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WITHAM OAKS ACADEMY

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 10

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www.withamoaksacademy.co.uk

Part of the Inspires MAT
Inspires
M A T

w/c: 16th March 2026



It has been another busy and exciting few weeks in school, with lots of wonderful learning and community events taking place.

On Monday 9th March, the children thoroughly enjoyed taking part in our Welly Walk. Thank you to all parents and carers for your generous sponsorship. The funds raised will help us continue to develop and enhance our outdoor learning area for all pupils.

We were also very impressed with the Year 5 pupils' photography work, where they explored framing techniques and experimented with lighting to create striking self-portraits.

During recent visits to classrooms, we were particularly impressed with the learning taking place in Year 4 science, where pupils have been exploring how living things can be grouped in different ways. There were some brilliant observations being made and fantastic scientific talk as pupils explained their thinking and justified their ideas.

We hope all the wonderful mothers and carers in our school community had a fabulous Mother's Day on Sunday.

A reminder that our annual Ladies' Day Lunch will take place on Tuesday 17th March, and on Friday 20th March children are invited to wear something red for Red Nose Day.

Thank you for your continued support.

KEY DATES

16/03/26	Class Photographs
17/03/26	Ladies Day Lunch
20/03/26	Red Nose Day – Wear something red - £1 Donation
24/03/26	Year 4 Easter Assembly
24/03/26	Year 5 Colchester Zoo Trip
26/03/26	PTA Easter Trail £2 Entry – 3.30pm
30/03/26 – 10/04/26	EASTER HOLIDAYS
14/04/26	Non Uniform Day for Cereal



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This Week's Awards



Stars of the Week

Each week, children will be celebrated for demonstrating one or more of the five key character strengths



Chloe – 6I

Emerald – 5T
Dzhemre – 3A
Eliza – 3P
Gracie – 3B
Teddy – 5S
Owen – 6C
Leo – 4Z
Jake – 6J
James – 4E
Wynter – 4K
Lucy – 4K
Alfie – 3P
Lillian – 3A

Cobie – 6I
Tianna – 6I
Reggie – 4E
Theo – 3B
Jacob – 5K
Armanda – 5S

Katie-Louise – 5K
Toby – 5T
Freddie – 6C

Malak – 6J



Week 2
w/b 16/03/2026



Sports Personality of the Week

Sienna H
Mason B



Parent/Carer Survey

In our bid to both highlight the schools success and continually improve, we would like as many of you as possible to complete the attached survey. These questions are ones which would be provided by Ofsted during an inspection and will inform our school development plan.



As part of Essex County Council's Health and Safety policy, all jewellery must be removed for PE, including earrings. Children must not wear earrings or other jewellery during the school day, unless for religious reasons.

- Sleeper studs must be removed before PE/Games – they can no longer be covered with tape or plasters.
- To help, please ensure earrings are removed before school on PE days.

Thank you for supporting us to keep children safe.

In Other News...



Term Dates:

Please see term dates for the remainder of the school year listed below. Ensure any holidays are booked during the period of times highlighted in red:

Autumn 1	2/9/25	23/10/25
Autumn Half Term	27/10/25	31/10/25
Autumn 2	3/11/25	19/12/25
Christmas Holiday	22/12/26	2/1/26
Spring 1	6/1/26	13/2/26
Spring Half Term	16/2/26	20/2/26
Spring 2	23/2/26	27/3/26
Easter Holiday	30/3/26	10/4/26
Summer 1	13/4/26	22/5/26
Summer Half term	25/5/26	29/5/26
Summer 2	2/6/25	17/7/26

Inset Days

1/9/25

24/10/25

5/1/26

1/6/26

20/7/26

Please may we remind you that we do not authorise any holiday during term time.

Celebration Corner

We love to celebrate the amazing things our students accomplish both in and out of school! Please send us photographs and a brief description of their achievement, so we can feature it in here in our **Celebration Corner**. It's a great way to celebrate their hard work and dedication, and to share their success with our school community!

You can email your photos and information to adminwoa@inspiresmat.co.uk

Outdoor Learning

Please can we ask for donations of old wellington boots or old pairs of trainers for outdoor learning. These will be kept on site for children to use if needed. We are committed to supporting learning in all weathers, particularly during the wetter months, and having appropriate footwear helps keep children comfortable and safe when outdoors.



In Other News...



Spring Dates 2025-26

5/1/26	NON-PUPIL DAY
12/1/26	Year 3 Barleylands Trip
13/1/26	4 Kenya Class Lunch
21/1/26	Young Voices at the O2
5/2/26	6 China Class Lunch
6/2/26	Number Day - £1 donation
11/2/26	Valentine Disco Years 3 & 4 4-5.30pm Years 5 & 6 6-7.30pm
16/2/26 – 20/2/26	- HALF TERM
24/2/26	6 Japan Class Lunch
24/2/26	Parent Consultation Evening 3.30pm – 5.30pm
26/2/26	Parent Consultation Evening 3.30pm – 7.00pm
3/3/26	India Class Lunch
5/3/26	World Book day
9/3/26	Year 6 SATs Parents Meeting 3.30pm
16/3/26	Class Photographs
17/3/26	Ladies Day Lunch
20/3/26	Red Nose Day
24/3/26	Year 4 Easter Assembly
26/3/26	PTA Easter Trail £2 Entry (3.30pm)

