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Headteacher: Melanie Spark, BA (Hons)

No. 5

School Newsletter

January 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

What a wonderful start to 2026 Freegrounds Juniors have had!

Since joining the school in January, it has been an absolute pleasure to get to know our children, staff and wider community. I have felt incredibly welcomed and have loved spending time in classrooms, seeing first-hand the care, effort and pride the children take in their learning.

I have been particularly impressed with the standard of writing across the school. In Year 3, it was wonderful to see children confidently using persuasive techniques in their work. Year 4 have been busy crafting recounts, skilfully opening sentences with adverbials inspired by their survival day. In Year 5, the children used rich and ambitious vocabulary to describe the journey of the River Thames, while in Year 6 I have been struck by the creativity and imagination shown in their work on mythical beasts.

Beyond the classroom, the school has made a fantastic start to the sporting calendar. Our athletics competitions have already brought success, and I very much look forward to the next round of fixtures and what lies ahead. The choir also did the school proud at Young Voices—my thanks go to the staff for such a long day, and to the families who travelled to London to support the children.

Every day, I continue to be impressed by the manners and kindness shown by the children across the school. From holding doors open to asking how my day is going, they are a real credit to you all. I have also enjoyed meeting many of you at the school gate, online cooking sessions and at Michelle's coffee morning—thank you for taking the time to be so involved.

This has been a fantastic start to 2026, and I am very much looking forward to the coming weeks and the exciting opportunities ahead for our children. Thank you once again for the warm welcome.

Miss Spark

School Lane Vehicle Restrictions

We would like to remind all parents, carers, and members of the local community that **vehicles are not permitted to drive down School Lane between 8:30am–8:50am and 3:10pm–3:30pm.**

These times are particularly busy with children and families travelling to and from the infant and junior schools, and we have a duty to ensure everyone's safety.

Staff work hard to keep the car park gate closed during these periods to prevent vehicles from entering or exiting. We are grateful to families and community members for their cooperation and support in helping us keep our children safe.



Young Voices at the O2 Arena London

On Tuesday 20th January, Mrs Rident, Mrs Davies, Mrs Stewart and Miss Whettingsteel took 30 children to London's O2 Arena to perform alongside almost 9000 other children in the Young Voices concert. The children have been working hard with Mrs Rident throughout last term to prepare for the concert and we are so pleased that it was an amazing experience for them all



Sports news

This month we have already taken a team of Year 5/6's and Year 3/4's to indoor athletics competitions. The children represented the school brilliantly and made us very proud! We are looking forward to attending hockey and netball cluster events over the coming weeks and have some football matches coming up too.



Governor Spotlight!

Carolyn Wood– Staff governor



My name is Carolyn Wood and I am the Staff Governor at Freegrounds Junior School. I have been a teacher for seven years, five of which have been spent at Freegrounds, giving me a strong understanding of our school, its values and the surrounding community. I chose to go into teaching because I am passionate about making a positive difference to young people's lives and supporting every child to make progress and achieve their full potential. I joined the governing body because I wanted to contribute beyond my classroom role and help support the wider school community. Outside of school, I am a parent to a child under the age of two, enjoy beach walks and my family is heavily involved with Hamble Lifeboat, where I also help with fundraising whenever I can.

We are still looking for a clerk to the governing body. If this is a role you would be interested in, please contact Ms Matthews in the school office.

Family Support Worker events

Cooking with Michelle– 14.01.26

Thank you to everyone who joined us for this term's 'Cooking with Michelle' event. The school supplied the ingredients to each family which were funded through Eastleigh Borough Council. It was a fantastic way for our children, families and staff to connect together and feel capable as they learnt to cook Macaroni cheese– the session definitely met at least two of our '5C needs'.



Coffee morning– 21.01.26

It was lovely to see so many parents and grandparents at our first coffee morning of 2026. It was such a wonderful way to connect with you all and for your children to join us to make their lovely soothe boxes.

