

Balksbury Federation



For

Academic Year
2025-2026

Dear Families,

As we approach the end of another academic year, I want to take a moment to reflect on what has been a successful and rewarding year for our federation. We feel incredibly fortunate to have achieved so much together.

One of our proudest moments was receiving the EAL Silver Award, especially as we were expecting Bronze! To then be told we had already met many of the Gold criteria was simply amazing. That sets a clear and exciting goal for us next year! We were also honoured to be selected by the Hampshire SEN Team as one of just 15 schools in the county recognised for outstanding SEND provision. This means we will now support other schools in developing their own inclusive practices. And of course, we were thrilled with the extremely positive Ofsted report for the Junior School; another testament to the dedication of our staff and the strength of our community.

Across this year we have continued to support trainee teachers, and those wishing to take career paths in education, from Winchester University, Bournemouth University, Sparsholt College, QMC College and Andover College. It is always a privilege and an honour for our team to encourage and inspire our future generation of educators.

Thank you to all the families who have shared such kind and encouraging feedback. Your words reflect the confidence and happiness of our school community, and we see that joy every day in our children thriving, achieving, and growing as proud Barksbury Citizens.

As always, we've been refining and enriching our curriculum, and this newsletter includes updates on a couple of changes coming in September.

We will be saying goodbye to Miss Earle, and we wish her every success in her new adventures. At the same time, we're delighted to welcome Mr Brown and Mrs Damen, who will be joining just ahead of September as federated teachers. In September, we also look forward to welcoming Mrs Kew, who will be completing her teacher training with us.

A heartfelt thank you goes to our entire federated team for their unwavering dedication and hard work. Whatever their role, each member contributes so much to the success of both schools, and I am deeply grateful. Thank you to our Governors for their steadfast support, and to our PTA, who have once again gone above and beyond - most recently funding a beautiful pollinator border that has already become a valuable part of our science curriculum. Thank you also, to our wonderful volunteers and Reading Ambassadors, who come in regularly to support the children.

And of course, the biggest thank you goes to our wonderful children. They are the heart of everything we do, and we are so proud of each and every one of them.

Finally, thank you to all our families for your continued support. We look forward to welcoming you back in September for another exciting year ahead.

Best wishes,
Miss Katy Thompson
Executive Headteacher



Dear Families,

As we approach the end of another academic year, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on what has been a truly successful year for our federation.

Throughout the year, we've celebrated many good things - many of which Miss Thompson has highlighted in her update. From academic progress to creative projects, sporting events to community initiatives, our children and staff have continued to shine. It's been a joy to witness the enthusiasm and dedication that define our federation.

We are incredibly fortunate to have such a highly talented and committed team across both our schools. It is a pleasure to welcome trainee teachers on placement, and an honour to play a supporting part in future educators.

As you will read in this newsletter, the changes to Geography in the infant school looks so engaging and imaginative; I must admit, I wish Geography had been like that when I was at school!

As I write this, I'm looking forward to the upcoming Arts Festival. This week promises to offer our children experiences that go far beyond the typical primary school curriculum. I won't spoil the surprise, but I have a feeling the federated sculpture is going to be something truly special.

A heartfelt thank you goes to every member of our federated team. Your tireless work and unwavering commitment to providing a high standard of education does not go unnoticed, whatever your role. Thank you also to our wonderful children, who approach their learning with such enthusiasm, curiosity, and resilience.

To our Year 6 pupils who are preparing to move on to new adventures, congratulations on all you have achieved. We are so proud of you and wish you every success in the exciting journey ahead.

Thank you once again to everyone: staff, children, families, and governors for making this a fantastic year.

I hope you all enjoy a restful and enjoyable summer break.

Best wishes,

Chantele Adams
Chair of Governors



Who's Who for 2025 - 2026

Leadership Team

Miss Katy Thompson	Executive Headteacher Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead Teaching and Learning Leader Curriculum Development Leader Health and Safety Leader Maths Team Leader Modern Foreign Language: French Leader Attendance Team
Mrs Fran Farrell	Federated Deputy Headteacher Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead Teaching and Learning Leader Curriculum Development Leader Pupil Premium Leader Health and Safety Leader English Team Leader Attendance Team
Miss Amy Bolton	Assistant Headteacher Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead Community Development Leader Reading Leader Phonics Leader
Miss Sarah Bodinham	SENDCo and protected groups Designated Safeguarding Lead Mental Health Lead Attendance Team Health and Safety Team Protected Groups Leader EAL Leader
Mrs Tara Woodhams	Federated Business Manager Data Protection Officer (DPO)

Senior Leadership Team (Year Group Leaders)

Year R: Miss Emily Smith
Year 1: Mr James Watkins
Year 2: Mr Ollie Mackrill
Year 3: Mrs Harriet Shield
Year 4: Miss Hannah Shehata
Year 5: Mrs Chloe Andrews
Year 6: Miss Emily Romain

