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Furze Down School News

Dear Parents and Carers

The Autumn Term is always a busy one, it is also a time of transition and change as pupils adjust to being in new classes. We now have 210 pupils on roll and 147 staff are employed to meet the needs of our children and young people. This is in stark contrast to when I took over the headship in 2015. At this time there were only 112 pupils on roll and 60 staff. This rapid growth has been due to the demand for Special School places across the Country. We are excited that the 2nd stage of the consultation to have a second base in Buckingham has now been completed and we expect to hear the outcome of this in the New Year. The proposal for sixth Form to use the Opportunity Centre in Buckingham will extend the vocational, volunteering and preparation for adulthood activities that are available to them.

Despite the challenges illness and recruitment have brought this term, colleagues have continued to work tirelessly. No matter what challenges have been put their way, or issues they have faced, they have risen to them and worked exceptionally hard to ensure your children are kept safe and above all, that their education has continued. They have been truly remarkable and I am very lucky to lead a team of highly dedicated and professional staff.

After six years as our Chair of Governors Sheree Howard has stepped down from this role, she will however continue as a Governor. On behalf of staff, pupils and parents, I would like to thank Sheree for all her support and hard work over the last 10 years. Our new Chair of Governors is Matthew Watkins, who was previously a Furze Down Parent and also was Chair of Governors at The Buckingham School. Mathew will supported by Elton Norris as the Vice Chair. Elton is a parent Governor. The Governor role is an important one as the job of the Governing Board is to help set the strategic direction of the school and ensure strategic priorities align with our vision and values. We are very lucky to have a team of very dedicated Governors. Matthew and Elton are looking forward to engaging with Parents and Carers in the new Year in order to capture your voice in relation to school priorities and next steps for the school.

Our current strategic focus has been on the following areas:

1. **Further developing support for Emotional Health and Wellbeing (EHWB)**—We are continuing to collaborate with Dr Amelia Roberts, Deputy Director at UCL's Centre for Inclusive Education. Working with the EHWB Team we have produced a Charter to support pupils Emotional Health and Wellbeing and this academic year the charter and resources are being rolled out and evaluated. We will share more about this project as it develops
2. **Learning to Read and Reading to Learn**—Our work linked to reading continues to be supported by Dr Paula Williams who has carried out extensive research into what works best to support children and young people to learn to read as well as read for meaning. https://www.psychology4learning.com/educational_psychologists/
3. **Maths Mastery**- Centre Teams have been engaging in Teaching for Maths Mastery learning in collaboration with the Maths Enigma Hub <https://enigmamathshub.co.uk/>
4. **Reviewing and revising our curriculum to ensure it meets the ever-changing needs of our pupils.**

The last two weeks have seen us come together as a community as part of our annual carol concerts and nativity. It has been fantastic to see so many of you in school. These events culminated in the highlight of the year our Christmas Bazaar. At the time of writing this I do not yet know the total amount of money raised but I do know the raffle raised over £1700. A big thank you to Diana Campbell one of our new governors who liaised with local businesses encouraging them to donate to Furze Down School, and to all our enterprising pupils and staff.

Please enjoy looking through the following pages which highlight just a small fraction of the wonderful opportunities pupils have enjoyed this term.

We look forward to seeing all your children back in school on Friday 5th January. Wishing you all a very merry Christmas and looking forward to all that 2024 brings.

Alison Rooney



News from Early Years and Primary



The two new primary classrooms are being enjoyed by the pupils and staff in Birch and Willow.

These new buildings have given the Early Years and Primary department back some of our specialist spaces.

Birch and Cedar pupils are benefitting from sensory circuits already.



The new specialist playground equipment, including a swing, accessible roundabout, and trampoline, also provide valuable sensory input for our youngest pupils.



Willow class have been producing fabulous art this term



Year 6 have been travelling by school minibus to The Guttman Centre each week where they have been enjoying swimming lessons. As well as swimming the pupils have been practicing their life skills, and are getting quicker and quicker at getting ready

Oak Class had fun learning about the Great Fire of London. We learnt about how fire spreads by recreating our very own Pudding lane, using paper houses.



After observing how quickly the fire took hold we also looked at how they might have used different strategies to try to extinguish the fire.

Our Nativity

We couldn't be more proud of all the primary pupils for the most wonderful telling of the Christmas story.