Thank you for the feedback we received...

What did you learn about the Empowerment Approach?

"how to stay calm and be curious NOT furious"

"the importance of connections and building habits now"

"the importance of staying calm and trying to understand a child's needs"

"the importance of empowering children at this age to help them understand their inner self"

"the importance of starting healthy brain building behaviours from a young age"

"I have learnt to stay calm and to work with my child and her needs"

"how the brain works with toxic stress and the effects of this later in life"

"I learned a lot about the child's brain and how important it is to build a solid foundation at an early age"

What did you enjoy about the coffee morning activity?

"Face-to-face communication - how to be better and not feel alone"

"The mix of 'theory' and then being joined by the children"

"spending time with my son crafting and chatting with other parents"

"Connecting with my child"

"Being able to speak with Governors and Michelle"

"The making of the Soothe Box was great fun - my child loved the fidgets"

"Connection with our children and connection with school"



For any parents who were unable to attend, we have attached the presentation that was delivered by Michelle on the School website under Family Support Worker.



Empowerment Approach

Why teach children about Brain Best Needs?

The Empowerment Approach is about getting to the core of what is stopping a child from feeling good and doing well. Knowing the 'Why' helps us to plan the right support.

An effective approach must address unmet needs, build missing skills and implement scaffolds to support brain differences.

Good for me, good for you, good for everyone

The focus should be to help your child find ways that they can feel safe, content and able to be at their best AND everyone around them can too.

'Good for me, good for you and good for everyone!'



Do we give the child the responsibility to plan what would help them feel and do better?

Does my approach focus on the child **themselves** understanding why they are struggling?

Year 3

We hope you all had a lovely break and a positive start to the new year. Year 3 have returned to school with fantastic attitudes and enthusiasm for learning, and we are really proud of how well they have settled back into routines. January has been a busy and exciting month, and we are pleased to share some highlights from across the curriculum.

Our new topic this term is Community, which links closely to many of our subjects and helps the children develop a deeper understanding of the world around them. In Geography, we have begun a local study of Hedge End in preparation for our upcoming visit to the village. The children are learning about different types of settlements, including villages, towns and cities, as well as developing their map-reading skills using co-ordinates. They have also been identifying key features of settlements and exploring different types of buildings, such as bungalows, flats, town houses and detached houses.

In Design and Technology, the children have started an exciting project designing and creating packaging for small toys. These toys will be sold to raise money for local charities, allowing the children to see how they can make a positive contribution to their community. We warmly invite parents, carers and siblings to our after-school toy stalls on Monday 9th February and Thursday 12th February, both from 3:20pm. Each toy will cost £2 and will be presented in personalised packaging designed by a Year 3 pupil.



In Science, we have been learning about the human skeleton. The children enjoyed creating skeleton models using pasta to represent different bones, including the tibia, fibula and spine, and have learned how the skeleton supports the body, enables movement and protects our vital organs.

Our English work has focused on writing persuasive leaflets to encourage others to join community clubs such as football, dance, gymnastics, pottery, and arts and crafts. In Maths, we are continuing with multiplication and division, multiplying two-digit numbers by one-digit numbers using part-whole models, and we are now beginning to apply exchanging.

In Computing, the children have been designing posters on Chromebooks to advertise our toy sale, while in PE they have been developing basketball skills outdoors and practising balances in gymnastics.

Finally, we are delighted to welcome our student teachers, Mr Wellington in Ash Class and Mr Brown in Elm Class, who are supporting learning and delivering lessons across the week. The children have responded very positively to them.

When we visit Hedge End, we kindly ask that children bring in a toy or book to donate to the local charity shops, supporting our community theme.

Year 4

Happy New Year to all our families in Year 4! We have had a great start to the Spring Term with lots of excitement around our new topic "Survivor!" We spent a day outside last week learning essential survival skills and luckily, the weather was kind to us and we had mild temperatures and only a drizzle of rain!

