



*Loving to learn, Learning to love.
For every child a chance to shine*



LAYSTON C of E FIRST SCHOOL

The Causeway, Buntingford, Herts. SG9 9EU

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Head teacher: Mrs Adele McMurrough

9th October 2026

Dear Parents/Carers,

Spirituality:

Our Forest School sessions last week were full of opportunities for wonder, creativity and connection. Children crafted with conkers, made bows and arrows from hazel branches, and planted spring bulbs beneath the birch tree, imagining the beautiful display they will create together next year. There were also plenty of moments that tested resilience, from conker-crafting disasters to a Reception child bravely walking to the log circle in a white sock after losing a welly boot in the trampoline!

These shared experiences remind us that community is about growing, learning and supporting one another. Through time spent outdoors, children develop a sense of belonging, appreciation for God's creation and an understanding that even small actions can make a lasting difference to our school community.



Teaching and Learning at Layston

It has been a real pleasure to drop into phonics sessions across the school over recent weeks and see the consistency in practice that is helping our children to thrive. Staff are making excellent use of Read Write Inc. language and signals, providing children with familiar routines that support confidence and engagement.

It has also been wonderful to see the clear lesson structures, shared learning objectives and well-established classroom routines in action. This consistency means that children know what to expect, can focus on their learning and make the most of every lesson. We are proud of the high-quality teaching taking place across the school and the dedication of staff in ensuring all children have the best possible start to their reading journey.

Ofsted next steps actions:

As a school, we are always reflecting on how we can make learning even better for every child. This year, our improvement work is focused on four key areas that will help all pupils flourish and achieve their full potential.

- **Providing greater challenge in Early Years**

We want our youngest children to be curious, confident learners who are encouraged to think deeply and explain their ideas. To support this, staff are developing opportunities for problem-solving, ambitious vocabulary and high-quality discussions through both play and adult-led learning. We are also reviewing our learning environments to ensure they provide the right level of challenge for all children.

- **Using assessment to support learning more effectively**

Assessment is not just about tests; it is about understanding what children know and what they need to learn next. We are strengthening our assessment systems and staff training so that teachers can identify misconceptions quickly, adapt lessons and provide the right support or challenge at the right time.

- **Developing independence and higher expectations for pupils with the highest needs**

We are committed to ensuring that all children can access the curriculum and achieve success. Our focus this year is on helping pupils with additional needs become increasingly independent learners. Staff are using carefully planned support, scaffolds and strategies that encourage pupils to take ownership of their learning whilst maintaining high expectations for achievement.



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- **Closing gaps in reading and writing**

Reading remains at the heart of everything we do, and we are continuing to prioritise both reading and writing across the school. Through regular assessment, targeted support, extra opportunities to read and write, and close monitoring of progress, we aim to ensure that any gaps are identified and addressed as quickly as possible.

We will continue to work with the English Hub and we look forward to sharing our progress with you throughout the year.

Staffing update:

I am delighted to share some staffing news with you. Following a successful recruitment process, we have appointed **Amy Day** as our Year 3 maternity cover teacher. Amy will join the Layston team when **Ms Wilcox** begins her maternity leave at the end of this term. Amy brings with her valuable experience and enthusiasm, and we are very pleased that she will be joining our school community. Over the coming weeks, she will spend time working closely with **Ms Wilcox**, **Mrs Kelly** and **Mrs Rolt**, our SENCO, to ensure a thorough handover takes place. This will help provide continuity for the children and ensure a smooth transition as the class moves into the spring term.

We recognise the importance of parents having the opportunity to meet the staff who work closely with their children, and we will therefore be arranging an opportunity for Year 3 parents and carers to meet Amy before she takes up her role. I am sure you will join me in welcoming Amy to Layston. We look forward to her becoming part of our team and supporting the continued success and wellbeing of our Year 3 pupils.

Reminders:

Scooters and Bikes

A gentle reminder that, for everyone's safety, children should **dismount from bikes and scooters as soon as they enter the school playground**. Bikes and scooters should be walked through the playground and then parked in the designated bike and scooter shed. Thank you for helping us keep our site safe for all children, families and staff at the start and end of the school day.

Reading at Home

Regular reading at home continues to be one of the most important ways you can support your child's learning. Whether your child is learning to read or already reading independently, spending time enjoying books together helps develop fluency, vocabulary and a love of reading. We would be grateful if parents could record reading in their child's reading record, adding a brief comment and signature each time. This helps teachers monitor reading habits and celebrate the wonderful support children receive at home.

Arriving on Time Matters

Thank you to the many families who consistently ensure their children arrive punctually each day. Arriving at school on time helps children settle calmly into their learning and start the day positively. When a child arrives late, it can be unsettling for them, disruptive for the class and means valuable learning time is missed. Children often need to catch up on activities later in the day, which can make them feel rushed and cause them to miss other learning opportunities. Please help us maximise every minute of learning by ensuring children arrive in good time for the start of the school day. Thank you for your continued support.





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Weather and Outdoor Clothing

As we move further into autumn and the weather becomes colder and wetter, please ensure that your child comes to school each day with a suitable coat and appropriate footwear. We aim to spend time outdoors throughout the year, whether at playtime, lunchtime, Forest School or during other outdoor learning opportunities. Being dressed appropriately helps children stay comfortable, enjoy their time outside and make the most of all that school has to offer.

Please remember to label all items of clothing, including coats, hats, gloves and wellies, to help us return any misplaced belongings to their owners. Thank you for your support in helping children stay warm, dry and ready for learning, whatever the weather!

World Mental Health Day

We were delighted to see so many of our children in yellow today to acknowledge World Mental Health Day. Your voluntary donations meant that we raised £76.41, thank you.



Dates for diaries

Harvest Festival:

Our harvest festival is on the **20th October at 9:30 am** at St Peter's Church. We are delighted to invite parents to join us, however we have a **restriction on numbers within the church** for safety reasons. With this in mind, families will be given 1 ticket to the Harvest Festival and will be on a first come first serve basis. Bookings will open to all parents from **Monday 12th October at 8am**. You will need to email your ticket request into admin@layston.herts.sch.uk. Email ticket requests received prior to this time will not be included. Thank you for your understanding and support.

Harvest Festival	Tuesday 20 th October 9:30am St Peter's Church
Black History Month African Dance	Monday 19 th October TBC
Celebrating World Mental Health Day	Friday 9 th October
Flu Immunisation	TBC
Parent Consultations	Tuesday 20 th & Wednesday 21 st October 3:30-6:00pm
INSET	Friday 23 rd October
Half term	Monday 26 th - Friday 30 th October

If you have any questions or require any support please contact your child's class teacher via the school office email address: admin@layston.herts.sch.uk address. For any SEND or mental health queries please contact Mrs Rolt DRolt@layston.herts.sch.uk

Best wishes,

Adele McMurrough, Headteacher

