



GREAT KINGSHILL

Church of England Combined School



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12th February 2025

Aspiring to be our best with kindness, respect and faith

The half term seems to have come and gone in the blink of an eye! We've packed plenty in as usual, with one of the highlights being last Friday's PTA Discos! Thank you to all who were involved in the planning and preparation, as well as those who attended.

Elsewhere in school, Year 5 and Reception have both welcomed visitors recently: Year 5 took part in Viking Day, with axes, shields and all; Reception had a blast (as you can see from the photos below) at Dinosaur Day!





We've plenty of exciting things on the horizon - be sure to check the dates at the bottom of the newsletter - including PTA events for the festival of Holi and Quiz Night!

Thank you to those of you who attended Parents' Evening last night; I look forward to seeing many more of you tonight.

Have a lovely half term break!

Mrs Best

Attendance

We are fast approaching the end of this half term and with this, we are unfortunately seeing an increasing number of parents requesting leave of absence for exceptional circumstances, many of which are for Thursday and Friday of this week. I would like to remind parents that the Attendance Policy is on the school website and clearly outlines the steps parents must take when requesting leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. The word exceptional

is the key - it should only be an exception for which parents request leave and this should not be approached as an entitlement. A family holiday - however important or beneficial - will not be classed as exceptional circumstances. The policy also outlines that a minimum of four weeks notice must be provided and the request must be submitted on the appropriate form (an email is not sufficient). Mrs Marks is spending a large amount of her time going back to parents to ask them to complete the relevant form, which is also available on the school website.

Authorisation for absence can only be granted by the headteacher, and Mrs Marks and I discuss all requests. Please do not email the office or inform the office staff at the window that you need to pick your child up early or they will be late - if this is the case you still need to complete the relevant form and have the request reviewed.

We would like to thank those parents who have made a considered effort to ensure that they make appointments outside of school time or have taken steps to rearrange appointments when asked. I would also like to remind parents that routine medical appointments will not be authorised, and if you are making private hospital appointments or therapy appointments, we will request that these are made outside of school time. We would also like to thank parents for the effort they have made with their punctuality - there have even been days this term where everyone was in school on time.

The school's overall attendance this academic year is 95.9%. Whilst this figure is above the national figure of 94%, it is below our target of 97%.

Mrs Best

Use of the front car park

Parents are not permitted to use the front carpark for parking / picking up or dropping off at any time. This includes times when the main school is not open. During the half term break, a newly installed barrier will be present at the front carpark. This is to ensure that the school is able to provide ample parking for disabled blue badge holders and visitors. If you do not have a blue badge permit, please do not pull into the front driveway as you will not be able to gain access to the carpark at the front.

The school will be issuing parking permits for blue badge holders. If a parent or a child has a blue badge and requires a permit, they will need to bring the blue badge to the school office to have it registered and a parking permit issued. The permit will only be able to be used if the blue badge holder is in the car at the time or being collected, **and** if there is a designated parking space available. If there is insufficient space to park, you will need to find an alternative location.

There have been several occasions recently where parents have parked in the middle on the carpark and blocked everyone else in. If there is not a space you will need to park elsewhere - we have to be considerate to all users. The provision of the disabled parking spaces is primarily for those who have mobility issues and are therefore not able to walk to parking locations that are further away. It is not there as a convenience and parents will be expected to park in the marked bays nearest the building. The bays nearest the hedge will be for visitors or staff members with blue badges only.

Mrs Best

Traffic, travel and working with our local community

Before Christmas, I was invited to attend the GKRA (Great Kingshill Residents' Association) Traffic Calming group. The group is set up to tackle a range of problems that the village faces in terms of speeding, parking and traffic congestion. The meeting provided all parties the opportunity to share their concerns, views and potential solutions. There was obviously a large amount of discussion and frustration about the impact the school traffic, and particularly the inconsiderate / illegal parking of parents, has on the villagers and other road users.

Here, for reference, is the Thames Valley Police link for information on what constitutes illegal parking:

https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/police-forces/thames-valley-police/areas/c/2019/we-need-to-talk-about-parking/?fbclid=IwAR2xOd8owBH6LIZWr2R7yWbT01p4w-m9GSrL-A5Yhh_wli2pDDkQ7Vr4R0k

I listened to the concerns of the members of the group and I agreed that the school would be committed to working closely with them to attempt to improve road safety around the village, particularly the area directly surrounding the school.

The first action the group need our support with is the petition below. The petition outlines the challenges faced and the need for support from the community board to implement potential measures. I would appreciate it if all parents could sign the petition by the deadline on 20th February. Whilst it is clear from the petition that the actions of members of the school community are part of the problem, by working together with the residents association, Parish Council, County Council and Community Board, we could be part of a solution that makes the roads around the school safer - not only for our current pupils and families, but for future pupils and families as well.