In English, we are writing a recount of our Survival Day to interest and inform our reader. We have been learning how to write catchy topic sentences that hook our readers in and add technical and emotive language to add detail to our writing. YOU are our audience, so look out for some of our writing in our next newsletter!



In Geography, we have started our learning on 'Mountains' around the world, considering our enquiry question: How do people survive in the mountains? We began our topic with building a mountain out of papier mâché using card, paper, water and PVA glue. We then painted and labelled our mountains with some key features such as: summit, valley, ridge and plateau.



In Science, we are conducting a longitudinal study of our pond. We will compare the pond across the seasons and look at the plants and insects found there at each time of the year. Each class visited the pond this month and did some observational drawings, took photographs and did some pond dipping! We were amazed at the amount of creatures we found, even though it is winter. There was a newt, pond snails, pond worms and various types of larvae!



Year 5

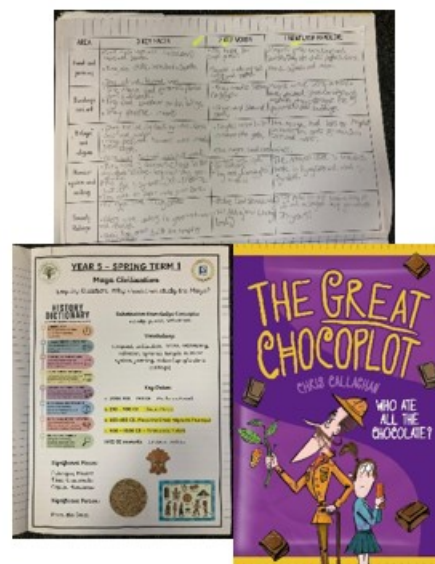
Year 5 have returned from the Christmas break and combated the recent grey weather with the colour and zest of Mexico! In our topic, Marvellous Mexico we have been learning all about the ancient Maya, how they lived and the legacy they left behind. Did you know that the Maya had their own alphabet and number system, their own calendar and religion and also really liked chocolate!? We will learn so much more about them when we have our educational visit from experts Mexicolore at the end of this week.

In DT, we have been learning about seasonality and about what foods grow in the UK and Mexico at this time of year. We carried out some taste testing of some traditional Mexican ingredients and thought about their texture and appearance as well as taste and smell. We will be thinking about how good combinations work together and how to build these into our final dishes which we will make in a few weeks' time.



In PE, we are dancing to modern music in a street style: through 'dance by chance', we let random numbers form our choreography and have been developing a sequence of movements in small groups. We will continue to build our sequence into a full routine considering dynamics and relationships as we link ideas together. We have been enjoying showing of our dance moves to adults as they walk through the hall.

For our class reader we are reading 'The Great Chocoplot' by Chris Callaghan – an enjoyable and funny text about a possible 'chocopocalypse.'



Year 6

In English, the children have been immersed in the wizarding world of *Harry Potter* and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*. We explored how the author creates a convincing, scientific tone when writing about completely imaginary creatures. The children examined scientific vocabulary and formal sentence structures used in non-chronological reports. Inspired by this, they designed their own magical beasts and have been writing detailed non-chronological reports about them. The creativity on display has been outstanding, with some wonderfully imaginative ideas and thoughtful explanations.

In Art, our magical theme has continued as the children studied how to create detailed drawings of fur, scales, and textures. They then designed their own magical creatures, carefully considering shape, pattern, and detail. These designs will soon be transformed into sculptures, and the children are very excited to bring their creations to life in 3D form.

In Geography, we have been learning about volcanoes, with a particular focus on the Galápagos Islands and their global significance. The children explored how the islands were formed through volcanic activity and why this makes them such a unique environment. To bring the learning to life, the children took part in a practical investigation using Rice Krispie treats to model volcanic formation—an activity they thoroughly enjoyed!

