



Balksbury Federation

Across the Playground

Friday 25th September

A Message from Mrs Whitlock

Autumn is one of my favourite times of the year. As the colours in nature begin to change, we also enter a season of growth, opportunity and new beginnings. It is always exciting to see children embracing new experiences, developing new skills and taking their next steps in learning.

As we settle into the academic year, I have been delighted to see our federated values of Perseverance, Respect and Collaboration shining through every day. Our children have approached new classes, routines and challenges with enthusiasm and determination, and it has been wonderful to watch their confidence grow.

We know that every child settles at their own pace, and our dedicated staff team is here to provide encouragement, support and care whenever it is needed. By working together, we can ensure that every child feels valued, happy and ready to succeed.

Thank you for your continued partnership and for helping to nurture these important values at home. Together, we are building a strong, caring community where every child is supported to thrive, achieve their potential and enjoy their journey through the federation.

Harvest Festival

What an incredible achievement! Thanks to the kindness and generosity of our community, we collected a fantastic **275.93kg of food** for the Andover Foodbank.

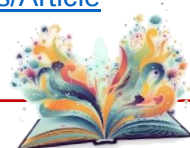
The children had the opportunity to hear from representatives of the foodbank during a special assembly, where they learned about the vital role the organisation plays in supporting people across the local community. We are incredibly proud of everyone who contributed to this wonderful effort.



Library of the Year Award

We are hugely proud and excited to announce that the federation has been shortlisted to the final four schools for the Peter Usbourne School Library of the Year Award! The shortlist was announced this week and more information can be found about the award by clicking the link below:

<https://www.sla.org.uk/Public/News/Article/s/2026/2026-SLA-Awards.aspx>



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Clubs

Next week sees the return of clubs to the federation. We are looking forward to seeing the children enjoy the huge range of activities from basketball to guitar and everything in between. Please remember to notify either admin team if your child cannot attend their club.

Dolce Special Lunch

We are excited to share with you Dolce's next themed lunch. On **Thursday 1st October**, Dolce will be cooking up a delicious Space Day themed Lunch. You can order this via SchoolGrid.



Homework Club

Homework club will be up and running W/C 5th October and will be open to children (and families) who would like support with homework.

If you would like to understand more about the strategies your child is being taught at school, we are always happy to show you so that you are able to support at home.

This year, Homework Club will run out of Kingfisher (Year 2) Classroom on a Tuesday from 3:15pm to 4:15pm.

Children and families do not need to sign up and can drop in.



Parking



We would like to ask for your continued support in helping us to be considerate neighbours within our local community, particularly at busy drop-off and collection times across our federation.

When travelling to and from our schools, please:

- Do not park in residents-only parking areas or anywhere that may block access to homes, driveways or roads.
- Park safely and considerately, ensuring that children, pedestrians and other road users can move around safely.
- Take extra care when driving and manoeuvring through the residential streets surrounding our schools, where there can be high numbers of children and families walking.
- Where possible, make use of our morning Park and Stride options, helping to reduce congestion immediately around our school sites.

We thank you for your continued support.

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Walktober 2026

Travelling actively and sustainably can make a difference to our wellbeing, our community and our planet. It helps us stay healthy, reduces traffic around our school and lowers air pollution.

That's why our school is taking part in Walktober and encouraging children, families and staff to walk, wheel, cycle, scoot, use Park and Stride or travel by public transport more often.

How do I take part?

- Have a go at walking, wheeling, cycling, scooting, using our morning Park and Stride sites or travelling by public transport
- Children also have the chance to take part in the **Top Tips, More Trips competition**.
- The school with the highest number of Walktober entries has the chance to **win books, nature themed games, outdoor exploration kits, vouchers and other great prizes!**
- Entry forms can be collected from your child's class teacher and all the information you need on submitting an entry can be found on our letters page on our website: <https://balksburyfederation.co.uk/letters/>



How can I travel to school sustainably?

Park and stride from one of our morning Park and Stride sites at the Anton Arms or Chesnut Tree pubs. More information can be found here: <https://balksburyfederation.co.uk/links-and-information/>



Wheel, Scoot or Walk! We have two bike sheds at the federation (one at the Infant School car park and one on the Junior School playground. We also have additional scooter storage at the Infant School bike shed. Both sheds can be used by children regardless of their year group.

