



Hillcross Primary School: Whole School Newsletter 3



Vision 2025

Nurturing our children to think critically and creatively within a collaborative community.



Dear Hillcross Families,

Festivals are wonderful opportunities to bring people together. This term we have celebrated Diwali, Hanukkah and now Christmas. These provide us with lots of opportunities to get together with the people we care about and in doing so we deepen bonds that help us to better understand each other and to develop compassion and respect.

In the words of Mary Ellen Chase, an educator and literary figure of the 20th century *'Christmas, is not a date. It is a state of mind.'* At the moment we could be forgiven for having a negative state of mind with so many worrying things happening around the world – conflict, financial struggles and the general feeling of discontent within society. However, Christmas is a wonderful time to remember that there are many things we can be grateful for. Gratitude is when you feel thankful for the good things in your life. It is taking a moment to reflect on how lucky you are when something good happens, whether it's big or small. You could be grateful for your family, your friends, your health - that you get to be part of the most amazing primary school! But, there are also the little things in life that we could be grateful for such as a peaceful moment, a smile from a stranger, or the sun which provides us with warmth and light.

Practicing gratitude when life feels difficult isn't easy, in fact, it takes a special kind of inner strength and resilience to appreciate your blessings in times of hardship. But it's not impossible. If you fill your heart with gratitude, there won't be any room for discontent, self-pity, or animosity.

As the Headteacher of such a wonderful school community, I feel truly grateful for the sense of connection that links us all together. No matter the different opinions, cultures and beliefs we each have, on a daily basis, we come together from our different backgrounds and merge our different worlds together based on a shared feeling of admiration - for our Hillcross children, for our Hillcross staff and for our Hillcross families. That sense of belonging and connection is crucial to our wellbeing and our ability to be grateful.

At Christmas we get to experience what psychologists (who have studied the science of human connection) call **Collective effervescence** – this is when we experience awe with others and feel a sense of connection within a group, it is a feeling that something special is happening. Collective effervescence is a positive experience that enriches our lives. For example, it often happens when you are at a concert and everyone is singing and dancing along together, or when you watch the most amazing firework display and everyone gasps at the same time, or when your train has been delayed and the station guard starts singing 'You are my sunshine' and everyone joins in, so caught up in the moment that they forget to be angry. You can feel collective effervescence by passively watching but actively engaging and getting involved can significantly increase the wellbeing benefits it provides for yourself and others.

I challenge everyone to embrace the power of gratitude. Be grateful and express your appreciation for the people around you – it will brighten everyone's day!

I urge you to notice and fully focus on opportunities that come your way where you can create and experience collective effervescence. During times of instability and challenge it can be difficult to remember that coming together with others, even people we do not know or do not agree with, can boost our happiness, self-esteem and our ability to show compassion to others.

Christmas, and all its messages of love, hope, joy and peace, is a great time to start. I would like to thank everyone for making the Hillcross School Community a place where we can all feel safe, cared for and valued, a place where we can all flourish. I wish everyone a very happy Christmas and look forward to seeing you all again in 2024!

Best wishes,

Lisa Francis, Headteacher.



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Hillcross Parental Communication - Thursday 21st December

Whole School

Reminders and New Dates for Your Diary

Monday 8th January - children return to school for spring term 1

Thursday 11th January - Pre-loved Uniform & new water bottle sale 8:30am

Friday 19th January: Deadline to upload video entries for Hillcross Has Got Talent Competition

Friday 26th January - FoH Winter Warmer Breakfast 8:00am

Monday 5th February - EYFS Disco from 3:00- 4:00pm

Wednesday 7th February - Year 1,2 & 3 Disco 3:00 - 4:00pm

Wednesday 7th February - Year 4,5 & 6 Disco 4:15 - 5:45pm

Friday 9th February - Last day of spring term 1

Monday 12th - 16th February - Half term

Monday 19th February - Children return to school for spring term 2

Wednesday 21st February - Parents Evening in person meeting via appointment

Thursday 22nd February - Parents Evening remote meeting via appointment
(parent evening appointments will be available to book in advance)

