



Weekly Newsletter

Friday 18th September 2026



Message from Mrs Branton

Packed Lunches

We are seeing an increasing number of children having packed lunches containing lots of snacks. Please see below the expectation for a healthy packed lunch:

Packed lunches should include:

- At least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables every day.
- Meat, fish or other source of non-dairy protein (e.g. lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, hummus and falafel) every day.
- A starchy food such as any type of bread, pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, potatoes or other type of cereals every day.
- Dairy food such as milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais or custard every day.
- Only water, fruit juice, semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, yoghurt or milk drinks and smoothies.
- Biscuits are allowed but are only to be included as part of a balanced meal.

The following items should be included only occasionally:

- Crisps.
- Cakes and biscuits.
- Meat products such as sausage rolls, individual pies, corned meat and sausages.

Packed lunches should not include:

- Peanut butter and any nut products due to having children with serious nut allergies.
- Sweets or chocolate bars.
- Chocolate spread with nuts.
- Fizzy drinks.

The school also recognises that some pupils may require special diets that do not allow for the standards to be met exactly. In this case, parents are urged to be responsible in ensuring that packed lunches are as healthy as possible. For these reasons pupils are also permitted to have different food items.

Year 6 to 7 secondary admission round for September 2027

As you may be aware, the new secondary school admission round opened recently, for parents of current Year 6 children to apply for a secondary school (Year 7) place for September 2027.

The statutory national closing date for applications is 31st October 2026.

Applications can be made online via www.essex.gov.uk/admissions. 99% of parents in Essex applied online last year. All of the application information is available on the website above.

Harvest Festival Appeal – supporting the local food banks

Please help us show our support by donating any of the following items over the next few weeks: -- tinned/canned food (vegetables, fruit, meat, fish) - spreads (jam, honey etc.) - long-life milk, juice and drinks - dried pasta – rice - cooking sauces – condiments - tea and coffee – cereal and toiletries. Elm class are having a harvest assembly on Friday, 2nd October so please have any donations in by this date.

Thank you for your support.

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SchoolGrid – Benedicts Law

Benedict's Law have introduced new allergy safety requirements for schools in England from September 2026. It is named after 5-year-old Benedict Blythe, who died from anaphylaxis at school in 2021 after mistakenly being given cow's milk, to which he was known to be allergic.

Further to the email sent out this week, you will be aware that previously on SchoolGrid, the school had the permissions to update a child's diet and allergens, this is no longer the case. Since the new regulations, parents are solely responsible for ensuring that SchoolGrid is up to date. If your child has a new allergy, medical evidence needs to be uploaded onto SchoolGrid. If you change your child's record to show a new allergen and medical evidence is not uploaded, this could result in a restricted list of options for you to order for your child. Thank you for helping us ensure all children can eat safely in school.

Cake donations for our MacMillan Coffee Morning on Friday 25th September

A reminder that on Friday 25th September, we are hosting our annual MacMillan Coffee Morning to help raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support. Any donations of cakes would be greatly appreciated, please bring these to the office from Monday, 21st September onwards. Please note that we cannot accept any cakes containing nuts, and as a precautionary measure for allergen safety, we kindly request that anyone donating homemade cakes provide a list of the ingredients used in their baking. Thank you in advance for helping us to ensure all our children are kept safe.

When you drop your children to school on 25th September, please make your way into the hall where there will be cakes available and after registration our infant children will entertain you with their wonderful singing.

Sporting News

A busy week of football! ⚽ On Tuesday morning some of our year 2 boys attended their 1st football tournament hosted by Brentwood Town Football club. The team worked hard and improved with each match played. The children thoroughly enjoyed this great experience.

Tuesday afternoon was the turn of our year 4 boys. The team played brilliantly, we were so impressed with their performance and determination. Well done boys.

Thursday was all about the Shenfield Cup, attended by our boys and girls year 5&6 football team. These tournaments are fantastic opportunities for our children to participate in. The teams compete against schools across the borough, and both teams showed great strength and teamwork. Well done everyone. 🏆 🙌



Supporting a Smartphone-Free Childhood

This morning, we were delighted to welcome **Papaya** into school for a parent talk exploring the impact of smartphones and technology on children and young people.

It was an **incredibly informative and insightful morning**, giving parents plenty to think about when it comes to screen time, social media and the way technology is designed to capture our attention. One of the key messages was the importance of considering not just *how much* time children spend online, but also **how technology is designed to keep us coming back**.

