Ickleford Primary School

Shared Values · Shared Aspirations · Shared Achievements

Newsletter 1

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Dear School Community,

I hope you all had a wonderful break and a very warm welcome back to the new school year! Although the summer break seems such a distant memory now, it really has been a very busy start to the new school year!

In fact, I had just finished writing this newsletter and was about to press the 'send to all' button when the phone rang and we received the news that Ofsted would be arriving the following morning! Needless to say, the newsletter was put firmly to one side for a couple of days while we focused on welcoming our inspectors and showing them everything that makes Ickleford such a great school. So, after a little rewriting, I can finally press send!

A particularly big welcome to our new Reception families, whose children have settled into school so well and with such confidence. It has been lovely to see them coming through the doors so happily each morning. In fact, there is such a calm and purposeful feeling around school that you could be forgiven for thinking we had been back for weeks rather than just a few days!

That calm and positive start is a real testament to the hard work and dedication of our staff. Many worked tirelessly over the summer to prepare classrooms, organise resources and get lessons ready so that we could begin the new year in such a positive way. One person who has certainly been busy is Mr Dickens, our Site Manager, who has worked incredibly hard to refurbish our Year 1 classroom. Much to Mr Horgan's delight, it is looking fantastic, and he is very much looking forward to showing it off at the upcoming Welcome Meeting!

Please do remember to check the list of Welcome Meeting dates below, which was also sent out last half term. Please note that the Year 4 Welcome Meeting has a revised date, so do check the updated list for the correct date. These meetings are a really useful opportunity to find out more about classroom routines, learning, trips and other important information for the year ahead.

There are lots of exciting developments around school too. Our Rainbow Sensory Room is really starting to come together, with new carpet and resources helping to create a calm and welcoming space for our children.

The new library has been something of a passion project for me, and it has been wonderful to hear the gasps of surprise from the children when they see it for the first time! Our KS2 children will soon be choosing new non-fiction books to broaden their reading diet and develop their knowledge and interests. I just hope they don't mess up the shelves too much!

Our Christian value for this half term is Stewardship. Stewardship is about looking after, caring for and sharing the world and its resources that have been entrusted to us. Through Collective Worship, our learning and our everyday actions, we will be thinking about what it means to care for one another, our school and the beautiful world around us.

This will lead us beautifully towards our Harvest Festival, when we will have a particular opportunity to think about generosity, sharing and caring for our wider community. We will be encouraging the children to consider not only what we have, but how we can use what we have to make a positive difference to others.

Diary Dates for the Term

Please find our diary dates for the term on the school website. There is lots happening over the coming months, from our Welcome Meetings, Pop In and Read sessions for Reception to Year 2, and Parent Consultations, through to school trips, School Play Week and, before we know it, our Christmas celebrations!

You can view all the dates and add them to your digital calendar using **this link,** making it easier to keep track of the important events throughout the term.

A paper copy of the diary dates is also attached to the accompanying email for this newsletter, for those who prefer to print of a copy at home.

Secondary School Transfer – Reminder

A quick reminder to Year 6 families, and Year 5 families whose summer born children are being taught out of their natural year group, that the Secondary School Transfer leaflet was sent home last week.

Please check the information and book any secondary school tours or visits you are interested in, particularly with application deadlines in mind.

If you have booked a visit during the school day, please let the office know in advance so we can have your child ready for collection and record the absence correctly. These absences are authorised.

Allergy Safety at Ickleford Primary School

The safety of children with allergies is extremely important to us. You can read our new **Allergy Safety Policy** on the school website.

All staff are currently revisiting their anaphylaxis training, including recognising the signs of a severe allergic reaction and knowing how to respond quickly and safely.

As part of the new statutory requirements for schools, relating to Benedict's Law, we have purchased a bright orange KITT allergy emergency pack containing adrenaline auto-injectors (AAIs). If a child were to experience a suspected anaphylactic reaction, staff would call 999 immediately and following the emergency guidance, use the appropriate AAIs from the KITT pack.

KITT company provides the emergency pack and will ensure that the AAIs are appropriately stocked and maintained, so that we are always prepared to respond should an allergic emergency occur.

Our KITT pack is stored in the dining room, where it is readily accessible to staff. You can see a photograph of the kit below.

While we hope that the KITT pack will never be needed, it provides an important additional layer of protection for all children. In some cases, a severe allergic reaction can occur in a child with no previously known allergy, so having emergency medication on site, alongside well-trained staff, helps ensure we are prepared to respond quickly and effectively should the need arise.

Welcome Meetings – A Reminder

Here are the dates for our Welcome Meetings, which were published on our last newsletter in the summer term. Please do make every effort to attend, even if you have attended a Welcome Meeting for this year group before.

