



MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Happy New Year to you all and welcome back! It has been lovely to greet so many pupils and parents on the gates these past two days; we are thrilled to be back in school and looking forward to the term ahead.

I hope that you have enjoyed the festive break and can tell from speaking to the children that many of them have had a wonderful time. However, I do know that the Christmas holidays can be difficult for some for many different reasons. If any circumstances have changed over the break, or if there is anything happening at the moment that school can support you with, please do not hesitate to get in touch. We are here to help and support you and your child/children in any way that we can.

Whatever your resolutions, I hope that 2025 will be happy, healthy and successful for you all. Thank you for your continued support.



Mrs Middleton

SPRING TERM DATES

Spring term is here! Below are the main dates currently in the calendar until Easter. As we did last term, we will update these via the weekly newsletter and highlight any changes in **YELLOW** so that they are easy for you to track.



Date	Event
Wednesday 8 th January	Cross Country pm (30 x Y4/Y5/Y6) Sedbergh School, Casterton
Wednesday 15 th January	Year 4 swimming begins
Tuesday 21 st January	2.45 pm-3.15 pm KS1 Healthy Choices with Sam Hill
Wednesday 22 nd January	9.00 am-9.30 am KS2 Healthy Choices with Sam Hill
Wednesday 22 nd January	County Cross Country (qualifiers only)
Tuesday 28 th January	Rock Kidz come to Heron Hill! (More information to follow next week!)
Thursday 30 th January	Pantomime 'Jack and the Beanstalk' (Reception-Year 2)
Monday 10 th February	Nursery open session for September 2025 Intake, 1.00 pm-2.00 pm, come and visit!
Tuesday 11 th February	FOHH cakes and table top sale, 3.00 pm. Please donate cakes (no nuts)
Friday 14 th February	End of half term, 3.15 pm. Return to school Monday 24 th February
Thursday 6 th March	World Book Day! (Mufti day - dress as your favourite book character)
Friday 21 st March	Red Nose Day - Mufti - wear something odd (e.g. odd socks, t-shirt inside out/back to front)
Mon 31 st Mar-1 st April	Y5 residential to York (one night)
Tuesday 1 st April	FOHH 'Break the Rules for April Fools' - Up to £2.50 for 5 rules
Thursday 3 rd April	FOHH Easter Treasure Hunt at 3.30 pm. Mufti - dress as a bunny/Easter costume
Friday 4 th April	Break up for Easter Holidays, 3.15 pm
Tuesday 22 nd April	School reopens after the Easter Holidays

Chase Y5 - I'm going to work hard on my football; hopefully I'll get to play for a big team in Cumbria.

Freya Y2 - I'm going to try hard to make lots of new friends.

Bradley Y3 - I'm going to work on my football skills!

Chrissy Y5 - To tidy my room more often because it is a big mess.

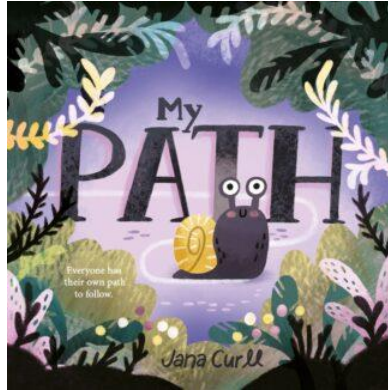
Leo Y2 - To walk to the top of Scafell Pike to raise money for a cancer charity.

Isla H Y5- I'm going to work hard on doing my 'round off, flick straight' in gymnastics!

Skye Y2 - I'm going to work hard on my maths!

Byron Y5 - My resolution is to get better at football!

Harriet Y3 - I want to learn to crochet.



ASSEMBLY THIS WEEK....

Our whole-school assembly this morning was a great way to come together after the festive break and look ahead to 2025 as part of Team Heron Hill. We recapped our school values of **RESPECT – RESPONSIBILITY – RELATIONSHIPS** and children know these so confidently now! Mrs M was so impressed!