The talk explored the idea of *persuasive design* — how notifications, likes and other features can tap into our reward systems and encourage us to spend longer on our devices. We also reflected on the balance between protecting children in the real world while ensuring that we don't overlook the challenges they can face online.

A few statistics to get us thinking

According to the figures shared in the presentation, the average UK teenager spends around **4.54 hours online each day**. That equates to approximately:

34.3 hours a week

75 days a year

14.3 years over a lifetime

The presentation also referenced Jonathan Haidt's *The Anxious Generation*, which estimates that teenagers spend between **6 and 8 hours a day** engaged in screen-based activities, with approximately **4.8 hours dedicated specifically to social media**.

These figures provide plenty of food for thought, and we hope that sharing information will help families have open conversations about technology and make choices that work for them.

Following the parent talk, we will be sharing statistics or insights regularly in our newsletter, giving families the opportunity to explore some of the issues around smartphones, social media and children's wellbeing at their own pace.

We will also be making our Smartphone-Free Childhood banner visible at the school gates from next Tuesday, 22 September, as a reminder of the conversations we are having as a school community.

Thank you to all the parents and carers who came along to the talk and engaged so positively with this important topic. We look forward to continuing the conversation together.



Want to do more? PAPAYA × SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

01. Talk to your child and other parents.

02. Join your local Smartphone Free Childhood WhatsApp group.
smartphonefreechildhood.org/find-your-community

03. Sign the Parent Pact



Scan to sign

Extra Resources

www.papayataalks.com/after

Link to slides, feedback form, chance to donate and smartphone alternatives.



Extra resources

The Anxious Generation
by Jonathan Haidt

The Healthy Selfie
by Dr Susie Davies

papayataalks.com

smartphonefreechildhood.org

healthprofessionalsforsaferscreens.org



Encourage your school to register for the Smartphone Free Schools rating.

smartphonefreerating.org

Share a thank you

Please see a link below to share a special thanks for a member of staff for this term:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfNrd6PyxKW_b8tvMFyuCLSJ_Da-OWv11rlqQjMdKMuKr3Qig/viewform?usp=publish-editor

If a member of staff has gone above and beyond for you or your child, please give them a special mention. Your kind words make a real difference, brightening staff members' days and recognising their hard work. Thank you for helping us spread positivity and support throughout our school community!

Community News

Please see the link below to our community news page, you will find lots of useful information and activities each week: <https://www.willowbrook.essex.sch.uk/page/?title=Community+News&pid=85>

Have a lovely weekend.