All meetings will begin at 7:00pm and are for parents only (no children, please).
Reception – Thursday 3rd September - completed
Year 2 – Monday 7th September - completed
Year 3 – Thursday 10th September - completed
Year 6 – Monday 14th September
Year 5 – Wednesday 16th September
Year 1 – Thursday 17th September
Year 4 – Monday 21 st September (Rescheduled due to the Ofsted inspection and then to accommodate the significant number of families who had already prebooked an external activity. Thank you for your understanding)

These meetings contain important information about classroom routines, the curriculum, school trips and other key information for the year ahead. They are particularly important for Year 6 families, as we will also explain our approach to SATs assessment and how we support the children in preparing for this important year, as well as sharing information about their exciting residential trip to Shropshire. We look forward to seeing you there!

Free School Meals – Important Update

There has been an important change to Free School Meals (FSM) from September 2026. All children whose families receive Universal Credit are now eligible for Free School Meals, regardless of household earnings. This means that many more families can now access this valuable support.

Please apply even if your child is in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2 and already receives a Universal Infant Free School Meal. Although these children are automatically entitled to a free school meal, registering for benefits-based Free School Meals is still important. If your family meets the criteria for Targeted Free School Meals, your child will also attract Pupil Premium funding for the school.

Pupil Premium funding is extremely valuable to us as a school and helps us provide additional support, resources and opportunities for pupils who may benefit from them most. At a time when many families are experiencing financial pressures, we want to make sure that families receive all the support to which they are entitled.

If you have previously applied and were not eligible, please apply again, as the eligibility criteria have changed.

You can check your eligibility and apply through Hertfordshire County Council.

The application is confidential and we would encourage you to apply if you think you may be eligible.

Music Lessons at School

We are delighted to welcome the Hertfordshire Music Service teachers into our school, providing children with the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument during the school day.

If you are interested in your child having music lessons in school, please sign up through the **Hertfordshire Music Service portal.**

Learning to play an instrument can bring so many benefits beyond developing musical skills. It can help children to build confidence, concentration, perseverance and creativity, while also providing opportunities to perform, collaborate and develop friendships with others who share their love of music.

We are very fortunate to work with such wonderful and talented music teachers, and we would love to see even more of our children taking advantage of this fantastic opportunity.

Strengthening Our Community: Home-School Agreement

Each year, we revisit and update our **Home-School Agreement** to reflect our shared expectations, values and commitment to working together for the benefit of every child. A copy will be sent home in your child's school bag. Please take a few minutes to read it together and talk through the promises we make as a school, how we will work in partnership with you to support your child's learning, and how your child can make the most of the opportunities available at school.

Once you have discussed it together, please return it 'signed' by your child to confirm that you have read and talked about it. Thank you for taking the time to do this and for continuing to work in partnership with us.

Children enjoy making this commitment to their school, and we hope the Agreement continues to be a positive way of reinforcing our shared values, expectations and responsibility for creating a happy, respectful and successful school community.

Thank you for taking the time to do this and for continuing to work in partnership with us**.**

Harvest Festival Donations – Friday 2nd October

We are looking forward to celebrating our Harvest Festival at St Katharine's Church on Friday 2nd October.

We would be grateful if each child could bring a harvest donation into school on the morning of the festival. Suitable items include tinned goods, rice, pasta, cereal and other non-perishable foods. Please ensure donations can be carried by your child.

All donations will be given to the Ickleford Food Larder to support local families and will help us put our school value of Stewardship into action.

Due to limited space in the church, this is a school-led service and parents are unable to attend. Thank you for your generosity and support.

How Harvest Festival services are supplying food banks

FEATURE / Harvest Festival services in schools over the coming weeks are playing a major role in helping replenish food bank supplies that have run low over the summer months.

The Church of England

Ofsted Inspection – A Brief Update

We know that many of you will be interested in hearing how our recent Ofsted inspection went and we really appreciate the messages of support and interest that we have received.

At this stage, however, we are not yet able to share the suggested inspection judgement. This information is currently confidential and is only available to the Senior Leadership Team and governors. The suggested judgement is also subject to Ofsted's quality assurance process and may change before the final report is issued.

I have not even been able to share this information with our staff yet, which is so frustrating for them after all their hard work!

We therefore kindly ask parents not to ask individual members of staff about the outcome at this stage. We completely understand that these questions come from a place of genuine interest and support but staff are not currently in a position to provide any information. Please help us to avoid putting them in the difficult position of being asked questions they are unable to answer.

We expect to have the final report ready to share with you before the half-term break and we will of course communicate the outcome with you as soon as we are able to do so.

Thank you, as always, for your patience, understanding and continued support.

Retuning Last Year's Excercise Books

We are looking forward to passing on all of the children's books and other pieces of work from last year's class. We held on to them over the summer holidays in case Ofsted decided to call and who knew they would get in touch so early!

Please send your child in with a sturdy, clearly named bag for life so that the books can be sent home on Wednesday next week. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Apply for school on time

Applying for a school place for September 2027

Secondary/Upper/Studio/University Technical College
Application deadline: Saturday 31 October 2026

Primary (Reception)/Junior/Middle
Application deadline: Friday 15 January 2027

Apply online at
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions

Hertfordshire