Early Years Teaching Team

Miss Emily Smith <i>Admiral Class</i>	EYFS Leader Senior Leadership Team Federated Music Lead
Mrs Sharon Palmer <i>Emperor Class</i>	Federated History Leader
Mrs Helen Cordner <i>Skipper Class</i>	Federated Geography Leader

Year 1 Teaching Team

Mr James Watkins <i>Robin Class</i>	Year 1 Leader Senior Leadership Team Federated English Leader
Mrs Debbie Sanderson <i>Heron Class</i>	Federated Design and Technology (D&T) Leader
Mrs Rosie Baker <i>Heron Class</i>	Federated Maths Leader
Mr Jack Brown <i>Tawny Class</i>	Federated Teacher

Year 2 Teaching Team

Mr Ollie Mackrill <i>Kingfisher Class</i>	Year 2 Leader Senior Leadership Team Federated Computing Leader
Miss Hannah Watts <i>Nightingale Class</i>	Federated Religious Education (RE) Leader
Mrs Emma Damen <i>Merlin Class</i>	Federated Teacher

Year 3 Teaching Team

Mrs Harriet Shield <i>Oak Class</i>	Year 3 Leader Senior Leadership Team Federated Art and Design Leader
Mrs Katherine Cowley <i>Oak Class</i>	Federated Design and Technology Leader
Miss Emily Hackman <i>Elm Class</i>	Federated Geography Leader
Miss Olivia Coombes <i>Ash Class</i>	Federated Computing Leader

Year 4 Teaching Team

Miss Hannah Shehata
Pine Class
Year 4 Leader
Senior Leadership Team
Federated Science Leader

Mrs Hannah Barry
Palm Class
Federated Reading Leader

Miss Beth Thain
Lime Class
Federated Religious Education (RE) Leader

Year 5 Teaching Team

Mrs Chloe Andrews
Olive Class
Year 5 Leader
Senior Leadership Team
Federated Health and Wellbeing Leader
Community Schools Safety Leader

Mr Liam Cook
Maple Class
Federated Maths Leader

Mrs Zoe Milsom
Aspen Class
Federated Geography Leader

Year 6 Teaching Team

Miss Emily Romain
Willow Class
Year 6 Leader
Senior Leadership Team
Federated Health and Wellbeing Leader
Community Schools Safety Leader

Miss Ella Cruz
Spruce Class
Federated Art and Design Leader

Mr Chris Townend
Poplar Class
Federated Maths Leader

Cover & Support Teachers

Mr Nick Bensaid
Federated Sports & PE Leader

Mrs Charlotte Scott
KS1 & KS2 Cover
Federated Cover Teacher
Federated Writing Leader

Mrs Deirdre Shannon
KS1 & KS2 Cover
Federated Cover Teacher
Federated Science Leader

Mrs Emma Stokes
KS1 & KS2 Cover
Federated Cover Teacher
Federated History Leader

Mrs Faye McKay
KS1 & KS2 Cover
Federated Cover Teacher
Federated Design and Technology Leader

Mrs Lisa Whittington
KS1 & KS2 Cover
Federated ECT Support

Mrs Den Buck
KS1 & KS2 Cover
Federated Cover Teacher

Mrs Max Young
KS1 & KS2 Cover
Federated Cover Teacher

Support team: Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA)

Mr Simon Lunn	Special Education Needs Team & Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA)
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Classroom Support Staff

Mrs Sarah Morgan	Mrs Stacey Reilly
Miss Jen Ritchie	Ms Alina Holanda
Mrs Christine Betteridge	Miss Julia Fitzpatrick
Mrs Sam Cutting	Mrs Denise Douthwaite
Mrs Jo Prosser	Mrs Emma Hibberd
Mrs Steph Morgan	Miss Kerry Beatson
Miss Emma Clarke	Miss Lindsey Juliff
Mrs Zarra Wilkins	Mrs Michelle Hudson Special Education Needs Team
Mrs Zoe Holloway	Miss Donna Burns Special Education Needs Team
Miss Tracey Hill	Mrs Louise Walker Special Education Needs Team
Mrs Lucy Whitchurch	Miss Kassie Powell Special Education Needs Team
Mrs Sam Russell	Miss Shannon Chalkley-Dyer Special Education Needs Team

Community Support Leads & Attendance Officers

Mrs Cheryl Grinham	Family Pastoral Care, Attendance Officer & Young Carers and Forces Leader
Mrs Emma Whatley	Family Pastoral Care, Attendance Officer & Young Carers and Forces Leader

Admin Team

Mrs Tara Woodhams	Federated Business Manager
Mrs Claire Foster	Federated Admin Officer - Infant School
Mrs Sarah Fleet	Federated Admin Officer - Junior School
Miss Charlotte Proud	Federated Admin Assistant
Mrs Lucy Clapcott	Federated Admin Assistant