It was a sell out event with a huge audience, and the actors, singers and dancers were unfazed and entertained their audience superbly. A big shout out goes to the staff supporting the pupils, and our digital leaders who controlled the sound effects and lighting.



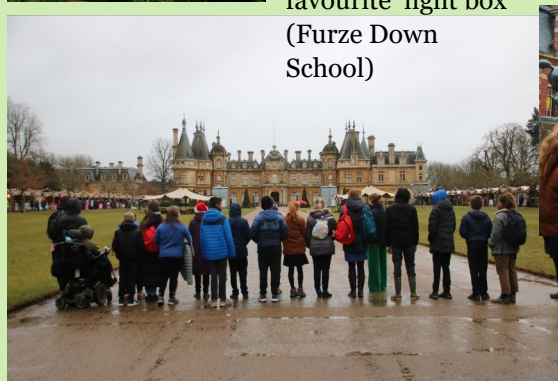
News from Key Stage 3



Year 8 designed this year's photobox contribution displayed at Waddesdon Manor. The group had a great day out where they were able to see their contribution alongside other local schools.

A visit to the stables, the light trail and hot chocolate at the Christmas Marker featured high on their agenda. Possibly their favourite time was the visit to the playpark! If you out and about at Waddesdon manor this holiday, please take along your pennies and vote for your favourite light box

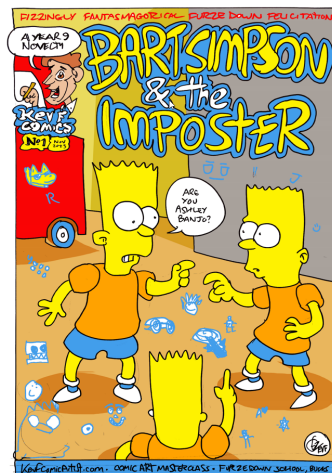
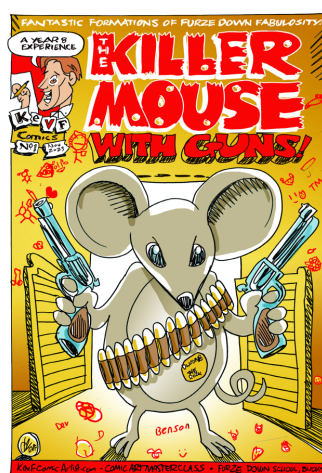
(Furze Down School)



Comic Masterclass

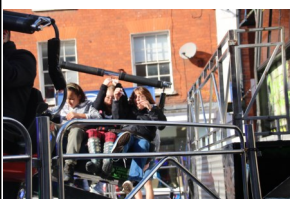
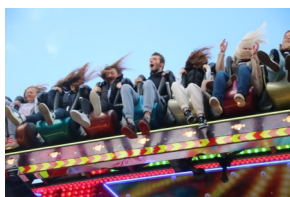
Pupils in year 8 and 9 really enjoyed the wonderful **Kev F Sutherland's Comic Masterclass**. The workshop was linked to the Autumn term 2 unit of work on Superheroes and Comics. Kev F has been writing and drawing comics for everyone from Beano to Marvel, Doctor Who to Viz, Red Dwarf and The Dandy.

The pupils explored how to make comic strips and manga and by the end of a session the group had produced a comic containing a strip by every single one of them, a copy of which they took home, along with a hand drawn caricature of themselves.



Buckingham Fayre

The showmen generously gave all the pupils at Furze Down School 1 hour of free rides at this year's Buckingham Charter Fayre. Needless to say a wonderful time was had by all.



News from Year 9

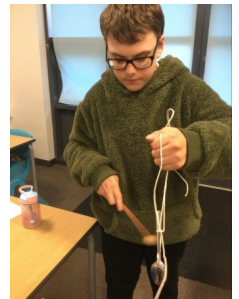
During the Autumn term Year 9 students have enjoyed developing their travel training skills.

They discussed and then practiced elements around road safety including walking along the path, leaving room for other pedestrians and using safe strategies when crossing different roads. Skills included looking and listening carefully before, and whilst, walking across a road. As well as walking around Winslow the two Year 9 classes have recently explored how to travel safely in the minibus. By considering these new skills they were able to travel to other local villages and towns in order to apply their road safety knowledge in different settings.



Year 9 are great scientists.