In Computing, Year 6 have been developing their coding skills using *Scratch*. They have been exploring how games use variables, such as scores, and experimenting with how different actions can affect the output of a program. The children showed great problem-solving skills and curiosity as they tested, adjusted, and improved their games.

It has been a brilliant start to the half term, full of creativity, curiosity, and enthusiasm. Well done, Year 6—we're looking forward to all the exciting learning still to come!



Year 6- Creative writing club

Is Social Media Damaging Young People More Than It Helps Them?

Young people at Freegrounds Junior School, like many others, spend around three to five hours a day on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. There are reasons why social media is so popular with young people. Over 80% of young adults and children say it helps them feel more connected to others, is a good way to communicate and many enjoy being creative online. Social media gives young people a place to express themselves, share ideas and feel supported. Around 63% of teenagers say social media helps them show their creative side and allows them to connect with people from different backgrounds. After all, what's more important than communication, connection and being creative?

However, the amount of time young people spend online is becoming worrying. The average young person now spends 21 to 35 hours a week on social media. This can quickly become unhealthy. For example, a girl named Alexi once spent eight hours online in a single day, which her friends found amusing, but it highlights how easily screen time can get out of control. With this comes many risks, including fear of missing out, constant comparison with others, cyberbullying and pressure to fit in.

Cyberbullying is one of the most serious online dangers. Research shows that 1 in 5 young people experience some form of cyberbullying. Online, it can be difficult to know who is responsible, which can cause paranoia, stress and false accusations. This can seriously damage a young person's mental health and self-esteem.

Social media can also affect sleep, concentration and wellbeing. Many teenagers stay up late scrolling, leaving them tired and unable to focus in lessons. Studies show that 45% of young people report sleep deprivation due to excessive device use. Bright screen light can strain eyes and disrupt sleep patterns, making it even harder to rest properly. Constant notification sounds also reduce concentration, pulling attention away from important tasks.

In addition, unrealistic and edited content can make young people feel jealous or unhappy with their own lives. Some friendships can suffer when posts exclude others, and mental health can decline when teens feel lost without their devices.

Social media is not all bad, but without limits it can become highly damaging. Parents should consider restricting screen time to one to three hours a day to help protect young people's health, happiness and future.

Written by the Year 6 Creative Writers Club members: Molly, Fynn and Jessica

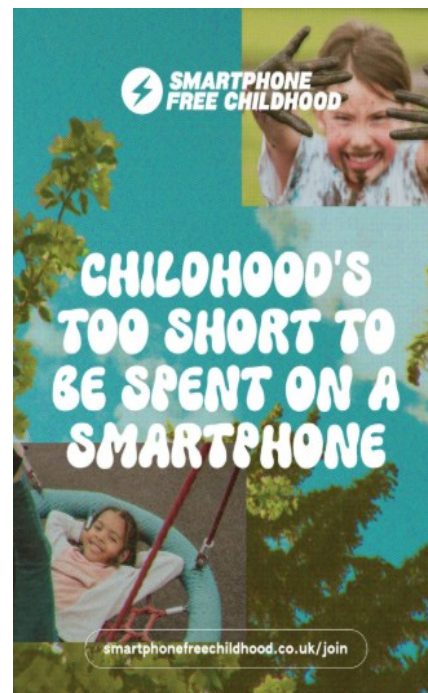
Christmas Tree

We would like to thank Hilliers Garden Centre, who very kindly donated the beautiful Christmas tree that stood outside reception.



Smart-Phone free school

As per our previous correspondence, we would like to remind everyone that we are a smart-phone free school (Years 3-5). This does also include smart watches and any other similar devices. This pledge has been taken alongside all of the other primary schools in our cluster to help promote a positive childhood and support parents with the pressures surrounding smart phones and other similar devices. From September 2026, we will be smart-phone free for all year groups in line with the rest of the cluster schools as there will have been sufficient time for this message to feed through the relevant cohorts.