Check out public transport options. My Journey Hampshire is a great resource which allows families to plan their journeys to and from school using public transport. Click the link below to get started:

[Home | My Journey Hampshire](#)



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Classroom News



Across the Playground

Year R

Can you believe the children are already almost halfway through their very first half term at school? We are incredibly proud of how well they have settled into life at the federation and how confidently they have embraced new routines and experiences. The children have made a fantastic start to their phonics journey. They have fully immersed themselves in learning new phonemes and have shown great enthusiasm when taking part in activities designed to embed their phonics knowledge. They are developing their ability to hear the initial sounds in words and are becoming increasingly confident in matching these sounds to the correct letters. We are delighted with their eagerness to learn, their positive attitudes, and the wonderful progress they are already making. We look forward to supporting them as they continue to grow in confidence and develop as enthusiastic young learners.



Year 3

We are incredibly proud of how well our Year 3 children have transitioned into the Junior School. They have settled quickly into their new environment and routines, demonstrating independence, enthusiasm, and all the qualities of fantastic Barksbury Citizens.

We have started the year with an exciting exploration of koala habitats using our VR headsets, which provided a wonderful immersive learning experience. Inspired by this, the children developed rich vocabulary that they then used to write sentences and questions linked to our class text, *The Koala Who Could* by Rachel Bright.

In Music, we have been exploring bells and the unique sounds they can produce. The children listened carefully to identify different pitches and then followed musical notes to play *Happy Birthday*. They did a fantastic job, and it sounded brilliant!

It has been a wonderful start to the year, and we are excited to see the children continue to grow in confidence and enthusiasm as their learning journey progresses.

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Classroom News

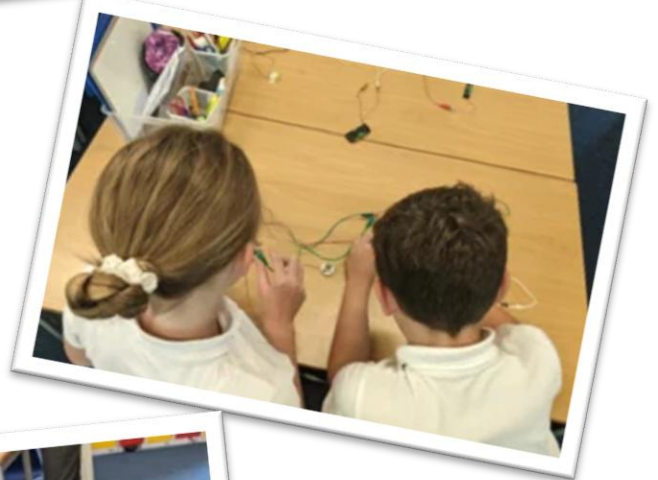
Across the Playground

Year 6

Year 6 have made a fantastic start to the academic year and have quickly embraced the responsibilities of being the oldest children in the federation. They have settled brilliantly into their new routines and are setting an excellent example for younger year groups through their positive attitudes, maturity and dedication to learning.

This term, the children have enjoyed an enriching visit from OpenBox Theatre Company, which brought their World War Two learning to life through an engaging and interactive experience. In Music, they have been exploring baroque music, developing their understanding of this influential period and listening critically to a range of compositions.

We are incredibly proud of the enthusiasm, resilience and leadership qualities that Year 6 have already demonstrated. We look forward to seeing them continue to flourish and make the most of the exciting opportunities ahead this year.



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The Reading Corner

Focus Bookshelves

We all belong

At Balksbury Federation, we celebrate diversity and take pride in what makes each of us unique. Through our curriculum, assemblies, and learning environments, children develop an understanding of the importance of valuing and respecting differences. We encourage children to celebrate their own identities while appreciating those of others. To support this learning, we provide a wide range of books and resources that explore diversity, inclusion, and belonging.



Recommended Reads

Hudson and Millie in Year 2 spent **Free Reading Friday** getting stuck into *Gozzle* by Julia Donaldson. Millie found the book 'very funny', while Hudson thought it was 'really cute'. Thinking of his younger sister, Hudson decided it would be a great read for younger children too, so he gives it a big recommendation for Year R.



Author Spotlight

Tom Fletcher is best known as the lead singer of the band McFly, but he is also a hugely successful children's author. Since publishing his first children's book in 2013, he has captured the imaginations of young readers with his humour, creativity and engaging storytelling. His popularity soared during the Covid lockdowns when he shared regular online bedtime stories with families across the country. Children particularly enjoy his laugh-out-loud *The Dinosaur That Pooped...* series, while his more recent books have introduced readers to exciting mystery and adventure stories. With his warm sense of humour and entertaining characters, Tom Fletcher's books continue to be a favourite with children of all ages.



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ESafety

Social media and online abuse



Between April 2025 and March 2026, **900** Childline counselling sessions involved children talking about the abuse they had suffered online.

Each of the 900 sessions mentioned a social media platform where the online abuse took place.

