

Trust Termly Newsletter

December 2025



Trust vision: To ensure that every child has an exceptional educational experience.

As we reach the end of the autumn term and prepare for the Christmas break, I want to thank you for the continued commitment, professionalism and care you show across our schools.

The autumn term is always a demanding one. It sets the tone for the year ahead and brings with it both opportunity and challenge. Once again, I have been struck by the brilliant work taking place across OMAT. In classrooms, offices, kitchens and playgrounds, staff continue to put children first and work together to ensure our schools are calm, purposeful and inclusive places to learn. I would also like to recognise the Shared Services Team (SST), who this term have stepped in to cover vacancies within schools while continuing to complete the annual audit to an exceptional standard. Their flexibility, commitment and professionalism have made a real difference and have not gone unnoticed.

This year continues to be shaped by increasing complexity. The needs of our pupils, families and communities remain significant, and the pressures on schools are well known. In that context, it is vital that, as a Trust, we take responsibility not only for outcomes, but for sustainability — for the way we support those who deliver this work every day.

Workload and wellbeing are not side issues. They directly affect the quality of education we can provide and the experience of working in our schools. For that reason, I want to be clear about a decision that reflects our ongoing commitment to supporting staff.

I am pleased to confirm that there will again be eight Professional Development (PD) days in the 2026–27 academic year. This is a deliberate step to protect time, support professional learning and reduce unnecessary pressure. These days are intended to be purposeful, planned and used well — giving space for development, collaboration and reflection, while recognising the demands of the role. It is not a token gesture, but a practical and meaningful investment in you.

This decision sits alongside our wider work to ensure expectations are realistic, systems are proportionate and support is available where it is needed. Across the Trust, there is some amazing practice taking place, and it is only sustainable if we look after the people who make it happen.

As the term comes to a close, I hope you are able to step back, rest and reflect on what has been another fabulous term of hard work and commitment. You have done a smashing job this term, often in challenging circumstances, and that should be celebrated.

Thank you for everything you do to make OMAT such a supportive and ambitious Trust. I wish you a peaceful, restful and well-deserved Christmas break, and I look forward to all that we will achieve together in the year ahead.

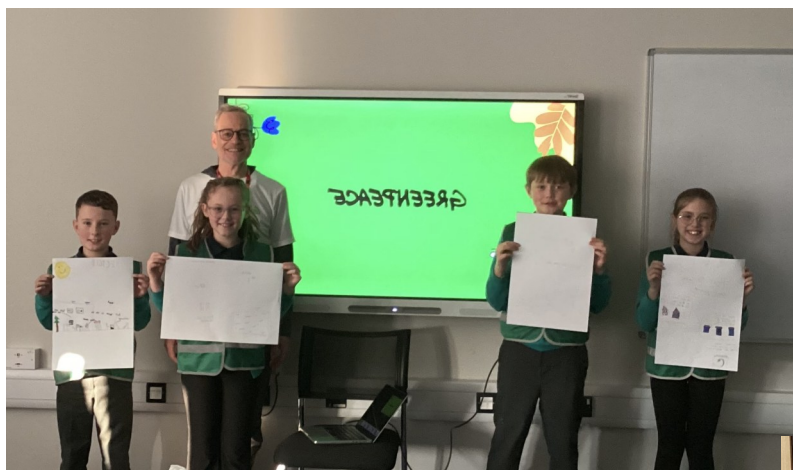
Please enjoy reading the stories from across our schools below, and take time to rest and recharge over the break.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Alastair Heath-Robinson
CEO



Grace Cook Primary School & Nursery



A Positive and Purposeful Start to the Year at Grace Cook Primary School and Nursery

The start of the academic year has been filled with excitement, growth, and community spirit at Grace Cook. We were delighted to welcome pupils and their families into Nursery and Reception, as well as opening our very first Year 5 class. It has been wonderful to see children settling confidently into their new routines and embracing the opportunities ahead.

From September, we have introduced the *Zones of Regulation* across the school. This whole-school approach is helping pupils develop a deeper understanding of their emotions and recognise how feelings can change throughout the day. Staff have been supporting children in learning strategies to regulate, reflect, and respond positively—skills that will benefit them far beyond the classroom.