Mrs Branton

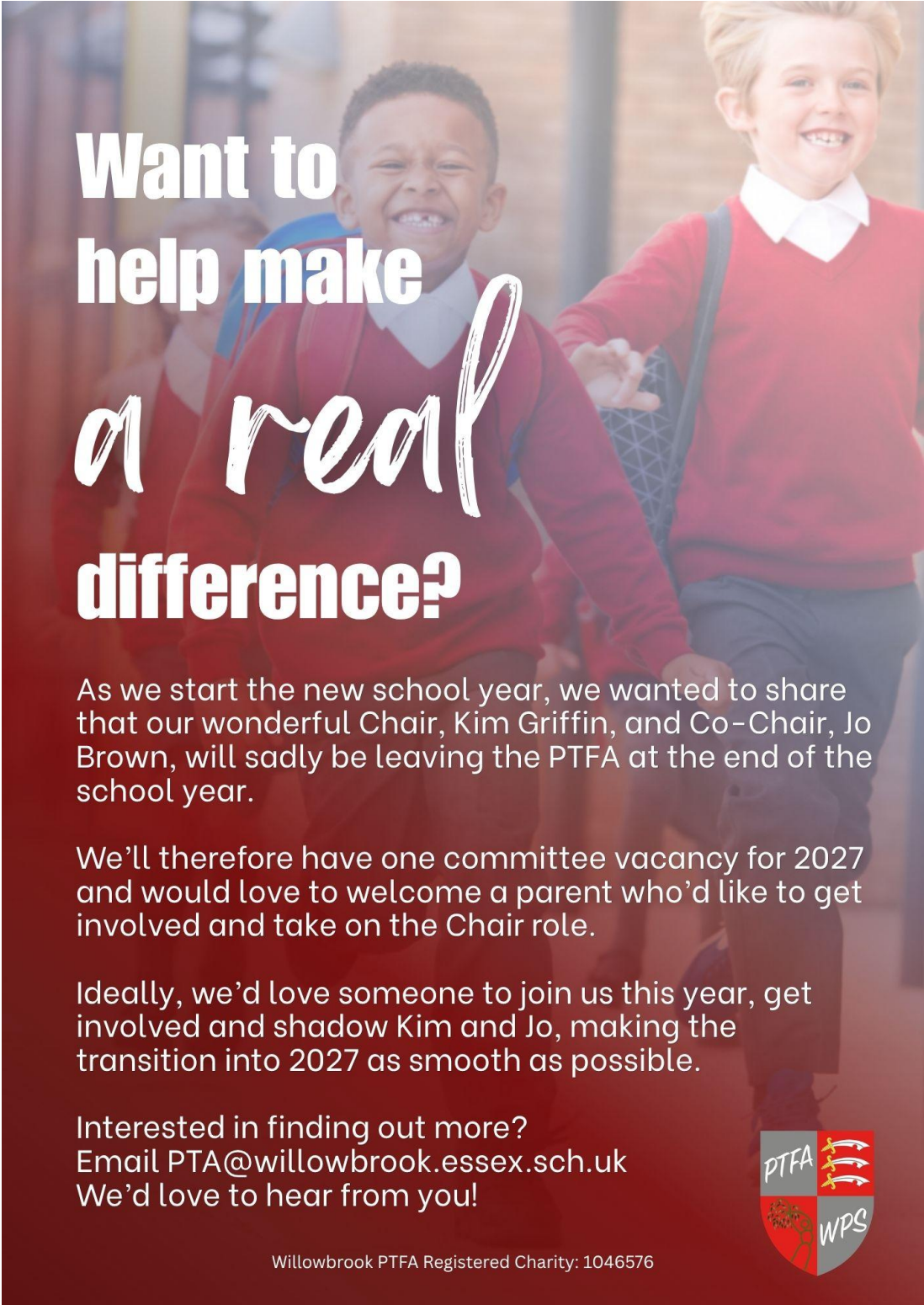


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PTFA FEATURE NEWS



**Want to
help make
a real
difference?**

As we start the new school year, we wanted to share that our wonderful Chair, Kim Griffin, and Co-Chair, Jo Brown, will sadly be leaving the PTFA at the end of the school year.

We'll therefore have one committee vacancy for 2027 and would love to welcome a parent who'd like to get involved and take on the Chair role.

Ideally, we'd love someone to join us this year, get involved and shadow Kim and Jo, making the transition into 2027 as smooth as possible.

Interested in finding out more?
Email PTA@willowbrook.essex.sch.uk
We'd love to hear from you!



Willowbrook PTFA Registered Charity: 1046576



PTFA EVENTS SCHEDULE

2026/27

16 **FRI**
OCTOBER

TRICK OR
TREAT POP UP

19 **THU**
NOVEMBER

WINTER DISCO

19 **FRI**
MARCH

ST.PATRICKS
DAY QUIZ

28 **FRI**
MAY

COLOUR RUN

24 **THU**
JUNE

SUMMER
DISCO

3 **SAT**
JULY

SUMMER
FAYRE

MORE EVENTS
STILL TO BE CONFIRMED...



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Words of the week

'Wonderful words of the week'

Key Stage 1

Year 1 Maple – peaceful

Year 2 Holly – carefully

Key Stage 2

Year 3 Elm – coarse

Year 4 Beech – thunderous

Year 5 Whitebeam – formidable

Year 6 Chestnut - government

Core value pupil



Well done to the core value pupil from Elm class who received this week's award for Happiness in the celebration assembly.



