

Partnership Press

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In this Partnership Press, I would like to reflect on a theme often explored by our Reception children: ***"People Who Help Us."*** Now that I am nearly a year into my role, I have had the privilege of seeing first-hand the remarkable range of people who contribute to the success of our schools. From staff and governors to parents, volunteers, clergy, and the wider community, it is clear that our schools are strengthened by the commitment, care, and collaboration of many. This newsletter is an opportunity to recognise and celebrate those individuals and groups whose support helps ensure that our children receive the very best educational experience possible.



The Importance of Our Staff Teams

At the heart of each of our schools are the dedicated and hardworking staff teams who give tirelessly of their time, energy, and expertise to ensure that every child receives the very best school experience possible.

Across both schools, staff demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the children in their care. Whether in the classroom, leading interventions, supporting wellbeing, or organising wider opportunities, their focus is always on helping every pupil to thrive and succeed. Their professionalism, creativity, and willingness to go above and beyond are evident in all aspects of school life.

It is not only the quality of teaching that stands out, but also the care, encouragement, and positivity that staff bring each day. They build strong relationships with pupils and families, creating nurturing environments where children feel safe, valued, and inspired to learn.

We are deeply grateful for the dedication of our staff teams. Their collective effort, teamwork, and shared sense of purpose make a real and lasting difference to the lives of our children and the wider school community.

Parents, Carers, LSA, PTA and the Wider Community.

The success of our schools is built upon a strong partnership between staff, pupils, parents, and the wider community. The support we receive from families and local volunteers makes a significant and lasting difference to the experiences and outcomes of our children.

We are incredibly fortunate to benefit from a dedicated group of volunteers who generously give their time to support learning across both schools. Whether listening to readers, helping within classrooms, or supporting a range of activities such as Forest School, swimming, and school trips, their contribution enriches the curriculum and provides valuable opportunities for our pupils. These experiences would not be the same without their time, care, and commitment.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all parents and carers for their ongoing support. Your encouragement at home, your engagement with school life, and your willingness to work in partnership with us are vital. Equally, we value polite challenge and thoughtful reflection. Constructive dialogue helps us to continue improving and ensures that we are meeting the needs of our community as effectively as possible.

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Earlier this year, we conducted a parent survey. While the response rate was relatively low, this can in some ways be reassuring, suggesting a general sense of satisfaction. However, it is important that we hear a broad range of views, and developing stronger parent voice will be a key focus for the coming school year. In line with this, we are currently reviewing our communication policy, including the ways in which parents can communicate with staff. This work is being shaped by feedback from both the parent survey and our staff, with the aim of ensuring clarity, consistency, and accessibility for all.

Finally, we would like to recognise the tremendous efforts of both the Limsfield School Association and the Parent Teacher Association at St Mary's. These groups work tirelessly to provide what can best be described as the "icing on the cake" for our children, enhancing their school experience in meaningful and memorable ways. We are particularly grateful to both organisations for their recent support in providing air conditioning units for some of our warmer classrooms, helping to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for pupils and staff alike.

The Importance of Our Church Partnerships

Our close links with the churches connected to each school remain a valued and important part of our community. We are fortunate to work alongside wonderful clergy who contribute significantly to the life of our schools. Reverend Helen Cook at Limsfield and Reverend James Ashton from St Mary's play a central role in leading worship, helping to create meaningful opportunities for reflection and shared values across the school community. Their presence enriches the spiritual life of the schools and provides a strong sense of continuity between school and church.

Beyond this, both Reverend Cook and Reverend Ashton offer ongoing support to staff, pupils, and families. Their care, guidance, and accessibility are greatly appreciated by all. In addition, as governors, they provide excellent service, offering both support and challenge while helping to ensure that the schools remain true to their vision and values.

We are very grateful for their dedication and the positive impact they continue to have across both of our school communities.

Governors

Our Governing Bodies play an essential role in ensuring that our schools continue to thrive, not only in day-to-day operations but, most importantly, at a strategic level. Governors work alongside school leaders to set the long-term vision, monitor progress, and ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of all pupils. Their oversight helps guarantee that we remain compliant with statutory requirements while maintaining high standards across all aspects of school life.

A particular strength of our governance structure is the way in which the respective governing bodies from both schools work collaboratively. They meet together for strategic partnership meetings, take part in shared training, and attend regular seminars where staff present on specific themes. This collaborative approach strengthens understanding, ensures consistency, and enables governors to remain well informed about key priorities and developments across both schools. This half term, governors benefited from an excellent training session from Anna Woodward on the statutory changes to the Sex and Relationship Education curriculum, further enhancing their knowledge and their ability to support and challenge effectively.

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Governors provide both support and challenge. This balance is crucial. Their thoughtful questioning and careful scrutiny help ensure that leaders remain focused, accountable, and forward-thinking. At the same time, their encouragement and understanding create a strong sense of partnership that benefits the whole school community.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the hardworking governors from both schools. Over the past year, they have shown unwavering commitment, offering support when needed while also ensuring that appropriate challenge is in place to keep our schools running effectively. Their dedication, professionalism, and willingness to give their time so generously are greatly appreciated.

As always, we are keen to hear from anyone who may be interested in contributing to this important work. If you are a parent, carer, grandparent, or a member of the wider community and would like to find out more about joining the Governing Body, please do get in touch. Your involvement can make a real difference to the continued success of our schools.

New Look Ofsted

Ofsted inspections play an important role in helping both schools and parents understand how well a school is working. Through visits to the school, discussions with staff and pupils, and careful review of teaching and outcomes, Ofsted provides an independent view of what the school does well and where it can improve. Their reports are designed to give parents clear, reliable information about their child's education, while also supporting schools to continue developing and providing the best possible experience for all pupils.

