, overwhelm, sensory experiences, or past experiences.

Why is Acceptance is important?

Through Acceptance children can learn that:

- They themselves are never a problem.
- Limits around behaviour do not damage the relationship.
- Adults stay connected and caring, even when things are tricky or overwhelming.
- Their emotions are valid, and adults can help them make sense of overwhelming moments.
- Conflict or disagreement does not mean rejection.

Therapies Team

This helps to build emotional safety, trust, and self-worth. This is especially important for children with trauma histories or neurodivergent profiles who may have learned to expect misunderstanding or criticism.

Strategies for being Accepting:

- "I can see you really wanted to keep playing, and stopping feels hard."
- "I hear you saying you hate me, and I can see how big your feelings are. I'm still here."
- "I'm disappointed by what happened, but you are still important to me."
- "It feels like I'm angry with you, that's a tough feeling to sit with."
- "I wonder if this felt overwhelming, and leaving the classroom felt safer."
- "Even if it doesn't feel like it right now, I want you here with us."
- "That sounds like it was really upsetting. Thank you for telling me."
- "I can see things feel really hard, I'm here with you."
- "That seems like a lot to manage on your own. I'm right here if you need support."
- "This work looks challenging. Would working together help?"
- "This is a tricky task, I can help if you'd like."

These responses validate the child's internal experience, reduce shame, and maintain connection. These responses help separate the child from the behaviour.

This reinforces emotional safety, which is the foundation for learning, growth, and connection.

The Therapies team – Sharon, Megan & Charlotte

Inclusive Activities Calendar for Easter Holidays from the Somerset CIA Team

The Easter Holidays are just around the corner, and the Community Inclusion Activity Team has put together an exciting calendar full of fun activities for children and young people with disabilities and/or additional needs.

Activities include family cooking, nature studies, interactive drama workshops and pizza making. In addition to these activities, the team will be delivering two family days at Butlins and Crealy, as well as two young persons' days featuring bowling!

For more information about the Community Inclusion Activity Team and to access the calendar, visit the [Local Offer at Activities](#) for families.

[Calendar Easter PDF](#)



The poster is designed to look like a spiral-bound calendar. It features a yellow background with blue clouds and a blue sky. The title 'Activity Calendar' is written in a large, stylized font, with 'Activity' in blue and 'Calendar' in pink. Below the title, it says 'Community Inclusion and Activity Team' and 'Easter Holidays Monday 7 - 18 April 2025'. The Somerset Council logo is in the top right corner. There are several photographs of children and young people participating in activities, including a family walking in a park, a child in a wheelchair, a child holding a bird, and a child wearing large headphones. At the bottom, there are colorful Easter eggs and a green grassy field. A small text box at the bottom states: 'For ALL children and young people in Somerset with a disability or additional needs *You DO NOT have to be referred to any service to access these activities, unless otherwise stated.'

Activity Calendar
Community Inclusion
and Activity Team
Easter Holidays
Monday 7 - 18 April 2025

Somerset Council

For ALL children and young people in Somerset with a disability or additional needs
*You DO NOT have to be referred to any service to access these activities, unless otherwise stated.

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one of many issues which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

An estimated one-third of children have a social media account, so it's important that trusted adults know what content young people are consuming, what they're posting and the interactions they're having. On social media, it can be easy to go down 'rabbit holes' that aren't beneficial to our wellbeing. As platforms grapple with managing such 'legal but harmful' content, lives are being impacted – sometimes to tragic effect. We might be daunted by the scale of the tech giants and their content which so entrains young people, but we can still help children to be aware of their mental wellness: recognising when something isn't OK... and knowing what to do about content that upsets them.

1. UNDERSTAND THE ALGORITHM

Algorithms rank content by user interest: someone who regularly interacts with sports news, say, will see the latest results at the top of their feed. Likewise, if a user browses content that can cause harm, that's what will be recommended to them in future. Someone who's had a bad day and looks for posts which reflect their mood will find similar content being suggested to them more and more.

2. AVOID THE MAIN FEEDS

Avoiding the default feeds on social media platforms limits the amount of recommended content that's shown. Users can opt to only scroll through the accounts they follow, use restricted modes, or highlight posts that they don't want to see more of. Explore the platform safety settings to see how you can take control of what your child's phone shows them when they open the app.

3. DISCUSS WHAT THEY'VE SEEN

Chatting about what your child's seen online keeps you aware of the content they're interacting with. Don't assume that platforms are screening out inappropriate material, or even that your child would recognise content as being harmful. Discuss who they follow, what posts they like and what comes up in their feeds: if alarm bells ring, it could be time for a more in-depth talk or to seek support.