Alongside this, we have continued to enhance the learning environment to further support pupils' social, emotional, and mental health. This term saw the development of our new sensory room, a calm and reflective space designed to encourage self-regulation and emotional well-being. We also opened *Comet Corner*, our dedicated intervention room, where pupils receive targeted support in a nurturing and reassuring setting.



This term we have been *Thinking About Others and Our World*, our Year 5 pupils delivered a thoughtful and moving Remembrance assembly for the school community. We were also pleased to welcome representatives from Greenpeace, who worked with our Eco Team to develop an action plan focused on protecting our environment and promoting sustainability within the school.



We ended the term by supporting our local community through generous collections for the local food bank. Pupils and families created shoeboxes filled with gifts or essential food items to support those in need at this time of year. The compassion shown by our school community has been truly inspiring.

It has been a purposeful and heart-warming start to the year, and we look forward to seeing what the next term brings.

WHERE LEARNING IS UNSTOPPABLE AND ASPIRATIONS HAVE NO LIMITS

Halifax Primary School

It has been a wonderfully busy and rewarding Autumn term at Halifax. We were delighted to welcome new members of staff alongside our new Reception children, all of whom have settled brilliantly into school life.

Across the school, pupils have taken part in a range of memorable experiences designed to capture their imaginations and support deep, lasting learning. Year 1 stepped back in time for a full day in a Victorian classroom, while Year 2 explored the lives and impact of key changemakers throughout history.

Through their geography topic on North America, Year 3 have impressed us with their developing skills as geographers, demonstrating an excellent understanding of the continent's diverse climate zones and the powerful influence of the Ring of Fire along the western coast. Year 4 also enjoyed an exciting visit from Ipswich Museum, who delivered a fantastic Anglo-Saxon workshop that brought their history learning to life.

Our Forest School sessions continue to provide rich outdoor learning experiences. This term, Year 2 not only picked and prepared sloes but also made their own sloe jam, which they enjoyed on toast cooked over the fire pit—a real highlight!

We have also loved welcoming parents and carers into school. Phonics sessions offered families the chance to see how their children learn and how they can support reading at home. Reception families enjoyed a wonderful visit from Little City, giving children and adults the opportunity to immerse themselves in creative role play together.

More recently, Annie O'Neill from OM Health and Wellbeing joined us to lead a 'Being Happy' workshop, where families worked together to make their own Glitter Minds and learned strategies for managing worries. We hope to build on this success through further sessions as we begin piloting our new Hamish and Milo programme with families.

Finally, members of our team recently attended Therapeutic Thinking training, and we look forward to embedding this approach from January to further strengthen how we support our pupils.

We are incredibly proud of everything our children and staff have achieved this term and look forward to building on this momentum in the new year.



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Brooklands Primary School

As this term draws to a close, it brings with it a time for brief reflection on the many amazing things we have achieved and celebrated at Brooklands.

Our wraparound childcare provider, Brooklands Young Explorers, is soon to renovate its outdoor space. We've been working closely with them over the last few months, enabling them to extend the outdoor space they can offer the children. Recently they've made plans to invest heavily in play equipment to enhance the area. Their plans include a mound tunnel with slide, cycle and scooter track as well as a play boat to support imaginative play and a shelter.

Brooklands invests significantly in professional development. This year we are prioritising oracy expanding our children's vocabulary use and understanding through the implementation of the Chatta approach.

Our recent PD Day linked environment and farming specialists and focused on supporting our teachers to identify farming and food production links within our curriculum. Brooklands is committed to all our children visiting a farm each year, supporting our children's understanding of the food system.

This year we are extending our use of technology to enhance learning in all areas of the curriculum through 1-1 iPads. We are maximising our iPad investment through the use of the Showbie platform. Through comments, voice notes, and other annotation tools, Showbie makes it easy to personalise learning and track progress.