In the past, schools were given a single overall grade such as Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate. This system has now been removed because one word was seen as too simplistic and did not always reflect the full strengths and priorities of a school.

Instead, Ofsted now uses a report card approach. Schools are assessed across a number of key areas, such as achievement, behaviour and attendance, teaching and curriculum, leadership, personal development and inclusion.

Each of these areas is graded separately using a new five-point scale:

- Exceptional
- Strong standard
- Expected standard
- Needs attention
- Urgent improvement

Safeguarding remains a priority and is reported separately as either "met" or "not met."

This means that, rather than relying on a single overall judgement, parents now receive a broader and more balanced view of a school. For example, a school may be strong in teaching and achievement, while still

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developing other areas such as attendance or wellbeing. Another important point is that the new grades are part of a completely different system, so they cannot be directly compared with previous Ofsted judgements.

Overall, these changes aim to provide clearer information, celebrate strengths, and identify areas for improvement more precisely. The focus remains the same: ensuring that all children receive a high-quality education in a safe and supportive environment.

A Prayer of Thanksgiving for Our Partnership

Loving God,

We give you thanks for our partnership of schools,
for the gift of learning, friendship, and growth.

We thank you for every person who helps us each day -
staff, volunteers, governors, families, and friends -
all who give their time, care, and encouragement so generously.

We thank you for the ways your love is made visible among us.

At Lingsfield, we see Peace in the kindness we show,
Joy in the laughter we share,
and Love in the care we give to one another.

At St Mary's, we see confidence growing in each child,
Belonging in the welcome and acceptance of all,
and courage as we are Challenged to contribute
and to make a difference in the world.

May these values not only be words we speak,
but actions we live out each day.
Help us to notice the quiet acts of service,
the helping hands, the listening hearts,
and the moments of generosity that build our community.

Bless all who support our schools.
Strengthen us to work together in unity and purpose,
so that every child may flourish,
and every member of our community may feel valued and loved.

Guide us always in your ways of Peace, Joy, and Love.
Help us to belong together,
to grow in confidence,
and to contribute with open and willing hearts.

Amen.

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Why Attendance Matters

- Every school day provides important learning, social development, and routine.
- Missing school, even occasionally, can affect progress and confidence.
- Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to make sure their child attends school regularly and punctually.
- Our shared aim is to help every child benefit from the full school experience.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Some absences are unavoidable, such as illness or medical appointments. These may be authorised if the school is informed appropriately. Absences that are not considered reasonable, such as holidays in term time, shopping trips, late mornings, or days off for birthdays, will be recorded as unauthorised. The Headteacher is the only person who can authorise an absence.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Government legislation states that Headteachers may only approve term-time leave in exceptional circumstances. These situations are very rare. Holidays are not considered exceptional and will be unauthorised. **When leave is taken without authorisation, this may lead to a Penalty Notice.**



Penalty Notices

From after the Easter break, the updated national regulations around Penalty Notices will be fully in place. These regulations apply to all schools and all families.

A Penalty Notice may be issued when:

- A child has 10 or more unauthorised sessions (5 school days) within the previous 10 school weeks
- A family takes unauthorised term-time leave (including holidays), totalling 10 sessions or more
- A child is persistently late after the register closes
- A child is found to be absent without good reason during a truancy patrol

National Penalty Notice Amounts (from August 2024)

- **£160 per parent per child if paid within 28 days**
- **Reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days** (only if no previous Penalty Notice has been issued for that child since 19 August 2024)

If a parent has already received a Penalty Notice for the same child since 19 August 2024, the charge will be **£160 with no reduced rate.**

If two Penalty Notices have already been issued for the child, the Local Authority is required to consider prosecution instead of issuing a third notice.

How we will work with you...

Our approach is always supportive. We monitor attendance closely and intervene early to help families overcome any barriers to regular attendance. This may include:

- Conversations with your child's class teacher
- Meetings with school leaders
- Support with routines, wellbeing, or anxiety
- Partnership work with the Local Authority when needed

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Dates for 2026 / 2027 Academic Year



Key Dates for next academic year (2026-2027):

Autumn Term (2026):	
Tuesday 1 st September 2026	INSET Day – No children in school
Wednesday 2 nd September.	All Children in School (<i>Reception Children start dates TBC</i>)
Friday 16 th October	Last day of Autumn 1 (2-week half term)
Monday 2 nd November	First day of Autumn 2 – all children back to school
Friday 18 th December	Last Day of Autumn 2 / Break Up for Christmas
Spring Term (2027):	
Monday 4 th January	First day of Spring Term – all children back to school
Friday 13 th February	Last day of Spring 1 (1-week half term)
Monday 22 nd February	First day of Spring 2 – all children back to school
Thursday 25 th March 2027	Last Day of Spring 2 / Break Up for Easter
Summer Term (2027):	
Monday 12 th April	First day of Summer Term – all children back to school
Friday 28 th May	Last day of Summer 1 (1-week half term)
Monday 7 th June	First day of Summer 2 – all children back to school
Friday 23 rd July	Last Day of Summer 2 / Break Up for Christmas

Important Notice:

Surrey County Council has confirmed that, from 2027, the Autumn Term half term holiday will return to a one-week break. Please note that, for the 2026 Autumn Term, arrangements will remain unchanged and there will still be a two-week half term as previously planned. As a voluntary aided school, we are obliged to follow the term dates set by Surrey, and will therefore adopt this change from 2027 onward.