30/3/26 – 10/4/26 – EASTER HOLIDAYS



Summer Dates 2025-26

14/4/26	Non-uniform Day for Cereal
4/5/26	BANK HOLIDAY
11/5/26 – 14/5/26	- Year 6 SATs Week
19/5/26	5 Korea Class Lunch
25/5/26 – 29/5/26	- HALF TERM
1/6/26	NON-PUPIL DAY
1/6/26-12/6/26	- Year 4 Multiplication checks
9/6/26	5 Singapore Class Lunch
16/6/26	Year 3 & 4 Sports Day (AM)
16/6/26	5 Thailand Class Lunch
17/6/26	Year 5 & 6 Sports Day (AM)
18/6/26	Gentleman's Day Lunch
25/6/26	Year 6 Lift Maltings & Lift New Rickstones Academy Induction Day
25/6/26	Year 2 Transition Visit (all day) & Parent Picnic
25/6/26	Year 2 Parent Meetings 1.30pm & 5pm
3/7/26	Summer Fete 2.30pm
6/7/26-8/7/26	Year 6 Residential
9/7/26	End of Year Disco Years 3 & 4 4-5.30pm Years 5 & 6 6-7.30pm
10/7/26	Year 6 Play Dress Rehearsal
15/7/26	Annual Progress Reports sent out
15/7/26	Year 6 Performance to Parents 1.30pm & 5.30pm
16/7/26	Year 6 Leaver's Lunch
17/7/26	Year 6 Leaver's Ceremony (details to be confirmed)

Year 2 to 3 admissions

Applications for Year 3 children starting in September 2026 opens on Monday 10th November.
To apply for a place please visit www.essex.gov.uk/admissions
The closing date for applications is
Thursday 15th January 2026.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about GROUP CHATS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

On messaging apps, social media and online games, group chats are one of the most popular ways that children connect. Group chats allow messages, images and videos to be shared in one place and help friendships flourish; however, they also come with a number of risks.

TEASING AND BULLYING

Children of all ages are keen to fit in socially, and group chats can sometimes complicate that process. While group chats can foster connection, they can also give way to mean comments or jokes at someone's expense, especially when others join in for laughs. When bullying happens publicly, in front of friends and classmates, it can intensify the emotional impact – adding to embarrassment, anxiety and feelings of isolation for the child being targeted.

UNKNOWN MEMBERS

Children often can't control who is added to a group, which can lead to privacy concerns. Sharing personal details in group chats can be dangerous, and children have no control over what others do with the material they send. Some members of the chat might even decide to use such information maliciously.

PEER PRESSURE

Children may feel they have to constantly stay engaged just to be included and keep up with the conversation. In some cases, they might partake in inappropriate behaviours – like sharing explicit photos, jokes or teasing – just to fit in. Group settings can also encourage children to act in ways they normally wouldn't, or stay silent when they know something is wrong, out of fear of being excluded. Some children may find it difficult to leave toxic group chats.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some group chats may include inappropriate language or imagery. Even if a child isn't actively participating in the conversation, they may still be exposed to this content simply by being part of the group. Some apps have disappearing messaging features, where content is only available once or for a few seconds, which makes it harder for children to report something they've seen.

EXCLUSION AND ISOLATION

Exclusion in group chats is common and can take several forms. Sometimes a new group is created specifically to leave one child out on purpose. In other cases, the chat may happen on an app that a child doesn't have access to, making it impossible for them to join in. This can cause feelings of being left out – even unintentionally.

VIDEO AND LIVE CHATS

Many popular apps allow children to engage in live streaming with interactive chats or have group video chats. Anyone can be added to these streams, and often children tag peers in the comments and have conversations which are unmoderated. There's a risk of being exposed to inappropriate or violent content and offensive language, either in the group videos or via the group chats.

Advice for Parents & Educators

CONSIDER OTHERS' FEELINGS

Group chats can become an arena for children to compete for social status. Help children consider how people might feel if they behave unkindly. If a child does upset someone, encourage them to reach out, show empathy and apologise for their mistake.

SET SOME GROUP CHAT RULES

Discuss safe group chat practices, such as asking a peer for consent before adding them to a group chat, or leaving a group chat if a stranger is added. Tell children that if they're added to a group they didn't agree to beforehand, it's OK for them to leave immediately.

BLOCK, REPORT AND LEAVE

If a child encounters inappropriate content or feels uncomfortable in a group chat, encourage them to block and report the sender and leave the group. Make sure children know it's OK to leave a group chat if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

SUPPORT, NOT JUDGEMENT

Group chats are an excellent way for children to connect and feel like they belong. However, remind them that they can confide in you if they feel bullied or excluded. Instead of responding to the person who's upset them. Validate their feelings and empower them by discussing how they'd like to handle the situation. You can also encourage children to speak up if they witness others being bullied.

PRACTISE SAFE SHARING

It's vital for children to be aware of what they're sharing and who might potentially see it. Ensure they understand the importance of not revealing personal details – like their address, their school, or photos they wouldn't like to be seen widely. Remind them that once something is shared in a group, they can't be certain where it might end up or how it might be used.

SILENCE NOTIFICATIONS

Being bombarded with notifications from a group chat can be an irritating distraction – especially if it's happening late in the evening. Explain to children that they can still be part of a group chat while disabling notifications. In fact, it would be healthier for them to do so, helping them avoid the pressure to respond immediately.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant at BCyberAware, who has developed anti-bullying and cyber-safety workshops and policies for schools in Australia and the UK. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government, comparing the internet use and online behaviours of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



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