Hampshire
SENDIASS

Y6 SECONDARY TRANSITION

Join Lisa for our SEN Support Workshop

- Learn what a smooth transition looks like
- Explore practical SEN strategies
- Make the most of the time before September
- Get signposted to extra guidance

March 2026

Friday 6th 13:00

Tuesday 10th 17:00

Thursday 12th 10:30



JOIN US VIA
TEAMS



WWW.HAMPSHIRESENDIASS.CO.UK/WORKSHOPS

FEBRUARY HALF TERM

ICON
SPORTS COACHING



Holiday Camp

- Ofsted Registered Childcare
- Indoor & Outdoor Facilities
- Wyvern College, Fair Oak
Eastleigh SO50 7AN
- Highly Experienced Coaching Team

5 DAY MULTI-SPORTS CAMP

Monday 16th - Friday 20th February

8:30-9am Drop Off - 4pm/5pm Collection

8:30/9am-4pm £30 per Day

8:30/9am-5pm £34 per Day

25% Sibling Discount Available

WHAT TO EXPECT

Athletics, Archery, Basketball
Cricket, Competitions, Dance
Dodgeball, Football, Gymnastics
Invasion Games, Tag Games
Table Tennis, Tennis & More!

BOOK & PAY ONLINE

www.iconsportscoaching.co.uk

Email info@iconsportscoaching.co.uk

or call Steve on 07415 888851

**AGES
4-12**

**CHILDCARE
VOUCHERS
ACCEPTED** ✓



@coachingicon

Our new after school sports clubs are proving incredibly popular however there is still space in multi-sports on a Monday. Children will have the opportunity to participate in a range of activities at this club, including archery. Please contact ICON directly should you wish to sign up.

Diary Dates

Friday 23rd January– Year 5 Mexicolore workshop in school all day

Wednesday 28th January– Parenting coaching session 1– Managing worries. 9-10am with Michelle

Tuesday 3rd February– Year 3 Elm class walk to Hedge End

Wednesday 4th February– Year 3 Ash class walk to Hedge End

Friday 6th February– NSPCC Number Day 'Dress up for digits' (wearing numbers- £2 donation for NSPCC)

Monday 9th February– Year 3 selling items for chosen charities on playground after school (£2- cash only)

Tuesday 10th February– Pupil Voice trip to Houses of Parliament

Wednesday 11th February– Year 6 height and weight check

Wednesday 11th February– Parents' Evening (information to follow)

Thursday 12th February– Parents' Evening (information to follow)

Friday 13th February– **INSET DAY**

Monday 16th February—Friday 20th February– **SPRING HALF TERM**

Monday 23rd February– **RETURN TO SCHOOL**

Monday 2nd March– **Bramley Reading Café 9:00am—9:20am**

Tuesday 3rd March– **Winston Reading Café 9:00am—9:20am**

Wednesday 4th March– **Russett Reading Café 9:00am—9:20am**

Thursday 5th March– World Book Day (Children invited to dress up as a book character or wear PJs)

Friday 6th March– **Empire Reading Café 9:00am—9:20am**

Monday 9th March–Friday 13th March– Science week in school

Thursday 12th March– FSW Michelle's coffee morning

Friday 13th March- FoFJS Disco (Year 3/4 4:30pm-5:40pm and Year 5/6 5:50pm-7:00pm)

Thursday 19th March– Year 4 Listen2me concerts to parents (more details to follow)

Friday 20th March– Year 5 Portsmouth Cathedral trip

Year 3 Stubbington beach day trip

Tuesday 24th March– Year 4 Anglo-Saxon trip to Winchester (Maple class)

Y3 Elm class Fab Finish to parents 9:30-10:00am

Wednesday 25th March– Rock 2 the beat concerts

Thursday 26th March– Year 4 Anglo-Saxon trip to Winchester (Pine and Beech classes)

Y3 Ash class Fab Finish to parents 9:30am-10:00am

Monday 30th March—Friday 10th April– **EASTER HOLIDAYS**