4. LEARN HOW TO HIDE CONTENT

If your child stumbles across unsuitable content on social media, there's the option to hide that post as well as indicating you'd prefer any similar material not to be suggested in future. On some platforms, you might also be able to block posts that contain specific words, which is an excellent way to start taking control of what your child sees online.

5. SET DAILY LIMITS

Phones and most apps can tell you how much they're being used. Spending too long online can mean a child misses out on other activities that are important to all-round wellbeing. You could set some family rules – for everyone to follow – around device use, such as screen time limits and tech-free spaces: involving your child in creating this agreement makes them more likely to stick to it.

6. MONITOR THEIR ACTIVITY

Keeping a discreet eye on how your child is using social media can help ensure they're not entering potentially dangerous situations. As they grow up, of course, children need space to exercise their independence – but you can still occasionally ask to see what they're looking at. Be transparent about your own social media use and try not to sound judgemental about your child's.

7. TURN OFF PUSH NOTIFICATIONS

Even for adults, it's tempting to check an email or message as soon as the alert sound pings. Push notifications encourage people to open their apps and spend time on their device, so turning them off will help your child to practise mindful use of tech. Most of us have other things that we need to focus on as a priority – and those notifications will still be there later, when we have more time.

8. USE DEVICES TOGETHER

Giving children internet-enabled devices and complete freedom to explore platforms on their own can result in exposure to hugely damaging content. You could consider making a particular area at home a designated space to use phones, tablets and so on – making it much easier to monitor what content your child is viewing and (if necessary) steer them away from any potentially harmful paths.

9. ENCOURAGE OTHER ACTIVITIES

Mental health professionals often highlight the importance of exercise, quality time with loved ones, a balanced diet and restful sleep for our mental wellbeing. Spending hours on social media can cause us to sacrifice other activities that our brains need to feel well – so encouraging your child to put down their phone and enjoy something that doesn't involve a screen can be immensely beneficial.

10. TALK ABOUT PEER PRESSURE

Most platforms default children's accounts to private, so only people they've accepted as friends can see their posts. This reduces the risk of bullying or unkind comments, but – just like offline life – the digital world can still make children feel as if they need to act or look a certain way to fit in. Talk to your child about peer pressure, and listen to any concerns so you can provide the support they need.

Meet Our Expert

Shazia Sarwar-Azmi is executive headteacher at a specialist primary school and, as an emotional therapy coach, works with school leaders to focus on the SEND, mental health and wellbeing agenda. A passionate advocate for vulnerable learners, Shazia is a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching and the author of *The Rainbow Within*, a book which supports children with SEMH needs.



Sources: <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52204936>
<https://proudsocial.com/insights/social-media-algorithms/>

NOS
National Online Safety
#WakeUpWednesday



www.nationalonlinesafety.com



@natonlinesafety



/NationalOnlineSafety



@nationalonlinesafety

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 30.11.2022



NURTURE > FLOURISH > GROW >

Nurture - Building a strong foundation for learning and personal growth through a range of activities.

Flourish - Developing the skills, knowledge and confidence to thrive in the world.

Grow - Growing through physical, social, personal, academic and financial health and well-being.

Instagram's New Parental Alerts Explained

At Phoenix we want all families to feel confident supporting their children's online safety. Instagram, owned by Meta, has announced a new feature that aims to help parents know when their teenager may need extra support online.

What the New Alerts Are

At Phoenix Instagram will soon send parents a notification if their teen repeatedly searches for terms related to suicide or self-harm within a short period. These alerts:

- Only appear when a teen's searches suggest possible risk or distress.
- Provide expert-designed guidance and resources to support conversations with your teen.
- Come as an email, text, WhatsApp message or in-app notification, depending on parental contact settings.

How the Alerts Work

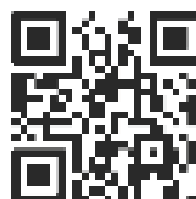
To receive alerts:

- Parents must be enrolled in Instagram's parental supervision tools.
- Teen must be using a supervised Instagram account.
- The system looks for multiple searches of concerning terms in a short time.

When triggered, you will see a full-screen message explaining what was recognised and links to information on how to talk with your teen.

The feature is rolling out first in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada, with other regions to follow later this year.

For more information visit: <https://about.fb.com/news/2026/02/new-meta-alerts-let-parents-know-if-teen-may-need-support/>





2025-2026

Petherton Park School

Key
School Holidays
Inset Days
Bank Holidays
Occasional days

September '25						
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Dates for NEXT SCHOOL YEAR



2026-2027

Petherton Park School

Key
 School Holidays
 Inset Days
 Bank Holidays
 Occasional days

September '26						
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