During the first half of the Autumn Term, we explored properties of materials. Through practical activities we recapped and extended our knowledge of the properties of different types of materials. We then worked together to carry out a range of experiments to compare and contrast mixtures and solutions, including exploring reversible and irreversible changes in different materials.



The second half of the Autumn Term Year 9 studied sound in their science lessons. We enjoyed lots of investigations, developing a range of scientific skills, whilst finding out about sound.

We discovered that sound is made by vibrations and can travel through different materials, including solids, liquids and gases. Through practical work we have also identified how the pitch of sound can be altered.

Employment and Enterprise

In Employment the Year 9 classes have been working through a variety of tasks to help them identify their strengths and qualities. These have included whether they can listen, follow instructions, and if they work better in a team or on their own.

In Enterprise the skills were taken further by having a goal—making something for the Christmas Fayre.

A range of items were made for the fayre and the stall was wonderfully looked after by several of the Year 9 staff and students. We had items made by the current classes as well as by those who were in Year 9 last year. I am delighted to say that our stall raised just under £50.

The items on offer showed how talented everyone could be when crafting. We will continue some of the skills involved, next term, by looking at how these talents can help you in a real world applications or occupations.



News from Key Stage 4

Class CH

Class CH have had a busy term working on our functional life skills. We have also enjoyed reading our second Bear Grylls adventure story!



Recently the class went to Lillingstone Farm to take part in some festive activities. We had a brilliant time. We iced gingerbread men, fed hungry pigs and toasted marshmallows. This left us feeling very Christmassy now!



More about the Farm

Lillingstone 'pick your own' Farm have supported many students from Furze Down School.

The students have gone pumpkin picking and the experience was excellent preparation for Evolve students involving lots of practical skills.

Students are all put to work and many enjoyed the recent Christmas craft visit such as Class CH.

Remembrance 11.11.11.

The whole school observed a 2 minute silence at 11am on 11th November, 2023.

Miss Cotterill played the last post and pupils and staff stood in perfect silence, together, around the amphitheatre. In reflecting on our observance of the 2 minutes most people shared that it was very moving and thought provoking.





NPHT

NATIONAL PARALYMPIC HERITAGE TRUST

This half term we were very excited to be invited to take part in a project, funded by Heart of Bucks and a Kop Hill Climb Grant, with the National Paralympic Heritage Trust (NPHT), based at Stoke Mandeville Stadium, the home of the Paralympic Games.

Together, we explored how museums can create genuinely accessible spaces for visitors who may find them challenging places to engage in. This includes how an exploration of the ways movement supports learning.

The holistic approach to rehabilitation adopted by Professor Sir Ludwig Guttmann, the father of the Paralympic Games, saw the introduction of physical movement to the treatment of injured service men and women during the second world war. The effect this had not only on the bodily health of the patients but also on their desire to engage in wider society, fits well with the important work taking place in our schools around sensory circuits and sensory learning.

Together we were able to explore this subject with experts in a variety of fields, learning through the themes presented by the Paralympic Games, exploring opportunities to embed the learning through physically engaging activities.

Using performance, story writing and mindful movements, the project has built on the knowledge and practice already expertly provided at the school, drawing on sensory circuits for inspiration.

Through a process of reflective assessment undertaken at the Trust, we contributed to the exploration of how museums can discreetly support visitors to regulate and engage when enjoying a day out with their families.

The participation of Willow Class and also Year 7 on this project has been instrumental in the creation of resources by the Trust designed to support schools and families when visiting the Heritage Centre. The Trust are now keen for families to test these resources for free.

As the voice of experience, your involvement in this project is actively encouraged and the NPHT would like to invite you and your family to visit the Heritage Centre to test out the new resources and contribute to an informal conversation sharing your aspirations and knowledge around family days out to our local spaces.

To take part in this opportunity please email Fiona Darling-Glinski,
Learning and Projects Manager on the following address:

fiona.darlingglinski@paralympicheritage.org.uk



Mugs, T-shirts and keyrings!

The PfA Enterprise Stem group have been making personalised mugs, t-shirts and keyrings. To create mugs and t-shirts, students have been using our sublimation printer and then either the mug or t-shirt press to complete the design. Key-rings have been made using our 3D printers. Find out more by visiting: 3d-laser.co



MUGS

The perfect gift!

WE WILL MAKE THE MUG OF YOUR DREAMS!