Wednesday 6th March - Film Night

Friday 8th March - INSET school closed for pupils

Friday 22nd March - FoH Spring Fair

Wednesday 27th March - Nursery last day of spring term

Thursday 28th March - Reception to Year 6 last day of spring term

Click here to view key dates: <https://www.hillcross.merton.sch.uk/virtual-office/calendar>

**PE lessons will resume the first week of spring term
from Monday 8th January.**

Employment Opportunity at Hillcross

Business Officer: Administration and Human Resources

(5 days per week but we would consider 4 days).

The post will involve: managing the schools SIMS.net system and our admissions and attendance procedures with support from the office administrator; assisting the Inclusion Manager with the overall supervision of medical arrangements, assisting the Office Manager to manage the school's administrative systems and assisting the School Business Manager in the implementation of recruitment and personnel procedures.

If you know of anyone who you think would be a great fit for Hillcross and has the necessary knowledge and skills outlined in the job description and person specification, encourage them to come along for a visit and to apply! It was through our parent network that we received a successful application for our new School Business Manager so please let the right people in your network know about the opportunity!





Aspiration Challenge Compassion

Respect Responsibility



Our Year 6 children took part in the Little Experts workshop (as part of the ootiboo programme). The workshop is based on the book [Why Money Matters](#), a guide to managing money by the fabulous Deborah Meaden. The children were given the opportunity to think about money, the importance of it and, in line with our Rights of a Child, recognise the difference between a want and a need. The studio was transformed into interactive market stalls where children chose their job title and spent their Ootibloons currency on what they believed to be essential items. Thank you Beth from Farshore Books and Chris from ootiboo for leading our workshop and leaving bookmarks for each child as well as donating three books to our school. It was such an amazing experience for the children.



Click here for more information about the project and to watch the Deborah Meaden video: <https://play.ootiboo.com/projects/little-experts>

On Friday 18th November, children and staff were able to replace items of school uniform for Pudsey themed clothing or spotty equivalents for a minimum £2.00 donation. We saw some very inventive outfits indeed! Thank you for your generous donations, collectively we raised a whopping £900.40



School Facilities to Hire

If you require a space to run a club, tutoring sessions or host an occasion such as a birthday party or a family event, we have exceptional school facilities that are available to hire including the hall, studio hall, gym, sports arena and school field. We also have a smaller room that could be rented at weekends/in school holidays for meetings or smaller gatherings. Our lettings are open 7 days a week with closures only during bank holidays. If required, and providing the school is closed to staff, there is also ample parking available on site.

All our facilities can now be booked via lettings@hillcross.merton.sch.uk for more information please visit our website <https://www.hillcross.merton.sch.uk/virtual-office/facilities-to-hire>

LEARN AN INSTRUMENT AT SCHOOL WITH MMF

The Merton Music Foundation deliver over 850 instrumental and vocal lessons each week to children in Merton, the majority of them in school. However, they are keen to support more young people to start their musical journey. Please click the to see the film they have made or contact MMF if they want more information. <https://youtu.be/I9sWifkT8Mw>



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A huge thank you to everyone for their donations on Christmas Jumper Day. All the children that participated looked wonderfully festive and they all thoroughly enjoyed the day. In total we raised £378.85 that will be donated to the registered charity Save the Children.

Collaboration in the Community

We would like to extend a huge 'THANK YOU' to everyone in our school community for working with us to make the children's experiences at Hillcross the best they can be. Special thanks go to Friends of Hillcross, the volunteers who work across the school and to our governing body. We would also like to show our appreciation of our partners from our local community including the local policing team, Off The Record, TaMHS, MMF, Rocksteady, MSSP, Morden Park Baptist Church, St Martins Church and the Open the Book team.



