

# Abacus Primary School



# Newsletter 552 20/12/24



I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a wonderful Christmas. Enjoy your family time and we look forward to seeing all the children back on Monday 6th January 2025.

A huge thank you and well done to our amazing kitchen

team for all their efforts in preparing our Christmas dinner this week. Over 450 meals were served and enjoyed by staff and children. Thank you also to the office team for coordinating the numbers and decorating the school hall.



**After Christmas, we will be on WEEK 3 of our menu.**





As we come to the end of our first term of this academic year we wish Mrs Cooksey well as she begins her maternity leave today.

Miss South will be moving into a teaching role in White class from January and Mrs Sartoris will be moving into a class LSA role in Black Class. We also welcome Miss Dyer to our support staff team.

Following the exciting news last week that Mrs Craske has given birth. I am delighted to share with you a photo of Mila Craske.



## Our Young Leader's visited Silvanna Court



Today, our Young Leader's visited Silvanna Court to spread some Christmas cheer by delivering some gifts and a cheque for £100.00 towards their wellbeing funds. Thank you to everyone who bought a raffle ticket which enabled us to pass on this gift.





Well done to Abachorus for their amazing singing on Tuesday morning for St Luke's Hospice. Thank you for Mrs Mugford and Miss Waters for all their efforts in preparing the group for their performance. Thanks also to the members of our school community who came along to watch and support them.

# CHRISTMAS Breakfast



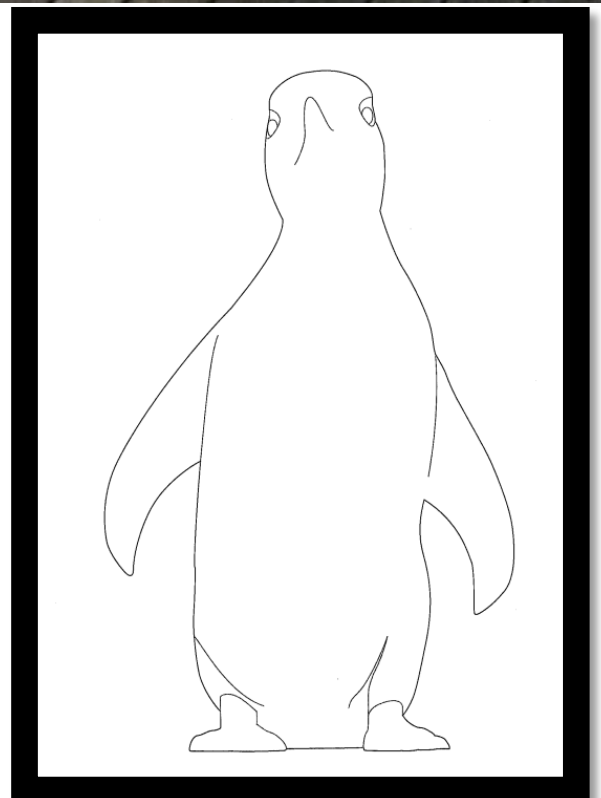
Thank you to our Foundation Stage team for organising the Family Christmas Breakfast on Wednesday morning.



# Waddle ON-SEA

After the success of Elizabeth for Herd in the City, I am delighted to say that we have purchased a penguin to create as part of the Waddle on Sea trail.

School Council representatives have been talking to their classes and the work that the hospice does (which costs £7000 a day to run). We are inviting children to create a design which involves every child in school and captures the 'definition of love' which the hospice creates. The design should reflect Abacus in some way. Designs need to be handed to Mrs Blakeley **by Friday 17th January 2025**. The templates for your designs can be printed off our website or collected from school reception. **Please ensure your full name and class are on the back of your design.**



# BREAK THE RULES DAY

The children have been counting down the days to Break the Rules day and they did not disappoint! It was great to see the children enjoying wearing their pyjamas, bringing their teddies to school and enjoying their dessert before their main course!

Thank you for all your donations

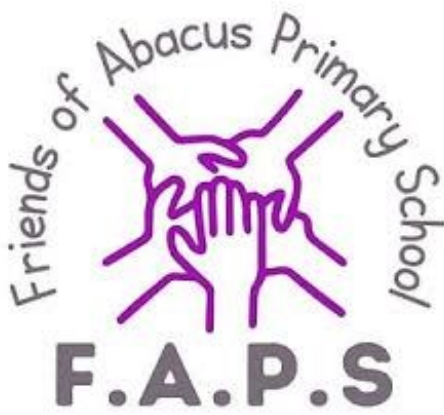
## LET'S CELEBRATE!