The top 5 social media platforms and the number of counselling sessions they were mentioned in, were:

Platform	Number of sessions
Snapchat	324
TikTok	234
Instagram	197
Discord	92
WhatsApp	39

In most of these incidents, the online abuse began with the sharing of one semi-nude or nude image.



Social media ban in the UK

On 15 June 2026, the UK government announced that major social media platforms will be banned from providing accounts to people under the age of 16. The new law is expected to come into force in spring 2027.



What are the risks?

Exposure to inappropriate content

Children can be exposed to harmful material through group chats, disappearing messages, and peer pressure. Social media algorithms can also add to this risk by suggesting content based on what users engage with.



Unwanted contact from strangers

Children may encounter people online they don't know. Unsolicited messages, friend requests, or group invites can lead to uncomfortable



Distorted body image and unrealistic standards

Filters and editing tools often present an idealised version of reality. This can lead children to compare themselves unfairly, which can affect their self-esteem and body image.



Pressure of likes and comments

Online engagement – likes, shares, and comments – can feel like a measure of self-worth. Children may feel defined by their popularity online, leading to anxiety and a need for validation.



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How can I keep my child safe online?

Set Privacy settings

Set your child's account to private. Use privacy controls to limit who can send friend requests, send messages or comment on posts



Encourage safe sharing

Teach your child to ask "Would I send this to my family?". If the answer is no, then don't share it online. Even via private messages, as it can still be passed on.



Keep information private

Remind your child that personal information like their address must never be shared



Manage daily screen time

Set how long your child can spend on each app. Cutting back on digital distractions can improve sleep, boost focus, and reduce stress.



Turn off location sharing

Turn off location sharing on each app, so that your child's location cannot be tracked by strangers



Encourage positive experiences

Help children question what they see online and focus on positive body image. Encourage them to understand that their worth isn't measured by likes or followers, but by who they are offline.



Talk to your child

Have regular conversations with your child about what they are seeing and experiencing online. Ask who they're talking to, what apps or games they're using, and how different experiences make them feel



Block and report

Show your child how to block and report harmful content



Talk about what to do if something worries or upsets them and remind them that they can always come to you for help. These conversations help children feel supported and more confident in recognising and reporting anything unsafe

Check age ratings

At the moment, most social media platforms are 13+. However, it is expected that from spring 2027, it will be 16+



If you are worried about what your child is doing online or need further advice, please speak to one of our DSLs who will be able to help you.



Or find further tips and advice covering a wide range of themes on our website

<https://balksburyfederation.co.uk/esafety/>

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CSL Messages



Reporting your Child Absence

Here at Barksbury Federation we strive to support our families, and you are able to log your child's absence in two ways.

1 - Leave a message on the absence line before the start of the school day.

2 - The Arbor App. – You can record your child's absence on a daily basis if due to illness. Any other absence will still require a medical or Request for Absence Form to be completed.

Both forms can be found either on our website or requested at either admin office.

Instructions for the Arbor App

Once opening the Arbor app and you are on the home page, click on the 3 lines at the bottom of the screen

Fill in the time that your child will be absent and the reason for absence. If your child is unwell, please ensure you state what symptoms they have. Then click 'Log absence'

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House Points and Tokens



House Points

The house with the most points across the Federation to date is: Sidbury.



Tokens - Infants

The class with the most tokens in the Infant School to date is: Merlin Class.



Tokens - Juniors

The class with the most tokens in the Junior School to date is: Willow Class.



PTA Message



CAN YOU HELP YOUR PTA?

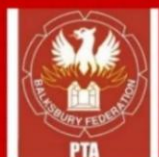
As a small team, we are always on the lookout for new volunteers to join us in raising funds for our schools. This could be by helping us at treat sales, helping with the ACE food donations or helping to source raffle prizes.

We also have our uniform swap shop which always needs a bit of support! Meeting attendance is optional and we really appreciate any time you can donate!

ACE food donations / Treat sales / Uniform swaps and sales all take place on Fridays at the hive. 3pm - 3.30pm.

**If you are interested in lending a hand,
please pop an email to
balksburypta@balksbury.org**

THANK YOU!



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Achievements from Outside of School

We would like to say a huge congratulations to Harvey from year 6. Last weekend Harvey passed his brown belt in karate. He has worked so hard over the last two years juggling karate and football each weekend. Harvey has been dedicated and determined to achieve his goal. We are all very proud of your amazing achievement.



In the Community



**Starting school
in September
2027**

If your child is 4 or
will turn 4 before
1 September 2027,
they can start school
in September 2027

Applications open for
Hampshire residents on
1 November 2026

THE NATIONAL CLOSING
DATE FOR APPLICATIONS IS
FRIDAY 15 JANUARY 2027
DON'T MISS IT!