Library and Reading Support

Mrs Victoria Davies

Site Management and Maintenance

Mr Alex Frowd	Site Manager
Mr Michael Mackay	Site Maintenance and Support

Lunchtime Supervisors

Miss Claire Moger	Miss Julia Fitzpatrick	Miss Shannon Chalkley-Dyer
Mrs Louise Walker	Ms Alina Holanda	Miss Donna Burns
Mrs Stacey Reilly	Miss Kassie Powell	Miss Lindsey Juliff
Mrs Zoe Holloway	Miss Tracey Hill	Mrs Donna Light
Mrs Christine Betteridge	Mr Michael Mackay	Mrs Michelle Hudson
Mrs Sam Russell	Miss Emma Clarke	Miss Kerry Beatson
Miss Emma Hibberd		

Drop Off Club

Mrs Louise Walker
Mrs Michelle Hudson
Miss Kerry Beatson
Mrs Christine Betteridge
Miss Claire Moger

Pick Up Club

Mrs Michelle Hudson
Miss Emma Clarke
Mrs Sam Russell
Miss Kerry Beatson

Curriculum News

Enhancing the Experience of Geography in Key Stage 1

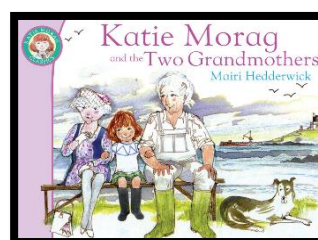
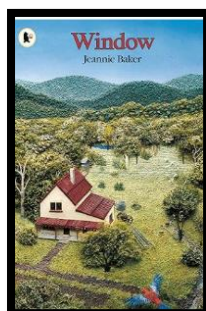
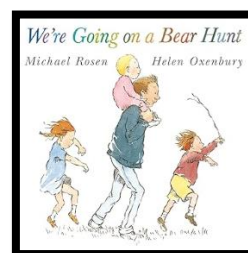
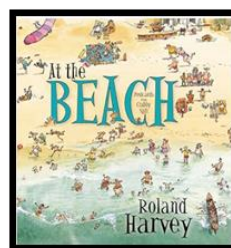
From September, the federation will be changing some of our Geography content for the infant school to improve further the experience of learning for children.

What does the National Curriculum say children have to learn in Geography?

Across a child's time in the infant school, they will learn about a range of geographical skills, and locational knowledge about continents, countries, seas and oceans. This will include:

- Looking at globes and atlases to identify the United Kingdom, and where this is in relation to the continents of the world
- Looking at a detailed study of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Identifying common weather patterns in our seasons in the United Kingdom
- Looking at aerial photos to recognise landmarks
- Identifying the four main compass points
- Naming and locating the world's seven continents and five oceans
- Using the federated grounds to study the geography of school grounds

In studying these aspects, children will learn in a fun way and in some cases, learn through a narrative approach to support them understanding the knowledge and skills to be learnt. Each time they learn a new Geography concept, an enriched text will be used.



Sprint Handwriting

This year, the federation has adopted a new approach to teaching handwriting. 'Sprint Handwriting' helps children use the skills they have learnt in their handwriting lessons across writing in different curriculum subjects. They support the children in developing both the gross and fine motor skills they need in order to be successful, as well as teaching them how to form letters correctly.

Sprints are carried out throughout the day and involve big and small movements, as well as learning on how to handwrite across all subjects. These sessions have been hugely successful and we are proud of the progress children are making. You can see the difference for a child below in just two months.

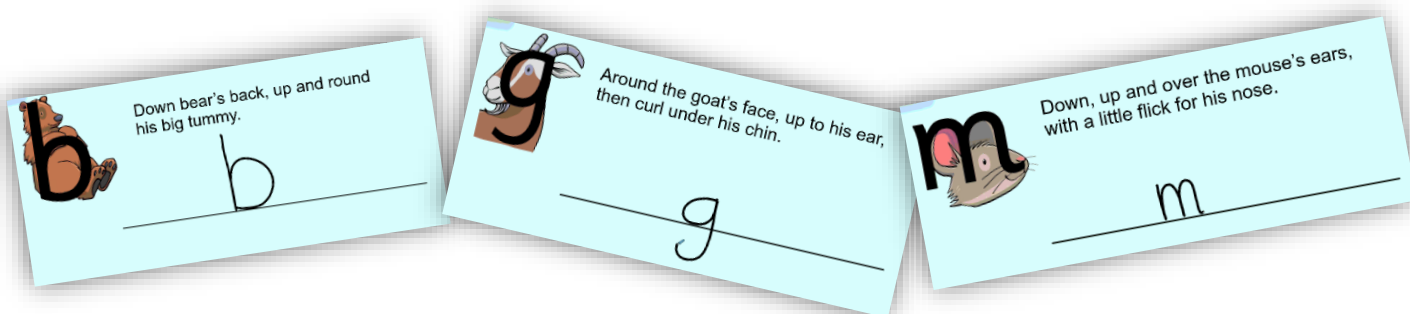


Writing in October



Writing in December

English Leaders have created videos for the children to use when practising how to form letters and all teachers use the same explanation to support children. For example, to form the letter 'b' children go, 'down bear's back, up and round his big tummy'. These are brilliant because the video shows the letter being formed over and over so that the children can follow using big movements with their arms. This helps them know how to form the letter and also develops gross motor skills.