Lots to celebrate this week for Darcey, James, Jorgie, Leah and



Well Done



## Bingo Night – 25<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Join us for an evening of fun when Skittleman leads us through our Bingo Night!

This is an **adults-only event**, so organise a babysitter, and bring all your friends!

We'll be in the School's Large Hall - doors open at 6.45pm. Please arrive in advance of the start time of 7.30pm.

Tables will be set up for groups of 8-10, so you may be asked to sit with other people if your group is smaller than this. Please bring your own drinks and nibbles – nothing containing nuts, thanks.

There are very limited numbers of tickets, so please don't delay if you'd like to join the fun.

Tickets cost £10 and are available from [www.pta-events.co.uk/faps-abacus](http://www.pta-events.co.uk/faps-abacus)

This covers your first book of 7 games; more will be available to purchase on the night – please bring cash for this.

Any questions, please contact [faps@abacus.essex.sch.uk](mailto:faps@abacus.essex.sch.uk)



Thank you

From the Friends of Abacus Primary School Committee





# FAPS Fundraising 2024

A BIG Thank you for all the support of our Fundraising events of 2024

FAPS are pleased to report a fantastic £12,600 was raised this year!

Some of the funds have been used or are earmarked for activities and projects such as;

- £500 to school for teachers to spend on class resources
- A new lighting and sound system is being purchased for the hall
- An upcoming Christmas surprise for the children
- Funding of an upcoming project

Fancy getting involved? Committee members or general volunteers would be most welcome. Please email [FAPS@abacus.essex.sch.uk](mailto:FAPS@abacus.essex.sch.uk)

# YOUR SCHOOL NEEDS YOU



Would you like the opportunity to speak about how your child's school can improve inclusion for it's neurodivergent pupils?

Join us at a 'cuppa and chat' hosted by Essex Family Forum as part of the PINS project.

(find out more [HERE](#))

Your school are committed to working with EFF to hear your voice and want you to speak openly with EFF about how the school can improve.



**The next meeting is-**

Wednesday 15th January 2025 at 9am

# 10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

## SAFETY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Currently, children are growing up in an immediate and throwaway culture when it comes to content that's consumed online. So much material is now deliberately created to be shorter in nature – and may often contain hidden elements such as advertising, or extreme political and cultural views. With complex algorithms built to keep people on their phones and engaging with social media content, it's becoming increasingly difficult to reduce time spent on these platforms.

### 1 REDUCE DOOMSCROLLING

It's concerning how common for young people to spend hours 'doomscrolling': trawling through social media and aimlessly viewing every post they see, many of which might make them feel sad or anxious. Social media can be useful for keeping in touch with friends and family, as well as staying up to date on current events. However, it's important to use it with a clear purpose, instead of endlessly scrolling through content, which could lead to young people accidentally discovering harmful material.

### 2 TALK ABOUT THE CONTENT

It's important to keep apprised of the kind of content that a young person is being exposed to. Discussing what they're watching online can help you understand why they're using social media in the first place. Furthermore, ensure that children are aware of hidden content, such as advertising of a product – and that they know how to spot that the creator is being paid to talk about it.

### 3 FIND POSITIVE ASPECTS

Despite all the concerns, there's plenty of wholesome content on social media. It's worth spending time with children to help them find something suitable and enjoyable. Perhaps you'll even discover a joint interest, and you can enjoy the content alongside the child. As part of this, you should also point out why certain things shouldn't be given attention, explaining why it isn't suitable and why it's been created in the first place.

### 4 REDUCE SCREENTIME

Young people can sometimes be unaware of the exact amount of time they spend looking at social media. Smart phones don't just have the capacity to monitor screentime; they also record how much time is spent on each app. Consider setting targets to reduce this and support children to meet these goals, gradually reducing the amount of time spent on different apps.

### 5 FILL THE VOID

Monitoring and reducing screentime can create a lot of free time to fill, and young people can even face withdrawal symptoms when made to step away from their phones. To mitigate this, consider what offline activities you could introduce the child to, and what they would enjoy. This can ensure that young users will permanently cut down on their screentime, rather than temporarily doing so while they know it's being monitored.

### 6 REDUCE NOTIFICATIONS

One way in which social media platforms keep people coming back is through notifications. The algorithms behind these apps track people's daily habits, including the times of the day where they're most likely to engage with the platform. This data is then used to deliver specifically timed notifications to draw them back in. To avoid young users being exposed to this tactic, simply turn off notifications for the app in their phone's settings.