The full details of what the GKRA are trying to achieve is detailed below. I have also included the link to the petition.

<https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?ID=127>

[ePetition - GKRA Traffic Calming - Modern Council](#)



Following the Traffic Action meeting held in December, a petition has now been successfully submitted to the North West Chiltern Community Board. It is titled **GKRA Traffic Calming**.

Additional evidence in the way of photos and speed tables are with the Community Board.

This petition aims to apply for funding for a number of traffic, speed and parking restriction measures to be put in place in Cryers Hill and Great Kingshill. The key areas of concern in the villages were identified at the meeting.

In preparing the petition, GKRA liaised with Buckinghamshire Highways, Speed Watch and Councillors David Carroll and Stan Jones, with the aim of achieving support from the Community Board and acceptance of the measures by Buckinghamshire Highways.

There is much competition for the limited available funding, so we need the maximum number of signatures in support.

We feel that we need at least 300 signatures in order to show that there is clear support for this initiative from local residents. Multiple people in one household can sign the petition.

The deadline for this petition is 20th February, below is the direct link:

<https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?ID=127>

Please feel free to pass this message and link to anyone who you think might want to support the petition to reduce speeding and improve parking in our villages.

We will keep you updated on progress. The decision will be made at the next Community Board meeting in March after the petition has been investigated and costed.

Mrs Best

Local Academy Committee Vacancies

The local academy committee continues to have a number of vacancies for Foundation members. These members are appointed by the board and trustees and the Oxford Diocese.

What is a Foundation Member?

Foundation governors are the representatives of the Church of England on the governing board (academy committee) and all Church of England schools must have foundation governors. As Great Kingshill is a Voluntary Aided (VA) school, the number of foundation members must outnumber all other categories of members combined by a majority of two.

At present, we have very few foundation members and they are no longer in the majority. We are looking for our foundation members to come from further afield than the parent body - so if there is someone you know who may be interested in joining our committee and has a connection or is a member of a local church, we would love to hear from them.

What experience do I need?

Previous experience as a governor is advantageous but not essential, as full training can be given. It is more important that you have the time to engage with school.

What is the time commitment?

The academy committee meet termly in person. Outside of the main meeting, it is expected that you will have the time to engage with the school at least once per half term. It is not essential that all engagements with the school are on-site visits (it will depend on the role or the purpose of the contact). The staff team work hard to be flexible to ensure that they are able to find a way of working that is productive for both parties.

What skills do I need to have?

The ability to ask questions, be interested and provide both support and suggestions for improvement. The committee focuses their work under the following criteria:

S1: Safeguarding

S2: School Improvement

S3: Stakeholder Engagement

S4: Staffing

S5: Systems and Compliance

SIAMs & Christian Distinctiveness

We are looking for individuals who will not only support with the SIAMs strand, but who also have expertise in one of the other areas as well. We are particularly keen to have people who have skills in health & safety, travel planning, human resources, working with stakeholders (marketing, branding, website content management), as well as a number of members who have a range of educational backgrounds - this could be working in another school, having previously been a governor or working for the local authority.

What do I need to do if I know someone who is interested and has the desired skills?

If you know anyone who is interested and has the required skills, please ask them to email me on head@gkcs.school

We are really hoping that there are some people within our community who would be able to give some time to work with the school. Please pass this information on to anyone who you believe it may be of interest to.

Mrs Best

Update from the PTA

Firstly, from the whole GKCS PTA team, we would like to thank every one of you for the support you gave us last year, and that you are continuing to show us this year, which kicked off with the 'Crazy Hair, Don't Care' disco last week. In autumn, our first term as a newly

formed PTA, we are incredibly proud to announce we raised over £6,000, which we wouldn't have been able to do without you.

Your feedback remains hugely valuable to us as it helps us to improve and develop our activities. We will be looking at further ways to gain your feedback as parents, volunteers and teachers so that we can continue to grow.

The year ahead is an exciting one, and we can't wait to run more fun and diverse school community events for you all. We already have a jam-packed events calendar, which we shared last week, so please mark the dates in your diaries and come along where you can. We hope there is something for everyone!

The events we run would not be a success without the teachers, volunteers and PTA team taking time out of their personal lives to support and run everything behind the scenes and on the day. We want to say a big thank you to the individuals involved for the hours they put in to help and drive the PTA forwards.

We are extremely grateful for the support we've received so far from volunteers, but we are still calling for more help. If you're interested in volunteering at an upcoming event, driving an initiative or have a skill we could put to good use, please email pta@gkcs.school. Many companies also offer volunteer days for staff; if this is something your company offers and you would consider using it to support the PTA, then please get in touch.