What are gross and fine motor skills?

Gross and fine motor skills are types of physical skills which help children to move and carry out every day tasks.

Gross motor skills use the larger muscles in the body and are important for whole body movement. Good fine motor skills rely on good gross motor skills because children need to be able to use the correct posture to allow their hands and wrists to work effectively.

Fine motor skills use the smaller muscles in the wrist, hand and fingers. These help children with smaller tasks such as using scissors, tying a shoelace, doing up buttons and, of course, handwriting.

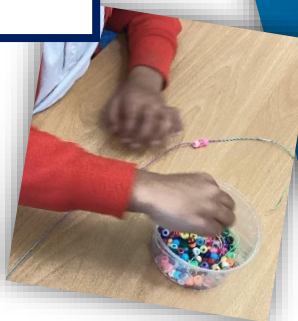
How are fine motor skills developed?

Fine motor skills such as cutting, threading, playing with Playdoh and Lego, drawing and writing are embedded in the curriculum. Each year group also has a box of resources which they use for activities to help strengthen the hand muscles of children who may need a little extra help.



Finger strengthening exercises, such as using tweezers, helps improve pencil grip and handwriting control.

Activities like threading beads support hand-eye coordination, which is essential for neat handwriting.



Tracing patterns, shapes, and letters on textured surfaces can build the hand muscles needed for smoother, more confident writing.

How are gross motor skills developed?

Gross motor skills are developed through movement and physical activity. Activities outside at playtime and lunchtime are strategically planned to develop groups of muscles such as upper body, lower body and core. In addition to the fixed equipment that the children always have access to, Mr Bensaid sets up a huge range of sporting activities for the children to engage in. Across the week, different teachers provide activities and sports at lunchtime such as cricket, netball, basketball, lacrosse and skipping.



Lumbar Support Chairs

The federation has invested in special lumbar support chairs for every child to help maintain the natural curve of the spine and improve posture. This also helps children to engage their core muscles so that their fine motor control improves.

ESafety



ESafety is taught as part of our Computing curriculum from Year R to Year 6. Each Year Group will cover topics such as online relationships; privacy and security; self-image and identity; and online bullying.

In addition to this, the first 10 minutes of every computing lesson is dedicated to ESafety. This is where we remind the children to 'Think Before you Click and be SMART'.

How do we support our families?

As a parent, it can feel daunting to support your child online and keep them safe.

You can find information and advice on how to keep your child safe online on our dedicated page on our website and in the fortnightly Across the Playground.



Federated Libraries

Over the academic year, the federation has invested another £10,000 in enhancing the federation's libraries resources.



This funding has supported the development of well-rounded reference libraries, ensuring a broad and diverse range of topics are available for both children and teachers to explore and utilise in their learning and teaching. Part of this investment has also gone into acquiring high-quality curriculum books, enriching curriculum subjects with informative texts that foster a love of reading across all age groups.



Attendance

ATTENDANCE Matters

Regular attendance at school ensures that children get the best possible start in life. Good attendance supports learning, the development of social skills and friendships, as well as building good habits that are essential for adult life. School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life.

Every moment in school counts, and days missed add up quickly. All children across their time in primary school will have days when they are ill, and the federation recognises this.

Attendance Days and what they mean?

0 days of school	100%	Perfection
Equates to 2 days off school each year	99%	Excellent
Equates to 5 days off school each year	97%	Good
Equates to 10 days off school each year	95%	Slight Concern
Equates to 20 days off school each year	90%	Concerned
Equates to 30 days off school each year	85%	Very Concerned

Balksbury Federation follows both national and county expectations. This supports promoting good progress and means that:

- A leave of absence during term time **will not** be granted except in the **most exceptional circumstances**. Families who take holidays, may be issued with a penalty notice. *Please note that money from penalty notices **does not** go to the federation, which is often the belief; instead it goes to the Local Authority*

- Requests for leave must be made in writing to the Attendance Team - an absence request form is available from either school office. Please note that permission **cannot be granted after the leave** has been taken and you should leave good time for your request to go through

Did you know...

95%	10 days from school
90%	20 days from school
85%	30 days from school
80%	39 days from school
75%	49 days from school



Struggling to get your child into school?

Talk to us – we are here to help.

This Year's Attendance - at the time of writing

thank you!

Infants: **96.4%** National: **94.9%**
Juniors: **96.4%** National: **95.2%**

Persistent Absence
Infants: **5.9%** National: **12.5%**
Juniors: **5.9%** National: **11.4%**

Just a reminder...