Changing your child's school lunch preference?

If you wish to change your child's meal preference for Spring Term 1, **you will need to inform the school no later than Monday 8th January 9:00am** by emailing the office at info@hillcross.merton.sch.uk with 'School Dinners' as the subject line. If you do not notify us of a change to your child's lunch preference, we will assume your child will continue with their current meal choice.

The spring term menu can be found via the following link to our school website: <https://www.hillcross.merton.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=897&type=pdf>

How to reassure your child if they are worried about the cost-of-living crisis

Worrying about money might affect a young person's mental health, Young Minds have published useful Information on the links between money and mental health, how to support your child's wellbeing and look after yourself in the cost-of-living crisis, and where to find practical and financial support for your family.

With rising bills, soaring energy prices and the cost-of-living crisis dominating the national conversation, it's inevitable that many children and young people, just like adults, are worried about money.

Individual family circumstances vary widely, and the cost-of-living crisis will impact our wellbeing and finances differently. You may be feeling anxious about managing bills, low in mood, helpless, or worried about the impact on your own or your child's mental health. Or perhaps you or your child feels isolated or lonely because of lack of money to socialise or do activities.

Whatever your situation, we can help. This guide has advice on taking care of yourself as well as looking after your child's wellbeing and helping them manage worries about money. You'll also find information about how to find practical and financial support for your family.



Click on the link to read the guide: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/money-and-mental-health/>

YOUNGMINDS
fighting for young people's mental health



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A big thank you from Friends of Hillcross to all of our volunteers and supporters this term. We more than appreciate your help with planning, organising and helping to run various events and initiatives - without your help these would not be possible.

During the Autumn Term we are delighted to inform you that we raised approximately £4480. This amount is from a range of events including the Autumn Disco, Gameshow Night, Christmas collectibles, Pre-loved Christmas jumpers, the Christmas market, Winter Fair and Christmas raffles.

Thank you to everyone that has supported and attended our events this term. Your continued contributions have allowed us to support a range of resources that will benefit the whole school as the Friends of Hillcross have been able to fund resources in the region of £6,000 - items include Maths resources, Art and DT resources, guided reading books, History resources, new library seating, a new type of handwriting pens for the older year groups, a playhouse and play trays.

Volunteers Needed

We need volunteers to join the Summer fair team to help book things like the entertainment and inflatables, we are looking for a new a raffle prize co-ordinator and we need a few volunteers to help with our governance and policy reviews. All of these jobs can be done at home and during hours that suit you, so if you'd like to find out more please email friendsofhillcross@yahoo.com.

We also need people to help make tea, coffee, cheese toasties etc... at our Winter Warmer event in January. Please email friendsofhillcross@yahoo.com if you might be able to help.

Dates for your Diary

Winter Warmer - Friday 26 January from 8.15am to 9am

Early Years Spring Disco - 5 February 3pm - 4pm

Years 1, 2 and 3 Spring Disco - 7 February 3pm - 4pm

Years 4, 5 and 6 Spring Disco - 7 February 4.15pm - 5.45pm

Disco tickets will go on sale via PTA Events on the 8th of January and the ticket deadline is midnight on the 4th of February: <https://www.pta-events.co.uk/friendsofhillcross/index.cfm?event=event&eventId=72051>

Spring Fair - Friday 22nd March

Summer Fair - 15th June from 3pm to 6pm

We wish you all the best for the festive season, enjoy the break and time with your families. We look forward to seeing you at our events next term.



Winter Fair for Christmas photos





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There has been an abundance of Christmas activities and events over the last few weeks, which have included a Whole School Pantomime, the Winter Fair for Christmas, Christmas Jumper Day, the Nursery Nativity, the Reception Christmas show, the Christmas Carol Service for Year 1 –6 , the Staff Hillcross Has Got Talent 2023, the Elf Christmas assembly and the whole school Christmas lunch– with a special thank you to our catering team for cooking over 400 delicious Christmas dinners for children and staff. We are so proud of our community and the consistent messages of Aspiration, Compassion, Responsibility and Respect that has been shared throughout.



