

End of School Year Newsletter - July 2026

Wow! Didn't that year go quickly?

As we come to the end of another school year, I would like to wish all of our Year 6 children the very best as they begin new adventures at their new schools. This can be a time of mixed emotions, with both nerves and excitement, but my hope for every one of our children is that they continue learning, growing and developing into happy, successful individuals.

Federation Improvement Plans

As we enter a new academic year, we will also be developing our next set of priorities as part of the Federation's journey of continuous improvement.

When creating our improvement plans, we undertake a thorough self-evaluation of the strengths and areas for development across our organisation. This includes reviewing our practice against the latest Ofsted framework, taking advice from the local authority, reflecting on our vision and values, and, most importantly, doing what we believe is right for the children in our schools.

The Federation's governors have yet to finalise the finer details of our plans. However, as a brief insight into next year, we will be focusing on our behaviour systems and promoting greater consistency in our approach across both schools. We will be working alongside behaviour specialist Kit Messenger, author of *Curious, Not Furious*, to help us build a culture that seeks to understand what children are communicating through their behaviour and how we can respond most effectively to achieve the best outcomes for all.

We will also be placing a continued focus on attendance and looking at ways to strengthen our processes to support children in developing positive, lifelong habits.

Alongside this, we will continue to refine and develop our curriculum, identifying opportunities to build upon the excellent work already taking place. We will also be developing aspects of our teaching practice, embedding key approaches that we expect to see used consistently across every classroom in the Federation

Staffing News

As always, there are lots of exciting updates!

At Sopley, we will be saying goodbye to Mr James and Miss Towers as they begin the next chapters of their careers. We would like to thank them for their contribution to the school and wish them every success in the future.

We are delighted to welcome Mr Bousot and Miss **Gover** to our team.

We have also recently recruited Mrs North, who is currently teaching in another Hampshire school. Mrs North will be our new Cover Supervisor, supporting classes across the Federation when teachers are planning lessons or attending training.

There is also some exciting personal news from Burley. Mrs Shutler will be having a baby! Her baby is due at the end of December, giving us plenty of time to find an excellent teacher to step into Mrs Shutler's shoes during her maternity leave.

Assemblies

We are keen to invite more members of our wider community to lead assemblies and talk to the children about the wider world around them.

This could include people from different faiths discussing celebrations, individuals sharing information about different cultures, professionals promoting health and safety (such as police officers or lifeguards), or other enriching presentations that provide our pupils with an insight into life beyond our schools.

If you know someone who might be interested in leading an assembly, or if you feel you have something valuable to share about yourself, we would love to hear from you. Ideally, we are looking for visitors on Wednesday mornings and would welcome opportunities for our children to meet and learn from a diverse range of people and experiences.

Uniform

With the new academic year approaching, this is often a good time to think about replacing items of school uniform that may have become worn or no longer fit.

At both schools, we have a selection of nearly new uniforms that have been kindly donated by families over the years. If you would like to see whether there is anything suitable for your child, please speak to a member of the admin team.

A strong, unified school community starts with something as simple as a school uniform. Uniform helps create a sense of belonging, reduces unnecessary comparisons and distractions, and allows children to focus on learning, friendships and personal growth. It also supports safety by making pupils easily identifiable and helps develop pride in both themselves and their school.

You may have seen in previous communications that we now have PE tops available in all house colours. These can be purchased through PMG or sourced as plain, non-logo tops from many clothing retailers. Please do not feel the need to purchase one immediately; however, when it is time to replace your child's PE top, we encourage you to consider purchasing one in their house colour.

Shoes

As you know, we operate an indoor and outdoor footwear policy, particularly as our grounds become very muddy during the winter months.

Children must wear suitable footwear indoors to ensure their feet remain protected. For indoor shoes, we ask for simple footwear with a hard sole, such as black plimsolls, dark-coloured Crocs-style shoes or black trainers. Please do not send novelty slippers, brightly coloured shoes or fashion boots.

For outdoor footwear, our policy remains black school shoes or black trainers.

Bags

Due to limited storage space within our schools, we ask that children in Years R, 1 and 2 bring only a book bag to school (and a small bag/lunchbox for packed lunches if this is your child's lunch option).

Book bags help protect reading books and can be stored safely and neatly within classrooms. We have noticed that books are more likely to become damaged when transported in rucksacks. Please therefore avoid sending children in these year groups to school with rucksacks.

Many children attach a small keyring to help identify their book bag quickly, which is a great idea. We simply ask that these remain small and practical.

From Year 3 onwards, children may bring a small rucksack if they wish (book bags are still a great option). We ask that these are appropriately sized so they can be stored easily.

We are also working with our uniform provider to introduce a branded school rucksack. These will gradually become part of our uniform offer and will be available to purchase through our schoolwear provider.

Fidget Toys

As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting pupils' individual needs and wellbeing, we will be investing further in a range of school-owned fidget resources. These will be used thoughtfully to support those children who benefit from them, helping them to regulate, focus and access learning more effectively. Due to the recent media investigation into some fidget toys not meeting health and safety regulations, no fidget toys from home will be allowed into school from September - unless there is a specific recommendation from a specialist e.g. educational psychologist and is clearly detailed within your child's Personal Learning Plan (PLP).

If children do bring them in, their teacher will ask them to remain in their bag until the end of the day and a message will be sent home to remind parents/carers. Unfortunately, we cannot take responsibility for items brought in from home that may be lost or damaged.

By providing and managing fidget resources centrally, we can ensure they are used appropriately, safely and in a way that supports learning and wellbeing for all children.