Infant School

8:45am Doors open and school starts

8:50am Classroom doors close. Families will need sign their child into school at the office

8:55am School registers close

8:55am onwards Late zone

Junior School

8:40am Doors open and school starts

8:45am Classroom doors close. Families will need to sign their child into school at the office

8:50am School registers close

8:50am onwards Late zone

After School Clubs

We are pleased to provide a range of clubs once again, which have been chosen by children. The vast majority of these will have no cost to families. As last year, **clubs will run in two blocks**:

Block 1: September until Mid-February	Block 2: Mid-February until July
Start: Monday 29 th September Block 1 Christmas Pause: Friday 5 th December Restart: Monday 12 th January End of block 1: Friday 13 th February	Start: Monday 23 rd February Block 2 Easter Pause: Friday 27 th March Restart: Monday 13 th April End of block 2: Friday 3 rd July
All clubs will run from after school until 4:15pm	

For a preview of clubs on offer, see the table on the next page. Please note that there **may be** some slight changes up until the time that clubs are released for booking.

Timeline of club booking:

1. **Monday 8th September** - Description of clubs released to support family's choice via the APP. A paper booking form will come home with your child ready to go, and a copy will be placed on our website.
2. **Tuesday 9th September** - Booking **opens via paper application**
3. **Friday 12th September** - Booking **closes**. Your child's paper copy needs to be handed into your child's class teacher or Drop Off member of staff who will pass them on
4. **Wednesday 24th September** – You will be notified of your child's club - **the slip will come home with your child**

Picking up your child from a club: information about where to pick your child up will be on your notification slip.

We often have waiting lists for our clubs. Therefore, if your child decides they no longer want to do their club, please let the office know and their place will be offered to the next child on the waiting list.

If your child does not attend 3 sessions of their club, then their place will be offered to the next child on the waiting list.



Balksbury Federation Clubs Block 1 - Monday 29th September

Day		Name of club	Name of Team Member	Where	Time	Who for?	Max number	Cost	Equipment needed
Tuesday	Lunch	Young Carers	Mrs Grinham & Mrs Whatley	Junior Community Hub (Infants go with an adult)	12:00 – 1.00	Held at the Juniors	Young Carers	Free	Bring lunch (Infants hot lunch at Juniors)
	After school	Dance and Cheerleading	Miss Smith and Mrs Stokes	Junior School Hall	3:20 – 4:15	Infants	30	Free	PE Kit/comfy clothes
		Construction	Mrs Cordner	Skipper Class	3:20 – 4:15	Infants	20	Free	None
		Art	Mrs Palmer	Emperor Class	3:20 – 4:15	Infants	20	£10 for the block	Old shirt
		Sewing	Mrs Sanderson	Heron Class	3:20 – 4:15	Infants	20	£10 for the block	None
		Football Club	Mr Bensaid	Junior Field	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	30	Free	PE Kit/comfy clothes
		Cooking Club	Mrs Andrews and Mrs Milson	Olive Class	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	24	£12 for the block	Apron/old shirt
		Choir	Mr Watkins	Robin Class	3:20 – 4:15	Infants	25	Free	None
Wednesday	After school	Rugby Club	Mr Mackrill	Meet in Library	3:20 – 4:15	Infants	20	Free	PE Kit/comfy clothes
		Outdoor Fun Club	Mrs Damon	Merlin Class	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	20	Free	PE Kit/comfy clothes
		Gardening Club	Mrs Shannon	Meet in Library	3:20 – 4:15	Infants	16	Free	Old clothes
		Dance Club	Mrs Young and Mrs Buck	Junior School Hall	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	40	Free	PE Kit/comfy clothes
		Choir	Mrs McKay	Pine Class	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	25	Free	None
		Outdoor Fun Club	Mrs Shield	Meet in Oak Class	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	20	Free	PE Kit/comfy clothes
		Computing	Miss Shehata	Computing Suite	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	30	Free	None
		Netball	Mrs Romain	Junior Playground	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	20	Free	PE Kit/comfy clothes
		Pottery	Miss Coombes	Ash Class	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	20	£10 for the block	Old shirt
		Multi-Sports	Miss Hackman	Meet in Elm Class	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	20	Free	PE Kit/comfy clothes
		Guitar Club	Mr Townend	Maple Class	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	10	£20 Security Deposit for a Guitar Loan	None
	Lunch	Quiet Club	Mrs Baker	Heron Class		Infants & Juniors		Free	None
Thursday	Lunch	Armed Forces	Mrs Grinham & Mrs Whatley	Junior Group Room	12:00 – 1:00	Infants & Juniors	Forces Children	Free	None
		Gymnastics	Mrs Whittington	Junior School Hall	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	20	Free	PE Kit/comfy clothes
		Multi-sports	Miss Watts	Nightingale Class	3:20 – 4:15	Infants	20	Free	PE Kit/comfy clothes
		Animation	Mrs Barry	Palm Class	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	20	Free	None
		Basketball	Mr Bensaid	Meet in Library	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	30	Free	PE Kit/comfy clothes
		Comic Strip Club	Mr Cook	Aspen Class	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	20	Free	None
		Technology	Mr Brown	Tawny Class	3:20 – 4:15	Infant	20	Free	None
		Cross Country	Miss Thain	Meet in Lime Class	3:20 – 4:15	Juniors	20	Free	PE Kit/comfy clothes

Drop Off Club

Drop Off Club remains a hugely popular club that provides a facility for parents to 'drop off' and get on the road to work. The club is run by our federated staff who set different activities up each day for children to do. Please note, this club is **not a breakfast club and does not provide any refreshments**. However, you can send your child in with a healthy snack for them to munch, and of course their water bottle. Drop Off Club runs out of the junior school hall for both infant and junior children.