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Please read the letter from Metropolitan Police below:



Dear Parent or Guardian,

Please can you help us to help you?

This time last year I wrote to you as there had been a significant increase in robberies across London where the victims were of school going age. I am really pleased and proud to be able to report that we have made significant reductions in reported crime over the last twelve months. Merton borough has recorded outstanding reductions, more than anywhere else in London in both robbery and burglary offences. We are also shown as the top borough in relationship to trust with the public. This is testimony to the relationships we have fostered with all our external partners and you the public we serve. I want to thank you all for the guidance and advice you have shared with the children under your care, as without this I have no doubt we would not have achieved such amazing results.

The South West police command area remains as the safest of all London Boroughs, however we must still remain vigilant and as such I would like to remind you of some ways in which you can continue to help. I would like to focus on robberies as this is an area we can all help with. The peak times that robberies occur are between 3pm-5pm (during term time) which obviously correlates directly to school leaving times.

So here is where you can help!

Your local police are currently taking many active steps to prevent any further robberies and bring offenders to justice. Some of these tactics you may notice, such as increased after school patrols in specific crime hot spots, more engagement with our local communities, researching and looking to find safer routes from school to transport hubs. Other may not be quite so obvious, such as plain clothed police officers patrolling in unmarked marked vehicles and an increased use of covert CCTV. We are also working closely with second hand shops, phone unlocking services and similar outlets where historically offenders have targeted to sell on stolen items. In addition our Safer School Officers are working directly with the schools giving presentations on various topics tailored to each year group, including Personal Safety. They also conduct follow up visits at school with any victims of robbery.

There are some simple steps children can take to make themselves less vulnerable to crime. One of the most effective methods is as easy as just keeping desirable property out of view when on the streets and to always remain vigilant. The wearing of earphones/buds and looking at mobile phones sadly causes two issues. Firstly it can distract the wearer from what's going on around them, but secondly it highlights they are likely to have high value items which are easy to steal and easy to sell. Please ensure that your child/children stick to routes that are busy, endeavour to stay with groups of trusted friends, choose a route that has good street lighting and ideally with local shops, if possible use a route that is covered by CCTV. Remind them that the short cut down the dark alley may well save 5 minutes, but it is not worth the additional risk. Empower and reassure them that if they feel uneasy or threatened in any way to go into a shop or approach an adult and ask them to phone police.

However most importantly of all make sure that they understand that if they are threatened for their property to simply hand it over. It is far better to lose personal possessions than to be injured trying to keep them.

Be aware of your surroundings

- If you need to call or use your phone on the street, look out for anyone on a bike or a moped near you. Look up, look out
- Make it quick so you don't become distracted
- Don't text while you're walking – you won't notice what's going on around you
- If that's not possible, stand away from the roadside, close to a building or wall, so no one can come up behind you
- Going hands-free can prevent a thief from snatching your phone out of your hand



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**METROPOLITAN
POLICE**

Use security features on your phone

- You must switch on your phone's security features to protect your phone
- Use the keypad lock so that thieves cannot immediately access your phone, or use the biometric authentication if your phone has it (finger print or facial recognition)
- Your phone may have other security features you can use – these could allow you to wipe data, lock your handset, or prevent a thief from restoring a phone to its factory settings from another internet device
- Consider installing an anti-theft app. These can be an effective way of helping police trace your phone and identify the thief

Know how to identify your phone if it is stolen

- Every phone has an IMEI number which helps police and insurance companies to identify it if it's stolen. UK network operators can also stop a stolen phone from working across their networks with its IMEI
- Find your IMEI number by dialling *#06# from your phone and keep a written note of it; if the phone is stolen, report the number to your mobile provider to stop it being used
- Register your valuables on an accredited property database.