Brooklands has recently received grant funding to transform the way our children learn and play through the purchase of three 32" interactive tables. These tables have dynamic touchscreens designed to boost collaboration and are multi-touch with preloaded educational apps including interactive games, puzzles, maths and reading tools to support learning.

We have also introduced the Zones of Regulation. The Zones of Regulation aims to teach children strategies to help them to identify their emotions and cope with these feelings so they can get back to feeling calm and ready to learn.

We are sure next term will bring continued success.



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The Willows Primary School

The Autumn term at The Willows Primary School has been exceptionally busy, filled with educational trips and visitor events that have successfully brought learning to life and sparked enduring curiosity among our children. We firmly believe these opportunities play a vital role in enriching our curriculum and broadening children's experiences, helping them make meaningful connections between the classroom and the wider world.



This term all our enquiry questions are given focus through historical periods and figures with the other subjects enriching the key learning. Experiential learning has been key in bringing learning to life and the children have all participated in several highly engaging curriculum days designed to deepen their understanding of historical periods:

- Year 1 have had visits from Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale.
- Year 2 and 3 immersed themselves in the past with a Viking Day.
- Year 4 focused on classical studies during their Ancient Greek Day.
- Year 5 explored a more recent era during their Tudor Day.



Furthermore, our Year 6 children enjoyed a fantastic trip to Gressenhall.

Beyond history, the curriculum was enriched with cultural experiences, including music lessons using the amazing Gamelan.

Literacy and community engagement were also central to the Autumn term activities. We held several well-attended reading events for parents to encourage more reading at home, including the EYFS Snuggly Read and the Year 4 and 5 Snuggle up and read event. We have also managed to get every child a library card and we are looking forward to visits to borrow books in the Spring Term.

Our children have also proudly represented us in competitive and community-focused endeavours:

- Teams played in ITFC Football tournaments.
- Children contributed to local safety by participating in the Road Safety Poster Competition.
- Our choir has sung at the Corn Exchange Christmas Fayre, Avocet Care Home and for the ITFC Veterans Café.

The community spirit of The Willows shone brightly this Autumn. We celebrated the season together with the Autumn Together Event, and raising an amazing amount of money for Children in Need. As the term draws to a close, we have also enjoyed seasonal occasions like the Christmas Together Event, again supported by a fantastic number of parents, a wonderful Christmas Dinner and a fun-packed Fayre. Our wonderful Reception children have also shared the magic of the Christmas story with their parents.