Bookings: Important Dates

Bookings for next academic year have been sent out to families but should you wish to book a place, or join the waiting list, please contact either Admin Office.

Places available

Infant School - 50 places

Junior School - 50 Places

Cost

The price is **£10** per child a week (including Bank Holiday weeks) paid in **advance for the half term**. You may then use the club as many days as you wish.



Please note that this club is a non-profit club and only covers staff wages, costs and resources for the club. Therefore, we cannot give a discount for a second child.

Drop Off Club starts on **Friday 5th September** and opens at **7:45 a.m.** Your child will need to be signed in with an adult; please **do not** drop your child off at the top gate as we cannot accept responsibility for your child until they arrive with a club staff member.

Drop off point will be:

The hall door, which can be accessed through the side gate at the end of the car park. However, our Drop Off staff try to pick up from the car park as often as they can to support parents (this will still count as being signed in by an adult).

Pick Up Club Monday to Thursday

Pick Up Club is also extremely popular and is a paid club that provides parents with the facility to pick up later than the end of school day, **up to 5:30pm from Monday through to Thursday.**

The club is run by our federated staff and provides a range of activities both indoors and outdoors. Children are given a piece of toast to keep them going until they get home for dinner; the children often fondly refer to the club as Toast Club!

Bookings: Important Dates

Bookings for next academic year have been sent out to families but should you wish to book a place, or join the waiting list, please contact either Admin Office.

Places available

Infant School - 40 places

Junior School - 40 Places



The cost will be **£36 each week** paid on the 1st of each month.

Pick Up point will be:

Through the Year R gate at the front of the infant school and a quick walk around the outside of the school to the hall door at the rear of the infant school.

Scott Centre After School Club Monday to Friday

The federation works in close partnership with The Scott Centre, who offer wrap around care for longer hours than the federation can provide. They provide a range of activities including sport, craft, a quiet area, and both indoor and outdoor facilities, Monday through to Friday. They run an after-school collection service from both the infant and junior schools.

For more information, or to book, please call them directly on 01264 332188.



INSETs

Understanding INSET Days

INSET days are special days when school is closed to children but open for staff training and development. INSET stands for **In-Service Education and Training**, and these are days that all maintained schools (a publicly funded school that is overseen and maintained by the local authority) in England are required to have.



What Happens on INSET Days?

All staff are in school, to be part of a variety of important activities which includes but is not an exhaustive list:

- Essential annual safeguarding training
- Certification for life guard training
- Outdoor education training
- Curriculum development training
- Teacher knowledge and skills sessions
- Collaborative curriculum development
- Updating knowledge for protocol on the smooth running of the federation

Why are They Important?

INSET days help our staff grow professionally, which directly benefits our children. By investing in our team's development, we're able to provide high-quality, engaging, and effective learning experiences in, and out of the classroom.

When do They Happen?

Mostly, the federation's INSET day are either booked around the availability of county visitors, or to minimize disruption around family routines. We recognise that not all families will agree on when is best, therefore, we try to give as much notice as possible, and will always give the whole following year INSET days before the end of the academic year.

Dates for next year (already advertised)

Wednesday 3rd September 2025

Thursday 4th September 2025

Friday 27th March 2026

Tuesday 21st July 2026

Wednesday 22nd July 2026

Myths

Myth: INSET days are just for relaxing or time off for teachers

Reality: INSET days are designed for training relevant to the school

Myth: INSET days are optional for teachers

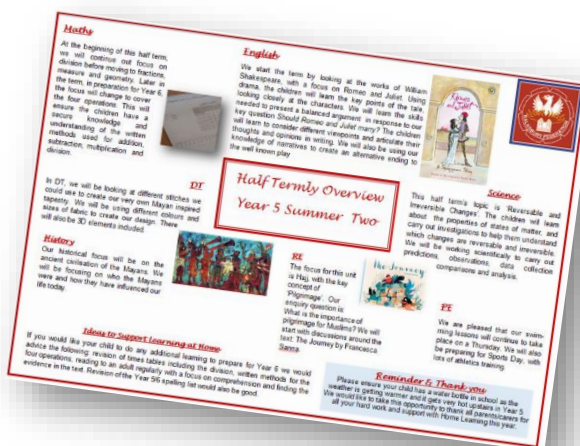
Reality: INSET days are part of the required number of days teachers are expected to attend

Keeping Up with what Your Child is Learning

There are so many great ways to stay connected with what your child is learning at the federation.