We shared the picture book 'My Path' by Jana Curll which follows the story of a dedicated and determined snail. This story explains how each of us has our own path to follow and encouraged us to think about the importance of **RESILIENCE**.

Finally, we had a really good think about our plans, hopes and dreams for 2025. Lots of children have made resolutions and just some of them are included here for you to see.

Happy New Year Heron Hill!

Rupert Y2 - I want to keep my room tidy and learn more Ju-Jitsu to challenge my dad!

Kady Y5 - I'm going to listen carefully to my coach at horse riding and be able to jump higher on my horse.

Alistair Y3 - I want to achieve my first ParkRun!

Ben Y5 - I've actually got 3 resolutions. I want to eat less sugar and have more of a balanced diet. I want to train harder for cricket and have more time outside. Finally, I want to spend more time in nature.

Austin Y5 - I want to get better at football and be nicer to my sister!

Emily Y5 - I want to get better at gymnastics and will keep practicing!

Lawson Y3 - I want to help raise money for food for the homeless.



ACHIEVEMENTS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

If there is something you'd like to highlight and celebrate for your child. Please email admin@heronhill.cumbria.sch.uk with the subject 'F.A.O Mrs Middleton – Newsletter' to ensure your email makes its way to me.

NB: By submitting photographs, you are consenting to your child's image being added onto the newsletter which is shared via ParentMail and online.



Esther from Y3 has been growing her hair to donate it to The Little Princess Trust. LPT are a charity who make wigs for children who have lost their own hair to cancer treatment or other conditions and fund research into childhood cancers. Esther has cut and donated her hair, as well as sending the money she has been fundraising for the charity too.

What an AMAZING and thoughtful thing to do. Well done Esther, we are all very proud of you!

APPLYING FOR A RECEPTION PLACE IN 2025

If your child is due to start Reception in September 2025, the deadline for applications is approaching! You must visit: [WFC Apply for Reception](#) and submit your application before 15th January 2025. If you have any difficulty accessing this site, please let our friendly office team know and they can support you. Despite our open events passing, Mrs Middleton is happy to host any visits to school for prospective parents ahead of this deadline date. Please contact the school office on 01539 721276 if you or anyone you know is interested in visiting.

ATTENDANCE

School follows the Westmorland and Furness policy for school attendance. This can be found on our school website: [School Attendance Policy](#). There is a **national push** to increase attendance for all pupils which has led to several changes since September. I must emphasise that these are both local and national changes, not just within Heron Hill.



The local authority policy and practice includes a number of letters which are to be sent to parents to raise awareness of any attendance or punctuality challenges. School issues these, in line with policy, on a half-termly basis. These letters are not designed to cause alarm or distress but are an important part of our statutory duty. If you receive a letter and wish to discuss it further, please do not hesitate to contact a senior leader in school.

Additional letters (and where applicable penalty notices) are issued for term-time holidays throughout the school year, as required. Please note: a leave of absence request form from our school office must be completed and school will not provide work for children being taken out of school on holiday or unauthorised leave. Worksheets etc are no substitute for the high-quality, face-to-face teaching provided in school each day.

Our weekly newsletter will continue to celebrate attendance successes and share the weekly/termly attendance percentages for school and each class. We are aiming for the national expectation of 96% attendance this academic year.

NEW DEVICE FOR CHRISTMAS?

Lots of children may have received devices for Christmas and be exploring these. We often hear children (particularly in KS2) refer to apps such as TikTok, Snapchat or Whatsapp during their peer conversations. All of these platforms are recommended for age range 13+ but ultimately, it is a parent's choice what their child accesses. We hope the resource below will be helpful to those who do allow Whatsapp to be used.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about WHATSAPP

...MSG ME...