We have two upcoming events – **Quiz Night and Holi Festival** – both taking place next month. Find out what's happening at the events in the communications attached.

We look forward to seeing you all at our events and activities this year.

The GKCS PTA

Holi Festival



GKCS PTA NEWSLETTER



Come and celebrate the Festival of Spring and Love!

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Join us to celebrate the Hindu festival of Holi, a colourful festival and one full of fun. Find out more about Holi, the significance of the festival and its traditions on page two!

Plus, we're excited to announce, we're unveiling the **new school MUGA** on the same day!

Date: Friday 14th March

Time: After school until 5.30pm

Location: School and MUGA

How are we celebrating Holi?

- **Rangoli designing**, showcase your colourful creations!
- **Flowerpot decorating and planting seeds** to welcome Spring – this can be prepaid for via the online PTA shop for £3.50 <https://gkcs-pta.sumupstore.com/product/create-your-own-colour-splash-spring-flower-pot-holi-event>
- Colourful **balloons and glow wands** to buy on the day and keep the festivities going at home
- **Beat the Goalie** on the new MUGA. Take a shot and win a prize!
- Plus, visit our **Desi Delights Tuck Shop** for delightful treats and drinks!

If you have any questions about Holi Festival or you would like to volunteer on the day, please email pta@gkcs.school.

We hope you can make it and celebrate this wonderful and colourful festival together!

The GKCS PTA



https://www.instagram.com/gkcs_pta



GKCS PTA NEWSLETTER



What is Holi?

Also known as the Festival of Colours, the Festival of Spring, and the Festival of Love, **Holi** is primarily a **Hindu** festival, celebrated by followers of the Hindu religion. It is now a worldwide celebration and is mostly acknowledged in countries in Asia, such as India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, but everyone is encouraged to take part and enjoy the celebrations.

What is the significance of Holi?

The Holi festival has many meanings attached to it.

1. It signifies the end of winter and the beginning of spring.
2. The blossoming of love, a celebration of friends and family and the chance to make amends and repair broken relationships.
3. The triumph of good over evil.



Holi traditions

Though primarily a festival of fun and celebration, there are several traditions related to Holi:

- The lighting of the **Holika** (Hindu goddess bonfire).
- **Gulal** – colourful powder thrown around.
- **Sweets** – many foods and sweets are eaten during Holi.
- **Rangoli** – though not a Holi-specific tradition, many people will create **rangoli** patterns in front of their homes to welcome the goddess **Lakshmi** and bless its residents with wealth and good fortune.



https://www.instagram.com/gkcs_pta

PTA Quiz Night

The graphic features a red header with the GKCS PTA logo on the left and the text 'GKCS PTA NEWSLETTER' on the right. Below the header is a central image of a red curtain stage with a glowing 'QUIZ NIGHT' sign in the center, surrounded by question marks. The main text is on a white background with a red footer containing an Instagram icon and the URL 'https://www.instagram.com/gkcs_pta'.

Will you be crowned the GKCS quiz champions?

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Brush up on your general knowledge and get ready for a night of fun and friendly competition at the GKCS PTA Quiz Night, hosted by Barnaby Moore, ex-pupil and resident quiz master.

Date: Saturday 15th March
Time: Doors open at 7pm, Quiz starts at 7.30pm until late
Location: School hall
Teams: Teams of 8 people
Entry fee: £10 per person which includes a welcome drink

Gather your brainy buddies and enjoy a great evening with fellow parents. Plus, bring your own drinks and snacks to keep those brains fuelled!

How to book your table:

- Get together a team of 8 players (no less, no more) and think of your quiz team name – the more creative, the better!
- Sign up link will go live and will be shared on **Monday 24th February** (please note it's a team sign up so full payment will be taken for all 8 quizzers at the time of booking)
- Spaces are limited, so book your team a table early.

If you have any questions about the Quiz Night, please don't hesitate to contact us at pta@gkcs.school.

We look forward to seeing you there and finding out who the best quizzers are!

The GKCS PTA

Healthy Lunches

Whilst they have been on lunch duty recently, several members of staff have commented that some lunches are not looking as healthy as we might have hoped - in fact, on one day last week, one adult saw only ten pieces of fruit amongst all of the Key Stage Two lunchboxes!

We would love for the children to be bringing in healthier foods and less sugary treats in their packed lunches. After half term, our head pupils Eliza and James will be awarding 'Healthy Lunch' stickers to those children who have made a real effort to bring a well-balanced, healthy lunch to school.