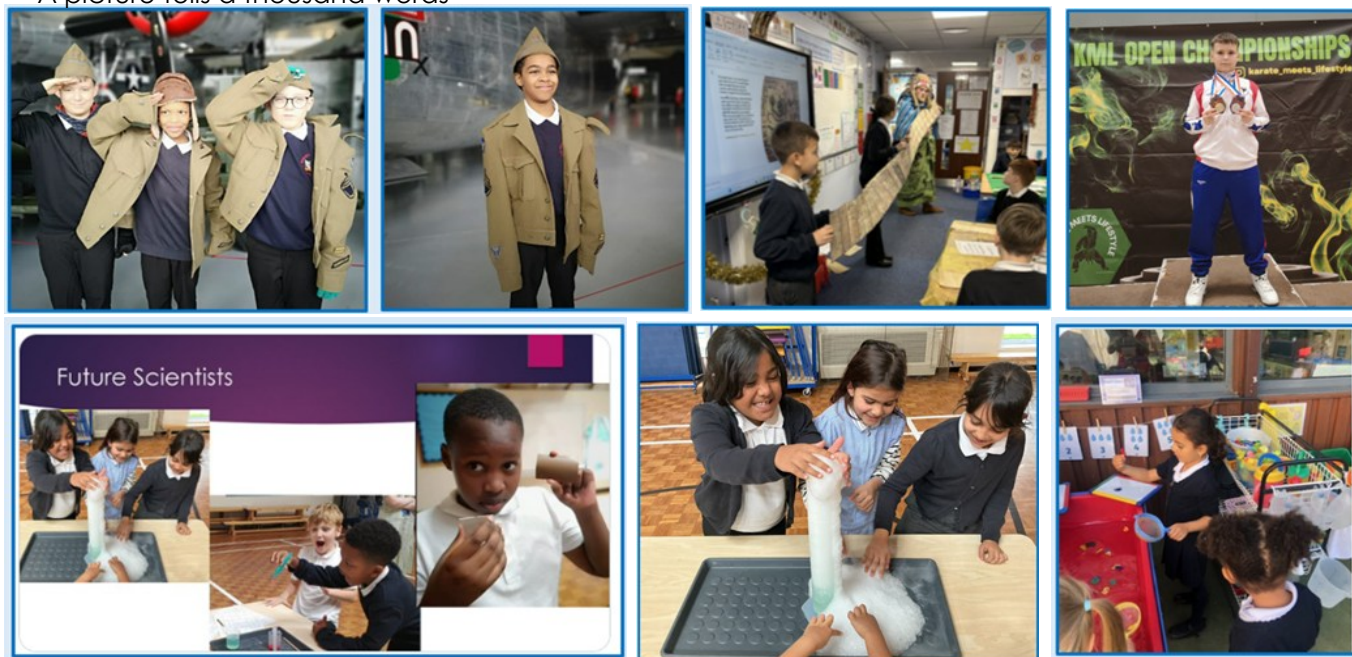
We are so proud of everything that has been achieved at The Willows this term, as staff and children have embraced My Happy Mind, Mighty Oak, new life and learning skills curriculums, and worked alongside experts such as Chris 'Chatta' Williams and Sander de Groot to enrich their pedagogy. The impact of everyone's hard work is clear to see in both the books and engagement of the children. Our new school motto is *'With strong roots, we transform tomorrow.'* This dedication underpins our commitment to offering a learning environment rich with experiences to deepen understanding, inspire children and create lasting memories throughout their time at The Willows.



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Handford Hall Primary School

"A picture tells a thousand words"



Handford Hall is a place where everyone loves to be

What an incredible start to the academic year we've had at Handford Hall! At our school, learning is not just a process, it's an adventure: exciting, memorable, and deeply meaningful.

Our Curriculum: Inspiring Lifelong Learning

At the heart of our success lies an ambitious, bespoke curriculum, a dynamic framework that continually evolves under the expert guidance of our dedicated subject leaders. We go beyond teaching knowledge and skills; we nurture deep understanding and empower every child with the confidence to thrive. Our mission? To spark a lifelong passion for learning, broaden horizons through diverse cultures and societies, and instil a profound respect for individual rights and responsibilities.

Enrichment

This term, pupils have enjoyed a wide range of enrichment experiences: travelling to Duxford to learn about World War II, exploring local landmarks such as our local Christchurch Mansion, transforming our dome into a Mayan Museum, and delving into ancient civilisations. Inspiring Fab Science workshops have sparked curiosity in physics and beyond, while our art curriculum continues to nurture a new generation of talented artists. Learning at our school extends far beyond the classroom. At Handford Hall we're not just teaching, we're inspiring the next generation of innovators and leaders.

Ahoy There, Me Hearties!

This December, our children had the wonderful privilege of experiencing Treasure Island, brought to life by the talented Eastern Angles theatre company. This brand-new adaptation of the timeless tale of pirates, lost treasure maps, mutiny, and heroism sailed into Suffolk, inspired by the mysterious lost town of Dunwich for Christmas 2025.

One of the greatest stories in English literature, featuring unforgettable characters like the cunning Long John Silver and the brave Jim Hawkins, came to Ipswich and Woodbridge. Our HH children were fully immersed in this festive production, a magical coming-of-age adventure that captivated both young and old. With all the hallmarks of an Eastern Angles Christmas show—innovative staging, storytelling, music, puppetry, and a cast of fabulous actors—Treasure Island was a true theatrical treat. We are incredibly fortunate to have such a strong connection with our local theatre, inspiring a new generation of performers and storytellers.