**For more information go to
www.hants.gov.uk/admissions**

 Hampshire
County Council

 **BEST
START
IN LIFE**

hants.gov.uk

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Diary Dates

September 2026

Tuesday 29 th September 2026	Tours for Year R 2027-2028
Wednesday 30 th September 2026	Tours for Year R 2027-2028
Wednesday 30 th September – Friday 2 nd October 2026	Year 4 Ufton Court Residential Trip

October 2026

Thursday 1 st October 2026	Tours for Year R 2027-2028
Wednesday 7 th October 2026	Year 6 Height and Weight
Monday 26 th October – Friday 30 th October 2026	Half Term

November 2026

Tuesday 3 rd November 2026	Openbox – Year 5 Egyptians
Wednesday 4 th November 2026	Tour for Year 3 2027-2028
Thursday 5 th November 2026	Tour for Year 3 2027-2028
Thursday 5 th November 2026	Fraser Portraits Individual Photos
Monday 9 th November – Friday 13 th November 2026	No After School Clubs (Pick Club will run as normal)
Monday 9 th November 2026	Year R- Height, Weight & Vision Screening
Monday 9 th November 2026	Parents' Evening 3:30-6:30
Wednesday 11 th November 2026	Parents' Evening 3:30-6:30
Thursday 12 th November 2026	Openbox – Year 3 Early Man
Thursday 12 th November 2026	Year 5 Winchester Science Museum Trip
Friday 20 th November 2026	Jingle Dress Down Day
Friday 20 th November 2026	Year 1 Tree Planting
Monday 23 rd November 2026	Year 4 Tree Planting
Friday 27 th November 2026	The Christmas Jingle

December 2026

Wednesday 9 th December 2026	Year R Nativity
Thursday 10 th December 2026	Year R Nativity
Tuesday 15 th December 2026	Christmas Jumper & Lunch Day

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Wednesday 16 th December 2026	Openbox Pantomime
Thursday 17 th December 2026	Christmas Disco Day
Friday 18 th December 2026	Children's Last Day of School before Christmas
<i>January 2027</i>	
Monday 4 th January 2027	Children Back to School
<i>February 2027</i>	
Friday 5 th February 2027	Anti-Bullying Day
Monday 8 th February – Friday 12 th February 2027	Year 6 Fairthorne Manor Residential Trip
Monday 15 th February – Friday 19 th February 2027	Half Term
Monday 22 nd February 2027	INSET Day
<i>March 2027</i>	
Wednesday 10 th March 2027	Year 1 Army Flying Museum Trip
Tuesday 23 rd March 2027	Year 1 Production 1:30pm to 3:00pm
Wednesday 24 th March 2027	Year 1 Production 1:30pm to 3:00pm
Thursday 25 th March 2027	Children's Last Day for Easter
<i>April 2027</i>	
Monday 12 th April 2027	Children Back to School
Tuesday 20 th April 2027	Year 2 Titanic Trip
Friday 30 th April 2027	INSET Day
<i>May 2027</i>	
Monday	KS2 SATs Week
Monday 3 rd May 2027	KS2 SATs Week

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June 2027

Monday 1 st June – Friday 7 th June 2027	Half Term
Monday 7 th June – Friday 18 th June 2027	Year 4 Multiplication Test week
Monday 7 th June 2027	Openbox – Year R: Pirates
Tuesday 8 th June 2027	Openbox – Year 1: Moon Landing
Thursday 10 th June 2027	Fraser Portraits Class Photos
Thursday 10 th June 2027	New Year 3 Parent Transition Meeting
Monday 14 th June 2027	Phonics Screening Check Week
Friday 18 th June 2027	Sports Day and Family Picnic
Tuesday 29 th June 2027	Year 5 John Hanson Taster Morning

July 2027

Monday 5 th July – Friday 9 th July 2027	Music and Arts Week
Friday 9 th July 2027	Music and Arts Festival 2:00pm - 4:00pm
Monday 12 th July 2027	Balksbury's Got Talent
Tuesday 13 th July 2027	Year 2 Fun Day
Wednesday 14 th July 2027	Year 2 Graduation
Thursday 15 th July 2027	Year 6 Fun Day
Friday 16 th July 2027	Disco Day
Monday 19 th July 2027	Year 6 Graduation 9:15am – 10:00am
Monday 19 th July 2027	Children's Last Day of School
Tuesday 20 th July 2027	INSET Day
Wednesday 21 st July 2027	INSET Day

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