Forest School News

It has been quite a wet and windy couple of weeks, which has meant that the forest school area has become a bit boggy and very sticky with mud. We had to cancel a couple of sessions due to the wind as the potential for danger was quite high. It is always safety first!

We have been continuing with knots for the most part, learning reef knots, clove hitches, and some children beginning some square lashings. Swords were made!





Some of the year groups took on the challenge to build bridges across the mud, and it involved a lot of engineering skills, teamwork, communication and bravery to guide themselves and in some cases, a bucket of water, across. We have definitely learnt a lot about how we work together!

Year 6 have been continuing with their mallet making, using the very sharp billhooks, bow saws and whittling knives to carve smooth(ish) handles. Again, this has required good talking and listening as they work with a partner to whack the tools in the right place at the right time and with the correct amount of force.

Over the next couple of weeks (depending on the amount of rain) we are hoping to light the fires and cook popcorn. It is always a test of their (and our) patience as it does take a little while for the kernels to heat up. We won't be adding any salt or sugar (boring, I know) but from past experience, they quite enjoy the natural smokey flavour.

If there are any issues, please contact me on Class Dojo or email the office with any updated dietary requirements.

I have added the timetable for after half term, just so you are prepared for when you have to bring kit in. If you do not receive a message from us, please assume Forest School is going ahead. We do aim to do it every week.

Mr Smith

Timetable for SPR1		
Day	AM	PM
Monday	Pre School	5H
Tuesday	Reception	3S
Wednesday		2G
Thursday	1F	4P
Friday		6H

Timetable for SPR2 (next half term)		
Day	AM	PM
Monday	Pre School	5L
Tuesday	Reception	3M
Wednesday		2F
Thursday	1T	4W
Friday		6C

Preschool admissions - September 2025

Places are rapidly filling up for Preschool admissions starting September 2025. If you would like to apply for a place, please email preschool@gkcs.school as soon as possible to ensure we can offer you the session(s) you require.

Thank you.

'Sunflowers'



HGBC Sunflowers is an inclusive, safe space for children with hidden disabilities to come together for fun, support and nurture.

We invite children aged 7-14 and their parents from this special community to join us at **Holmer Green Baptist Church** from **10am-12pm** on the 4th Saturday of each month.

At HGBC Sunflowers you can expect free flowing activities, crafts, structured games for those who wish to participate, plus a space for parents to have a cuppa and chat.

To register your interest, or if you have any questions, please email: sunflowers@holmergreenbaptist.org.uk

Please follow us on Facebook for news and events.





St. Michael's Pancake Party!

PANCAKE PARTY

@ ST. MICHAELS CHURCH HUGHENDEN



Join us at St. Michaels Church to celebrate
Shrove Tuesday (pancake day)
We will have lots of fun and games, a short celebration
and then sit down together for pancakes with lots of toppings.

4:30-6PM on the 4th March

Just £1 per child.

Scan the QR code or go to
<https://stmichaels.churchsuite.com/events/13stouta>
to sign up.

A parent/guardian will need to stay for the party




Dates - Spring Term

Below are the dates for the Spring Term. Please note that these may be edited, and more dates added, as the term progresses.

Monday 6 th January 2025	08:30	School opens for Spring Term 1
Monday 6 th January	09:00 – 11:00	New Preschool children settling-in session (no parents)
Monday 6 th January	13:30 – 15:00	New Preschool children settling-in session (no parents)
Tuesday 7 th January	10:30 – 12:00	4P first swimming session (every Tuesday)
Monday 13 th January	09:00	Open morning for prospective parents 2025
w/c Monday 3 rd February		Children's mental health week
Thursday 6 th February		Y5 Viking Day
Friday 7 th February		PTA Discos (timings and arrangements TBC)
Monday 10 th February		Reception Dinosaur Day
Tuesday 11 th February	15:30 – 18:30	Parents' Evening
Wednesday 12 th February	15:30 – 18:30	Parents' Evening
Friday 14 th February	15:15	School closes for half term
Monday 24 th February	08:30	School opens for Spring Term 2
Tuesday 25 th February		Science Fair
Tuesday 25 th February	15:20 – 16:00	Open classrooms and viewing of Science Fair
Thursday 6 th March		World Book Day
Wednesday 12 th March		Y4 Spirit of the Wild
Friday 14 th March		Y3 trip to Chiltern Open Air Museum
Friday 14 th March	After school	PTA 'Festival of Holi'
Saturday 15 th March		PTA 'Quiz Night'
Monday 17 th – Friday 21 st March		Y6 residential to Norfolk Lakes
Tuesday 1 st April	After school	PTA 'Eid al-Fitr Festival'
Thursday 3 rd April	14:00	Y1 Easter performance to parents
Friday 4 th April	13:30	School closes for Easter holidays