AGE RESTRICTION 13+

With more than two billion active users, WhatsApp is the world's most popular messaging service. Its end-to-end encryption only allows messages to be viewed by the sender and any recipients; not even WhatsApp itself can read them. The UK's Online Safety Bill proposes to end such encryption on private messaging, but for the time being, this controversial feature remains.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

EVOLVING SCAMS

WhatsApp's popularity makes it a lucrative hunting ground for scammers. Recent examples include posing as the target's child, requesting a money transfer because of a spurious 'emergency' – plus a scam where fraudsters trigger a verification message by attempting to log in to your account, then (posing as WhatsApp) call or text to ask you to log the code back to them, giving them access.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS

To start a chat, someone only needs the mobile number of the WhatsApp user that they want to message. Therefore, if a child has ever given their number out to someone they don't know, that person could then contact them via WhatsApp. It's also possible that the child may be added to a group chat or community (by one of their friends, for example) containing other people that they don't know.

CHAT LOCK

In 2023, WhatsApp introduced a feature that lets users keep their chats in a separate 'locked chats' folder, saved behind their phone's passcode, fingerprint or face ID authentication. They subsequently developed an additional feature – 'Secret Code' – where users set a unique password for their locked chats. Unfortunately, this function creates the potential for young people to hide conversations and content they suspect their parents wouldn't approve of (such as age-inappropriate material).

COMMUNITIES AND GROUPS

A community is a collection of related groups on WhatsApp. They can consist of thousands of users. Communities can often be used by scammers to target large groups, hoping someone clicks on their link or responds to their requests. In communities and groups, there are multiple ongoing conversations, which results in pressure to respond. Members – even if they are not each other's contacts – will be able to see any messages sent into the group.

'VIEW ONCE' CONTENT

The ability to send images or messages that can only be viewed once has led to some WhatsApp users sharing inappropriate material or abusive texts, knowing that the recipient can't re-open them later to use as evidence of misconduct. People used to be able to screenshot this disappearing content – but a recently added WhatsApp feature now blocks this, citing protection of privacy.

FAKE NEWS

WhatsApp's connectivity and ease of use allows news to be shared rapidly – whether it's true or not. To combat the spread of misinformation, messages forwarded more than five times on the app now display a 'Forwarded many times' label and a double arrow icon. This makes users aware that the message they've just received is far from an original... and might not be entirely factual, either.

VISIBLE LOCATION

WhatsApp's 'live location' feature lets users share their current whereabouts, which can be helpful for friends meeting up or parents checking that their child is safe while out. For example, however, anyone in a user's contacts list or in a mutual group chat can also track their location – potentially letting strangers identify a child's home address or journeys that they make regularly.

Advice for Parents & Educators

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Encourage children to treat unexpected messages with caution; get them to consider whether it sounds like something a friend or relative would really send them. Make sure they know never to share personal details over WhatsApp, and to be wary of clicking on any links in messages. Setting up two-step verification adds a further layer of protection to their WhatsApp account.

ADJUST THE SETTINGS

It's wise to change a child's WhatsApp settings to specify which of their contacts can add them to group chats without needing approval. You can give permission to 'My contacts' or 'My contacts Except...'. Additionally, if a child needs to use 'live location', emphasise that they should enable this function for only as long as they need – and then turn it off.

DISCUSS GROUP CHATS

Make children aware that there could be members of a group that they don't know well and that words can be misinterpreted. Encourage them to leave a good impression, to avoid joining in if conversations turn towards bullying, and to respond to such situations in an appropriate way. Make sure they know that it's OK to leave a group chat if it makes them uncomfortable – or for any reason, in fact.

THINK BEFORE SHARING

Help children understand why it's important to stop and think before posting or forwarding something on WhatsApp. It's easy – and all too common – for content that a user posts to be shared more widely, even publicly on social media. Encourage children to consider how an impulsive message or forwarding might damage their reputation or upset a friend who sent something to them in confidence.

CHAT ABOUT PRIVACY

Check in with the child about how they're using WhatsApp, making sure they know you only have their safety at heart. If you spot a 'Locked Chats' folder, you might want to talk about the sort of content they've stored in there, who they're talking to, and why they want to keep these chats hidden. Also, if children send any 'view once' content, it could be helpful to ask them why.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing Internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.

...HEY OSC WakeUp Wednesday

The National College

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