 *Send over your image*

We can use any image you send over as part of your mug design. Photos (digital or paper) of your loved ones, pets or favourite holiday retreats - we can make the mug!

 *Personalised*

Let us know the text you require on the mug and we can sort it out. No more losing your mug amongst the crowded collection of the mug cupboard.

 *Friendly service*

Let us know what you need and we will help!

CONTACT US stemsales@fds.org.uk



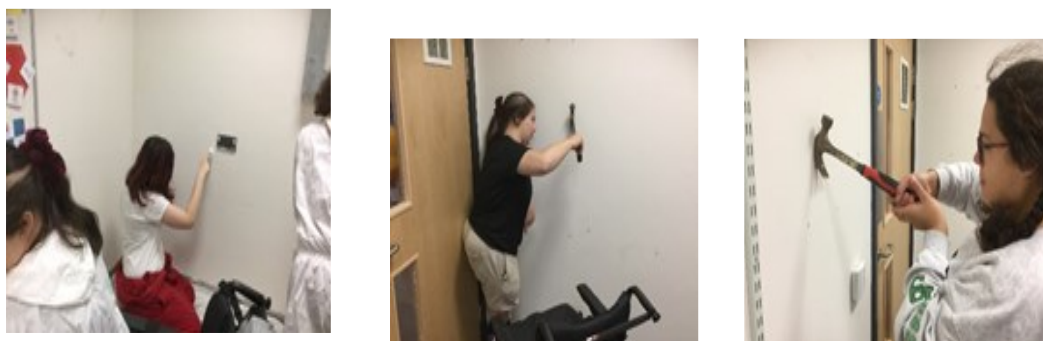


News from Preparing For Adulthood

Sixth Form have been working towards a Christmas Tea room for the senior citizens at Swan House this term. They have been researching recipes, communicating with the care home, making the different food items for the customers to enjoy and finally serving the customers during the Christmas tea room. It was a pleasure to see the students talking with the senior citizens and practising their hospitality skills. There were smiles all round after this afternoon! Our Horticulture group created some beautiful centre pieces for the tables and the STEM group designed and made our aprons to ensure we looked as professional as possible.



In Site Maintenance this term we have been focusing on DIY. Students have been learning how to put up picture frames, prepare and paint walls and consider what home improvements they would like to learn. They have filled in all of the holes in our well-being room wall using poly filler and then repainted this. These have been great skills to learn.



Holiday Activities in Bucks

Visit the Buckinghamshire Council Family Information Service for information on a range of events, clubs and activities going on across the county during the Christmas Holiday.



<https://familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/things-to-do/holiday-activities/>

There you will also find details and links to their 'Childcare in the holidays' page and a list of Ofsted registered camps and clubs.

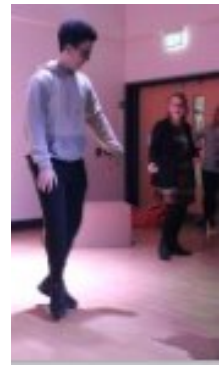
<https://familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/things-to-do/holiday-activities/keeping-school-holiday-costs-down/>



Drama Group



Furze Down Drama Group performed their FDS twist to Charles Dickens 'Christmas Carol' to an audience of 100 for the Matinee and then again in the evening for parents and staff.



We are extremely proud of the pupils who gave a very polished performance and also to our sound and lighting .



Huge 'Thank You' to the Royal Latin School for our private screening of the Little Mermaid' production.

This was put on especially for the enjoyment of our drama and choir students.



Thank you to Tara, Sarah Kavi and Becky for the most delicious Christmas Lunch. It is absolutely amazing that 300 servings were delivered all over the school for us all to enjoy! Here are a few photos of pupils and staff enjoying their lunch.







Fundraising Update from Linda Patterson, Business Leader

As the school continue to build working relationships with the local community, fundraising activities include awards from grant applications, regular, small ongoing donations and time, expertise and skills in support of the School Development Plan. It should also be noted that the school are delighted that Diana Campbell, who is one of our new school Governors, bringing amongst her skills, a wealth of previous experience working as a school fundraiser, will support Linda going forwards.