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Celebration Assembly



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DIARY DATES

	AUTUMN TERM 2026
21 st September 2026	Cherry Class phonics workshop for parents – 9.05am
22 nd September 2026	Drama4All - Superheroes Save Planet Earth Cherry, Maple, Holly and Elm Class. Dress up as super heroes
23 rd September 2026	Year 6 SATs information meeting for parents via TEAMS 4:45pm
25 th September 2026	Parent Macmillan Coffee morning- Cherry, Maple & Holly to perform to parents.
28 th September 2026	Individual and sibling photos
1st October to 31st October 2026	Black History Month
2 nd October 2026	Elm Harvest Class Assembly. 09:05am. Parents invited.
6 th October 2026	Prospective Parent Tour 5 till 6pm
7 th October 2026	World Inclusion Day - It is a day dedicated to ensuring that individuals of various abilities, backgrounds, ages, races, religions, genders, and other characteristics are accepted, welcomed, and treated fairly. Wear non-uniform and we will have collection buckets at the main playground gates for anyone wanting to make a voluntary donation for the charity SNAP
8 th October 2026	Year 6 Respect session provided by Essex Fire and Rescue
9 th October 2026	Chestnut Class Assembly
12 th October 2026	Whole School Firework and Halloween Safety assembly provided by Essex Fire and Rescue
12 th October to 16 th October 2026	Book Fair will run alongside parents' evenings – dates and times to be follow
13 th October 2026	Parents Evening (All year groups)
14 th October 2026	Parents Evening (EYFS only)
15 th October 2026	Parents Evening (All year groups)
16 th October 2026	Cherry Class Assembly. 09:05am. Parents invited.
19 th October 2026	Don-Rae Drama workshop with Chestnut and Whitebeam Class
20 th October 2026	Whole school flu immunisation
20 th October 2026	Last day of term
21 st -23 rd October 2026	INSET DAYS
2 nd November 2026	Towers and Turrets Holly Class Workshop- letter to follow
2 nd to the 6 th November 2026	Year 6 residential trip
6 th November 2026	Beech Class Assembly. 09:05am. Parents invited.
6 th November 2026	Prospective Parent Tour 10am till 11am
10 th November 2026	Whitebeam One Plan meetings- AM / PM
11 th November 2026	Maple One Plan meetings - AM
12 th November 2026	Year 6 Online Safety session provided by Essex Fire and Rescue
13 th November 2026	BBC Children in need day – wear non-uniform with a Pudsey theme (eg something yellow; something spotty; or both!) Collection buckets will be at the school gates for anyone wanting to make a voluntary donation
13 th November 2026	Maple Class Assembly. 09:05am. Parents invited.
13 th November 2026	Whitebeam Class year 6 residential parent meeting via TEAMS 4:45pm
16 th November 2026	Anti-Bullying Week

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16 th November 2026	Odd Socks Day - All you need to do is wear odd socks! Odd Socks Day is all about embracing and celebrating people's differences and helps to launch Anti-Bullying Week.
16 th , 17 th , 18 th , 19 th , 20 th November 2026	Year 6 Bikeability course
17 th November 2026	Beech One Plan Meetings – AM/ PM
18 th November 2026	Elm One Plan Meetings - AM
18 th November 2026	Beech One Plan Meetings - PM
19 th November 2026	Chestnut One Plan Meetings - AM
19 th November 2026	Cherry One Plan Meetings -AM
19 th November 2026	PTFA Winter Disco
20 th November 2026	Catch-up for those who missed the flu immunisation
20 th November 2026	Whitebeam Class Assembly. 09:05am. Parents invited.
24 th November 2026	Parent Coffee Afternoon 2:40pm start in the school hall- Find out more about our PTFA, governors and parent council. Performances from school choir and Chestnut class.
25th November 2026	Year 6 cyber bullying session provided by Essex Fire and Rescue
26 th November 2026	Holly Class Assembly. 09:05am. Parents invited.
26 th November 2026	Year 6 Online exploitation session provided by Essex Fire and Rescue
27 th November 2026	Christmas House Morning
1 st December 2026	Last swimming lesson for Whitebeam and top-up swimming for selected Chestnut pupils.
1 st December 2026	Year 3 & 4 Show for parents at 2:15pm
2 nd December 2026	Whole school Panto Trip
3 rd December 2026	Prospective Parent Tour 1:30pm till 2:30pm
4 th December 2026	Year 5 & 6 Show for parents at 2:15 pm
7 th December 2026	Last week of clubs
10 th December 2026	EYFS & KS1 Nativity for parents at 2pm
11 th December 2026	EYFS & KS1 Nativity for parents at 9:20am
14 th December 2026	RockSteady Concert for parents at 2:20pm
16 th December 2026	Christingle Workshop for all classes
17 th December 2026	Children's Christmas Bazaar
18 th December 2026	Christmas dinner and Christmas jumper day
18 th December 2026	Last day of term