### 7 LIVE IN THE REAL WORLD

Overexposure to social media can distort someone's perception of the real world – from body norms to social conventions. This filtered environment can make it hard for young people to distinguish reality from online content, which is now becoming even more difficult with the rise of AI. To mitigate this concern, take time to teach young people how to discern truth from fiction, both on and off social media.

### 8 DIGITAL DETOX

Encouraging young people to take a 'digital detox', from even just a couple of the apps that they use, can result in an overall reduction of screentime and less exposure to potentially harmful content. Alternatively, rather than avoiding the app entirely, encourage children to take a 'digital detox' from content creators and influencers, and instead, keep in touch with friends and family – which is generally a far healthier use of these platforms.

### 9 MODEL GOOD BEHAVIOUR

Consider the habits that you're demonstrating to your children. How much time do you spend on your phone? How much do you 'doomscroll'? Comparing your own usage with the child's could put things into perspective for them – or if it turns out that you're also overusing social media, it can turn screentime reduction into a joint mission, which you and the child can work on together.

### 10 BE CLEAR ON THE "WHY"

Research shows that young people can become addicted to social media. There are many schools that are moving towards being 'phone free' due to the negative impacts of using social media and phones continuously. It's important to explain to young people why managing screentime is important. Set out the benefits and ensure they have all the relevant information, so it's not just seen as a punishment.

### Meet Our Expert

John Insley is a senior leader in a Birmingham secondary school and has vast experience in leading schools over the past 15 years – including the development of computing curricula across primary and secondary schools, writing e-safety policies and supporting schools with computing and e-safety advice.



#WakeUpWednesday®

The National College®

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/top-tips-for-safety-on-social-media>

Below is a Focus on supporting Neurodivergent children  
over the Festive Period

## Neurodivergent Christmas

### Tips



Christmas can be tricky  
for neurodivergent people...

Social



Sensory



Routine changes



## What can help?

Opening presents in a  
quiet or private space



or reducing expectations for 'appropriate' reactions and facial expressions

Reducing the sensory  
environment



or using sensory aids like headphones and sunglasses

Eating preferred or  
safe foods



Discussing or deciding on  
gifts in advance



## What can help?

Having access to a quiet,  
separate space



and the ability to leave the setting  
without judgement

Keeping some parts of the  
routine the same

Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Night

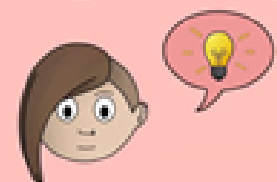
and discussing parts of the routine  
that will change

Wearing comfortable and  
preferred clothing



and reducing expectations of Christmas  
jumpers and clothing

Asking us what will help



For More  
Information



<https://family-action.org.uk/self-help/supporting-neurodivergent-children-at-christmas/>

<https://sunshine-support.org/being-a-neurodiverse-family-at-christmas/>

<https://www.sensorydirect.com/blog/10-tips-for-supporting-neurodivergent-children-at-christmas/#:~:text=child's%20unique%20needs,-Routine,situation%20and%20therefore%20less%20anxious.>

<https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk/development-additional-needs/neurodiversity/s-end-christmas/>

<https://www.facebook.com/people/AIs-Brain/100094968372747/>



# SEND Drop In Sessions



**An opportunity to speak to our Additional Needs Early Intervention Team For advice and support - no diagnosis is required.  
Suitable for families\* and professionals.**

**Sunnyside Family Hub Delivery Site  
Rosebay Avenue,  
Billericay  
CM12 0GH  
2nd Thursday of each month  
10:00 - 11:00**

**All About Family Hub Delivery Site  
James Hornsby High School,  
Leinster Road,  
Laindon  
SS15 5NX  
3rd Tuesday of each month  
10:00 -11:00**

**Highcliffe Family Hub Delivery Site  
Rettendon View,  
Wickford,  
SS11 8JE  
2nd Wednesday of each month  
10:00 - 11:30**

**Northlands Park Family Hub  
Davenants,  
Basildon,  
SS13 1QX  
1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month  
15:30-16:30**

**Fryerns Farm Family Hub Delivery Site,  
Greenshoots Building,  
Churchill Avenue, Basildon  
SS14 2EQ  
1st Thursday of each month  
9:30 - 10:30**

**Willows Family Hub Delivery Site,  
Riverside Primary School, Ferry Road,  
Hullbridge, Essex, SS5 6ND  
4th Thursday of the month  
10:00-11:00**

\*Children do not have to accompany parents/carers to the drop in

**For further information please call 0300 247 0013**

**Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service**