A great starting point is our website: www.balksburyfederation.co.uk Simply head to the 'Children' tab and explore the year group pages. Here you will find a half termly focus that gives a helpful overview of what's being covered across the curriculum. Then at the end of each week, you'll find a little snippet of news; often accompanied by some photos to give a glimpse of the exciting things happening in class.

Half Termly Overview



Year group weekly updates

Friday 23rd May 2025: Week 5

Another very busy, but very fun week, in Year 6 to finish the half term. This week the children have thoroughly enjoyed going out on their bikes during Bikeability and we have been so impressed with each and every one of them. They have also worked incredibly hard in their English lessons, writing non-chronological reports about the Yellow-Spotted Lizard from the book Holes. During Free-Reading Friday today, the children caught up with some of the recent news whilst reading First News.



Ufton Court: Day 2

After the first night's sleep, all the children were ready for a big breakfast this morning and lots of toast was eaten! This morning, we've learnt the skills of archery, jewellery making and fire making - in a safe way of course! We loved walking through the grounds and learning how to safely start and manage a fire, and why this would be useful during the Viking era. The children are all adorned with a fantastic array of rings, necklaces and bracelets which they can't wait to show off. This afternoon, we prepared for a wonderful Viking banquet and we are all absolutely full to the brim now with chicken, roast potatoes and cake! We are all ready for a great night's sleep tonight and are excited for our final morning tomorrow.



Friday 20th June 2025- Week 2- Pirates

ARRRRRRRR me hearties!

The children have had a truly fantastic week here at Pirate School! We launched our new topic last Friday with an exciting visit from the Open Box Theatre Company. The day began with a mysterious secret message from the pesky pirate Captain Stink! In their classes, the children took part in a thrilling workshop, where they used drama and their superb maths detective skills to solve clues and uncover the five magic numbers needed to open the pirate treasure chest. Much to everyone's delight, hidden inside were three bags of golden coins, rewards for all their hard work! Throughout the week, the children have been fully immersed in pirate life. They've been busy creating treasure maps, crafting pirate hats, hooks, and eye patches, and even building their own pirate ships using large construction materials. We're thrilled to announce that all of the children have officially passed Pirate School, congratulations crew!



Housekeeping

Mobile Phones and Smart Watches in School

Please can we remind families that mobile phones are not allowed into school, or on an educational visit.

However, should you need your child to bring a phone or smart watch into school, you must agree to the terms and conditions. Please collect an agreement and policy from the junior admin office.

If children bring their phone or Smart watch into school, please note:

- The phone must be switched **off** during school hours and **handed into the office first thing** in the morning and collected at home time – please note that phones are left at the owner's own risk
- Mobile phones or Smart watches brought into school without permission will be confiscated, stored in the office, and returned at the end of the day
- Phones should not be turned on until children reach the **school gates**

Uniform

The federation continues to support uniform being as affordable as possible. You can find our full uniform list on our website under the **Parents Tab**, then **Essential Information**.

Please note that we have made an addition and will now allow children to wear **plain black trainers**. The federation still does not allow white trainers, and we ask that families support us with this. The federation is also asking that hairbands are small.

Our website also provides essential information about the wearing of jewellery in school.

Please note that the PTA have a uniform swap shop that hosts a collection of pre-loved uniform. They are 'open for business' after school on a Friday afternoon at The Hive.



Please can we ask parents to label uniform as we always have a large amount of uniform in lost property that is unnamed.

PE – Hair and Earrings

Please can we remind families that all children who have shoulder length hair or longer, **must** tie it back for PE (both boys and girls).

The federation follows county and national health and safety protocol. Therefore, children must not wear earrings during PE.

If your child finds it difficult to remove earrings, we ask that they leave them at home on the day of PE/swimming.

All jewellery removed at school will need to be kept in your child's drawer (Infant School) or locker (Junior School). If your child wears a bracelet for religious or medical reasons, please note that a sweat band must be worn over the bracelet during PE.

Shirt for Art and Messy 'Stuff'!



We request that all children keep an old shirt in school for 'messy stuff' such as art. This needs to be large enough to go over your child's school uniform. It could be an adult size one; please do not go out and buy anything, just something old.

Healthy Snacks and Packed Lunches

As a federation we promote being healthy, but we recognise there is a time and a place for a treat such as birthday sweets, PTA Friday treats and Christmas Jingle.

In support of this, we ask that families follow us with our food policy which can be found on our website.

Infant School break time snack: your child will be provided with a piece of fruit or vegetable through a government scheme so you do not need to provide your child with a snack.

Junior School break time snack: please provide your child with a **piece of fruit/vegetable, or plain biscuit.**



Packed lunches: thank you for your efforts in reducing the amount of plastic packaging in your child's lunchbox. It has been amazing to see how many families have changed from single use plastic to containers.