HEADLINES

- **28.02.23 (Gawcott Fields Community Solar)** Successful, exceptional grant application of **£570** to support Breakfast Club
- **15.03.23 Winslow and Villages Community Board** award of **£15,000** towards our Pond Development Project. Monies will be paid upon completion of the project
- **31.05.23 Great Horwood Silver Band – donation of £200**
- **27.06.23 Buckinghamshire Community Board Mini Grant Application –** awarded **£775.00** towards hornbeam saplings planted as screening on the edge of the Primary Play-ground/turning circle.
- **Buckinghamshire Lottery – Regular fundraising platform £319**
- **09.10.23 Preston Bissett Nurseries – Amphitheatre Accessibility Scheme –** Scheme provided by Tina James, Head of Garden Design on a gratis basis, due to our ongoing working relationship
- **01.11.23 Co Op Community Fund** confirmation of **£1,436.19** raised through the Community Fund Scheme
- **16.10.23 Veronica Peat (Andy Peat Associates)** Design and Plans for the development of amphitheatre (staging/lighting) provided on a gratis basis, due to our ongoing working relationship – Veronica worked for the school as an LSA
- **06.11.23 Winslow Show Association – (Sue Keane) £200 donation**
- **Co Op Community Fund –** confirmation that the school's application to the next funding round has been awarded. The funding round started on Sunday 22 October 2023 and will run for 12 months until 19 October 2024. During this time, Co-op Members will be able to choose Furze Down as their cause and help us raise funds towards grounds development.

Co-op Membership

If you haven't already done so, this is an easy way to support school fundraising. Simply choose **Friends of Furze Down**.

Every time members buy selected Co-op branded products and services, 2p for every pound spent goes to you and they will give the same to support our cause.

We raised £1,436.19 in the last academic year through this scheme.



Carol Services and Bazaar

All of the Sixth Form groups have been working towards the Christmas Fayre this term. We have lots of small businesses as part of our Enterprise and Vocational groups which have been creating products to sell. These groups include Craft Store, Tuck Shop, Bike Maintenance and STEM.

Pupils from Primary, Key stage 4 and Key stage 3 also sold their enterprise items at the Bazaar. Thank you to everyone who contributed with giving prizes, their time and supporting us on the day.



Thanks to our Governor, Diana Campbell for collecting donations for the raffle and the overwhelming generosity of parents, staff and governors we had the most amazing raffle prizes. The raffle made £1700 +



Reminder of arrangements for the mornings and at the end of the day



To continue to encourage a low arousal start to the day, to keep everybody safe and the traffic flowing, we would ask that parents/carers keep to the arrangements you had regarding dropping off or picking up from school:- **Primary drop off 9.10am / pick up at 3pm. Rest of school 9am drop off / pick up at 3.35pm.**

The turning circle is reserved for the Local Authority provided transport before 9am each school day, and from 3.15pm – 3.35pm in the afternoon but you are welcome to park there at other times. If you are a Parent/Carer dropping off and arrive whilst the taxis are still in the turning circle, please park in the laybys outside the school gates.

If in doubt, or you have any queries regarding days or dropping off, please email office@furzedownschool.org.uk



For all enquiries regarding transport please contact:

Passenger Transport Section, County Hall, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 1YZ

Telephone Number **01296 387439**

Or follow the link to their website:

<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools-index/school-transport/>

Furze Down Cycles are an Enterprise Class comprised of KS5 pupils and staff.

Our aim is to learn how to repair and maintain cycles for our own use.

We are learning how to do this through the repair and restoration of donated cycles.

We also clean, check and repair bicycles at a cost of £5 (plus the cost of parts if necessary).

We would be happy to either service and return your bikes **or** take any bikes no longer used with a view to repairing and selling them on or using them for parts (before selling the frames for scrap).

If you have any bikes lurking unused and unloved in sheds and garages please consider donating them to us. They could be given a new lease of life and help continue to support our learning. No bike will be refused. Contact the school office with Furze Down Cycles as the subject heading, if interested.

Repaired, restored and upgraded cycles are sold on.

We sell **adult bikes for £20 - £30.**

Children's bikes are cleaned/ repaired and sold for **£10 -£15.**

The monies raised are used to buy tools to supplement those we have and a range of nuts, bolts and hardware often needed to fix bikes.



Advert from one of our Enterprise Groups

In the case of inclement weather, please check the following for information on school closures.

<https://closures.buckscc.gov.uk>

Mix 96 radio station

Please remember that parents are responsible for collecting their child from school in the event that taxis are cancelled.