I would like to encourage parents and students to report any incidents to police as well as any information that could lead to identifying any suspect(s). If an incident is happening at the time or has just occurred, please call 999 immediately (get someone near you to do this if your phone has been taken). This gives us the best chance of apprehending the offenders and is the most effective way of reducing robberies. I do understand that students can be quite scared as offenders often make threats, please rest assured that we are sensitive to this and have procedures in place to reassure and safeguard victims and witnesses. If a student is scared and does not want to talk directly with us then I would encourage them to report the incident to [Fearless.org](https://www.fearless.org) who will provide police with an anonymous report.

I would also encourage every parent and student to look at the following:

www.immobilise.com (register any personal items for free and increase your chances of having it returned if it is ever lost or stolen.)

Panic Guard app (this app allows the user to create safe routes monitored through GPS, to record audio and video discretely and upload it to the cloud if an incident occurs) (Flyer attached)

As a parent of children, myself I understand this letter may indeed worry you. But please remember that the fear of crime is far, far greater than the risk of becoming a victim of it. The South West remains the safest area of London in relation to personal robberies and we remain committed to working with our local communities in reducing crime across all four Boroughs.

Yours Sincerely,

Mark Sanna

Merton Youth Engagement Police Sergeant

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility



Anyone who has contact with a child or young person including staff, governors, volunteers, parents and other children should play their full part in keeping children safe. It is vitally important that any information of concern about a child is shared with the school. This isn't telling tales; this is exercising our duty to keep all our children safe so that they can be secure and happy. **Please read our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, revised in light of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023, which can be found on the school website.**



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Top Tips for SETTING UP PARENTAL CONTROLS ON NEW DEVICES

In children's eagerness to start enjoying new digital gadgets immediately, it can be easy to overlook setting up the type of parental controls that can help to protect their online. If you don't sort those out from the very start, it can be an uphill battle – technologically and psychologically – to impose such controls later. Here's our rundown of what to look for when setting up the various internet-enabled devices that might be lurking under the tree at this time of year.

IPHONE

If your child's lucky enough to be getting their own iPhone, parental controls can help avoid issues like screen addiction and unsuitable content. Go into the settings and scroll down to 'Screen Time'. From here you can customise important settings including time limits on using the device, communication restriction and content blockers. You can also lock your changes behind a passcode.

ANDROID

With Android devices, Google's Family Link app is your friend. You'll need a Google account – and a separate one for your child, which you should use when first setting up the device. Then, in Family Link on your own device, select 'Add child' and enter their account details. This lets you specify limits on daily usage, restrict certain apps, block particular content and more.

PLAYSTATION

You can prep for a PlayStation before it's even unboxed. At myaccount.sony.com, create an account, then go to Account Management > Family Management > Add Family Member to set up your child's account, which you'll use to sign in on the console. You can restrict the age ratings of the games they can play and who they can talk to, on the PS5, you can make exceptions for any games you think are acceptable despite their high age rating.

IPAD

Like parental controls are identical to those on iPhones. However, if you've got a shared family iPad and want to ensure your children aren't seeing anything age-inappropriate after you have them the device, there's a feature called Guided Access (under Settings > Accessibility > Guided Access). With this switched on, young ones can only use the app that's currently open.

XBOX

The Xbox Family Settings app helps you manage which games your child can play (and when). You'll need to set up the console with your own account and then create a child profile. Make sure your account's password's protected, so your child can't alter your choices later. You'll be walked through the functions of setup, but you can also reach them manually via Settings > Account > Family Settings.

NINTENDO SWITCH

Download the Nintendo Switch Parental Controls app on your phone, and you'll be shown how to link it to the console. Once that's done, you can limit how long your child can play each day, decide what age ratings are permitted and more. You'll also get weekly updates on how often they've used the device. These controls are accessible through the console itself, but the app is usually easier.