Humph the Camel: A Nativity to Remember

This year's nativity was an incredible success! Humph the Camel is usually the picture of indifference, never showing much interest in anything. But to everyone's surprise and delight, when he encounters the newborn King, his excitement and joy are impossible to contain! Our talented Year 1 and Year 2 children brought this lovely story to life in a fresh, fun, and heartwarming way. The audience was captivated and absolutely loved every moment.



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Grange Community Primary School



A 50th Birthday to Remember

This term, we celebrated a major milestone—Grange Primary School's 50th birthday! Our open afternoon welcomed past pupils, staff, and families to share in the celebrations. The event was filled with fond memories, laughter, and plenty of stories about how much the school has grown and changed over the years. It was wonderful to see old friends reunited and our community coming together.

Pupils Representing Our School Proudly

We are also very proud to have appointed our new school council representatives. These children have an important role in helping to make our school a safe, welcoming, and happy place for everyone. Attending the Felixstowe Youth Forum, their enthusiasm and ideas are already shining through.

Spreading Joy Through Song

Our school choir has had the pleasure of visiting several venues in the local community. The children perform beautifully and bring so much joy to the events. Their most recent performance at 'Christchurch Does Christmas' sounded fantastic and it was wonderful to showcase their brilliant singing to the local community!

Enriching Our Learning

Our Year 2 pupils brought history to life in spectacular fashion! With the support of the local Fire Service, the children recreated the Great Fire of London. It was an unforgettable (and safe!) way to see history in action. The children also had the chance to handle real fire hoses, which brought huge smiles to their faces.

Grange's Own Lionesses and Dodgeball Stars

Our U11 Girls football team were outstanding, competing at a School Games event in Ipswich. Skill, determination and teamwork were all on display. It was also a pleasure to accompany some of our Year 3s and Year 4s to a 'develop' U9 School Games dodgeball event to compete alongside schools from across Ipswich and the surrounding area. Their improvement in skills throughout the event was immensely impressive.

A School Community Working Together

Our wider school community of staff, parents, pupils (and even former pupils) have formed an amazing team who have given up their precious free time to come and help us with our biodiversity project. Our wildflower meadow is planted, new planters outside classrooms and on the playground have been established, and we have many more plans for future community days. We can't wait to see everything in full bloom in the spring and summer!



Springfield Infant School & Nursery

Once again we find ourselves at Christmas time again. Today year 2 have visited the church and sang for the local pensioners club. They were delighted hear the children sing a medley of songs including The 12 days of Christmas (complete with actions) and Twinkl, Twinkl, Little Star including Makaton signing. Reception have performed their 'Snuggle up Stable' nativity this week for our school governors, parents and grandparents, and our latest school bands have performed concerts for their parents with Rock Steady. Nursery will be singing to parents next week and they have been to the local library for story time and to get their own library cards. Next week school will be in a Christmas Frenzy with Christmas Jumper Day, Christmas Fayre, Disco's, Christmas Lunch and a special Church Service.

The whole school has been working with Shine, who are working alongside ITFC to provide dental services and learning sessions to the children. All of the children attended the dental practice at Suffolk University last week.

In the new year, we are looking forward to Kin-ball sessions with Kicks and Tricks and a pantomime performance of Jack and the Beanstalk. Our School Council members have been elected and their first action this year is to increase the planted areas around the school. They will be adding additional pots and revamping our sensory garden with new shrubs, climbers and bulbs that will add colour to our playground in the Spring and Summer. We have received a grant from Nature Park which has helped us to fund revamping our pond area and purchasing plants and equipment for the children to use.



Newsletter Quiz December 2025



Finally, it's Quiz Time!

Take the quiz anonymously online and find out if you're correct! Click or scan the QR code above!

- 1) What is multi-factor authentication (MFA) and why is it important when accessing school systems or sensitive information?
- 2) What should you do if you identify a trip hazard in a classroom or shared area (e.g. trailing cables or loose flooring)?
- 3) What should you do if you receive an email with an urgent tone, asking you to purchase gift cards or transfer money quickly?
- 4) Why is it important to complete accident or near-miss reports, even if no one was seriously hurt?
- 5) When using a shared school computer, what steps should you take before and after logging in to keep data secure?

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