Please continue to support us in reducing plastic in lunchboxes



At Barksbury, we know how important a nutritious and delicious lunch is for our children, and we are delighted to continue working with **Dolce** to provide high-quality meals for the 3rd year. Their lunches are made with ethically sourced ingredients, prepared with care, and designed to offer a satisfying meal every day.

Dolce work hard to keep prices as low as possible to support families, but due to increases in food costs, national insurance, and utilities, a small price adjustment will be necessary.

From September 2025, the price for a two-course school meal will be £3.00.

Dolce has done everything possible to keep this price as affordable as they can while ensuring the same great quality and choice remain in place.

If you are a new parent, please ask either admin office for support.

Infant School Dinners

If your child is in the infant school, they will receive a Universal Free School Meal. This is paid for by a government grant, which is paid to the school based on the number of meals ordered on a daily basis.

Please can you **support us** and ensure that you order your child's dinner on School Grid; this can be done ahead of time for as many days in advance as you wish. If your child comes into school but has not ordered, and Dolce feeds them a lunch, the school **does not** receive the grant and instead is charged for every meal not ordered.

Junior School Dinners

If your child has a hot lunch, the cost of the dinner from September will be £3:00. Please note that if you order and your child does not have the lunch due to being ill or brings a packed lunch in, then you will be charged, so please **ensure** that you cancel the lunch on School Grid.

Junior School Free School Dinners for Eligible Families

Free School Meals are paid for by a government grant, which is paid to the school based on the number of meals ordered on a daily basis.

Please can you **support us** and ensure that you order your child's dinner on School Grid; this can be done ahead of time for as many days in advance as you wish. If your child comes into school but has not ordered, and Dolce feeds them a lunch, the school **does not** receive the grant and instead is charged for every meal not ordered.



Barksbury Federation Dolce Cook
Emily Penn.

Communication

Here at Balksbury Federation, we believe clear and regular communication between the federation and our families is essential. When we stay in touch and share information, we can better support each child's learning and wellbeing. Working together helps us all make informed decisions about our children, whether it's through meetings, newsletters, or quick chats.

Sadly, there are occasions when a small minority of family members are directing unacceptable behaviour towards staff within our federation. This has included: aggression and swearing down the phone or face to face, the use of WhatsApp groups to criticise staff, and the sending of hostile or abusive emails.

Such actions can have a significant impact on staff wellbeing, and the wider school community. As a federation, we are committed to fostering a respectful and supportive environment for all. Therefore, from September, we will be displaying the poster below as a reminder of our shared values. Any incidents involving aggressive or abusive communication will be formally investigated by the Executive Headteacher or the Governing Body, and all staff will cease communication with any individuals that cannot conduct themselves in a calm manner.



Means of Communication	When	Reason	Our Response Time
Visit either the Infant or Junior Office Reception	Monday and Friday 8:30am - 3:30pm Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 8:30am – 4:15pm	For example: Drop off medicine you would like administered during the day; deliver a forgotten PE kit; collect an absence request form; drop off a child after registration closes. You can use the Office Reception to request paper copies of documents from our website.	Same day
Phone Office Infant: 01264 352801 Junior: 01264 365642	Monday to Thursday 8:30am – 4:20pm Friday 8:30am– 3:45pm	For example: Request a meeting or telephone conversation with a staff member (e.g. you need to discuss some news about your child that may affect their school day, or you are concerned about your child's school day). You can leave a brief answer phone message when admin staff are away from their desk.	Same day
Email via @adminoffice (see our website for email addresses)	Anytime	For example: Request a meeting or telephone conversation with a staff member (e.g. you need to discuss some news about your child that may affect their school day, or you are concerned about your child's school day). You can also use this email for notifying or updating information that you feel that school needs to know. Email can also be used to share good news that you wish to be passed on.	Email checked daily. Response within 2 school working days.
SchoolApp	As we send out	For example: You can read up to date information, alerts and emergency messages. You will also receive your newsletters through the SchoolApp with a link.	N/A
Across the Playground (fortnightly newsletter)	Every Two Weeks	For example: Every two weeks, the federation's newsletter will be sent out electronically via the SchoolApp. This includes, key messages, classroom news, diary dates etc.	N/A
Website	Anytime	For example: Looking at federated calendar, looking at your child's year group page or finding information about federated school life within both Infant and Junior School.	N/A
Reading Diaries	Anytime	For example: Mini posters or flyers for events or reminders	N/A

Some of the things you have shared and said...

'I would like to say how impressed we are with Balksbury. Our son has come out of school smiling every day which is a real test'

'Thank you to everyone at Balksbury for making our daughter's education so inspiring'

'The whole team always go above and beyond'

'I genuinely cannot express how much it means to me on what you all do, the team work tirelessly for these children'

'A massive congratulations to you all for your Ofsted report; it comes as no surprise'

'Thank you for all you do for my daughter. She values all that her teacher does for her and talks excitedly about what has happened at school'



Date for your diary: Monday 22nd September 3:15pm – 4:15pm

Open classroom door to meet your child's new teacher