WINDOWS 11 PCs

On Windows 11, account management is key. Set up the device with your own account as the admin. Then go to Settings > Accounts > Family and Other Users and create your child's account (if you've already done this on a previous PC, just log in with those details). Microsoft Family Safety (either the app or the site) then lets you control screen time, what content children can view and more.

CHROMEBOOKS

Chromebooks' parental controls are managed via the Family Link app. Unlike on Android devices, however, you need set up the Chromebook with your own account first, then add your child's. Go to Settings > People > Add Person and input your child's Google account details (or create a new account). Your child can then log in, and you can monitor what they're up to via Family Link.

MACS

Like iPhones, parental controls for Macs are managed via the Screen Time settings. Again, the trick here is to set yourself up as the administrator before adding any child accounts. In the settings, look for Users & Groups to create your child's account, then – while in their profile – use the screen time options to place any boundaries around apps, usage and who your child can communicate with (and vice versa).

SMART TVS

Smart TVs typically have their own individual parental controls. One of the most popular brands is Samsung – and on their TVs, you can restrict the content available to your child. In the settings menu, under 'Restricting', you can lock channels and restrict content by its age rating. Even this isn't foolproof, however: some apps (like YouTube) might still let children access unsuitable material.

Meet Our Expert

With multi-decade technology expertise combined with more than 10 years' experience of working with schools in the family time, we're proud to be an expert in this space. Our experts have more practical knowledge, including how to manage digital devices and protect your child's online safety and data security on the subject of online safety.



The National
College

NOS
National
Online
Safety
WakeUpWednesday



@nationalonline_safety



/NationalOnlineSafety



@nationalonline_safety



@national_online_safety



GOOD THINGS FOR YOUR CHILD & SCHOOL

All the info you need to know...

The pupil premium is a Government scheme that provides funding of up to £1,320 per eligible pupil.

The school can use this money to support your child, eg: providing new equipment or possibly additional teaching staff.

Q: How can I apply?

Simply click on the link below to complete the online form :

<https://self.merton.gov.uk/service/Pupil-Premium-and-Free-School-Meals-application>

Q: Why should I apply?

The main reason – you will be helping the school (and therefore your child) as the school will then be able to claim pupil premium funding from the Government. This is worth up to £1,320 per eligible pupil!

It'll only take five minutes to complete the form – why not do it now?

Also, you've probably heard that children in Key Stage 1 (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2) can now receive school meals free of charge. If your child is in Year 3 or above (and you meet the pupil premium criteria), the school will be able to provide them with school meals free of charge. This can help save you hundreds of pounds a year and is a service the school will be happy to provide for you.

Q: My child receives free school meals as they're currently in Key Stage 1. Do I still need to complete this form?

Yes! In order for the school to receive pupil premium funding we need you to complete this form so we can confirm you qualify. Even if your child is already receiving free meals in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2, please complete this form – it'll help both your child and their school.

If you think your child may be eligible for Free School Meals and Pupil Premium Funding, please click on the following link below to apply :

<https://self.merton.gov.uk/service/Pupil-Premium-and-Free-School-Meals-application>

THE PUPIL PREMIUM WHAT IT OFFERS...

- 1 Funding to the school** to support your child
- 2 A saving of hundreds of pounds to you** in the cost of school dinners
- 3 Healthy, nutritious food** (which can link to doing well!) provided free of charge





Winter Holidays Support Line


Free Support Line for Young People
open from 23rd December to
1st January, 3pm - 6pm.

*Call us to speak to our practitioners
and for confidential support.*

0800 980 7475

www.talkofftherecord.org

Off The Record' Youth Counselling Charity;
Registered Charity No. 1051144

A white smartphone is shown at an angle, with a blue speech bubble overlaying its screen. The speech bubble contains text about the support line's age range and location.

**Support for ages
11-25 in Croydon,
Merton & Sutton.**