Thank you, as always, for your understanding and continued support. If you have any questions or would like to discuss your child's individual needs, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

School Times and Gate Openings

As you may remember, we consulted earlier this year regarding changes to school timings, following the requirement to extend the school day by five minutes.

Following consultation, governors agreed that the school day will be:

- **School gates open:** 8:40am
- **School gates close:** 8:50am
- **End of school day:** 3:20pm

Please note that gates will close promptly at 8:50am. If you wish to speak with your child's class teacher before school, we encourage you to arrive as close to 8:40am as possible.

After 8:50am, all children must be signed in at the school office, where a late mark will be recorded.

Burley School Gates

To support families at the start of the day, we will also be opening both side gates off of the track rather than the current main gate via the schoolhouse.

Children in **Kestrels** and **Woodpeckers** will be able to enter through the gate nearest the end of the track. **Wagtails** and **Robins** should enter through the gate nearest Wagtails.

Once these gates are closed, parents should use the main entrance gate and ring the bell for access.

Pick up will be as it currently is, enter via the main school entrance and wait outside the classroom for them to be dismissed.

As mainstream local authority schools, we are held accountable for attendance levels because we know that attendance has a significant impact on pupil outcomes. There are also strict national regulations regarding attendance and punctuality, including the potential for penalty notices in some circumstances.

If you need support with improving attendance or punctuality, please speak to your child's teacher. Where we can help, we will always do our best to do so.

Maintaining a Safe and Respectful School Community

We would like to take this opportunity to remind all members of our school community of the importance of speaking respectfully to every member of staff. Our staff work incredibly hard to build positive, respectful relationships with the children in our care and consistently go above and beyond to support their learning, wellbeing, and development. We are proud of the dedication, professionalism, and kindness shown by our team each day, and we ask that all interactions with staff reflect the same level of respect and courtesy that we expect throughout our school community.

By working together in a spirit of mutual respect, we can continue to provide the very best environment for our children to thrive.

School Readers

Would you be interested in becoming a school reader?

Whether you can spare ten minutes every Thursday morning or a longer regular session each week, your support could make a real difference. Many children benefit enormously from additional opportunities to read with an adult. If you would like to join us as a reading volunteer or classroom helper, we would be delighted to hear from you. As a school volunteer, there would be some policies to read, a short online safeguarding module to complete, and we would require references and a DBS check.

Further information will follow in September.

Helping on School Trips

We are also keen to develop a bank of volunteers who would be willing to support with the supervision of school trips. This is a fantastic way to become involved in school life without needing to commit to a regular volunteering schedule. If you would like to be added to our trip volunteer list, please speak to Mrs Rixon (Sopley), Mrs Morris (Burley) or Mrs Buckley. We would require an education-based DBS check, which we can organise for you.

Summer Holiday Clubs

If you feel your child would benefit from a little more structure during the summer holidays, Educamps will be running holiday clubs at Sopley throughout the summer break.

Bookings can be made at:

<https://www.educamps.co.uk/book-now/>



INSET Days for Your Calendar

- Tuesday 1 September 2026
- Thursday 22 October 2026
- Friday 23 October 2026
- Monday 4 January 2027
- Tuesday 5 January 2027

Dog Survey

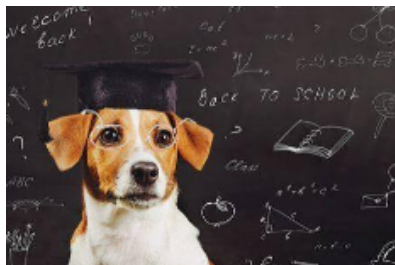
Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete our survey regarding the possibility of introducing a school dog.

As mentioned previously, this would be a significant decision and one that would require careful planning and consideration. We would want to ensure that there is complete clarity regarding the role of a school dog and the potential benefits it may bring.

We were delighted by the level of engagement, with 98% of respondents indicating that they would support us exploring the idea further. Many thoughtful questions were raised, which will help shape our ongoing discussions.

This remains an area that Miss Sewell and Mr Bowen will continue to investigate carefully. While this is by no means a confirmed addition to our provision, the survey results provide a positive indication of the views of our wider school community.

Any future developments will, of course, be communicated in a timely manner.



School Forum

Our School Forum groups have been an extremely valuable way of helping shape and develop our thinking about how we continue to improve both schools.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to facilitate a forum meeting this term; however, we are keen to get next year's dates into the diary.

Our first session will take place on:

Burley - Wednesday 16th September at 9:00am

Sopley - Wednesday 16th September at 2:30pm

As this will be the first forum meeting of the academic year, the agenda will be open, focusing on the following questions:

- What is going well?
- What could we be thinking more about?
- If you had a magic wand, what would you wish for the school?

We look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas.

Teacher Start-of-Year Talks

All teachers from Years 1 to 6 would like to invite parents to attend a short session outlining key information about the year ahead.

These meetings will be held in classrooms at **2:30pm on Wednesday 2 September**.

For parents of children starting in Reception, there will be a separate meeting once our new children have settled into school. Dates will be confirmed in due course.



Changes to meal prices

As of September 2026, the school meal price will be increased to £3.00 per child, per day. Please could we ask that all outstanding meal accounts are cleared over the summer holidays so that all children's Arbor accounts start with a nil balance in September. Thank you.

PE days

Burley' PE days will be as follows ;

Wagtails - Monday

Robins - Wednesday and Friday

Kestrels - Wednesday and Thursday

Woodpeckers - Tuesday and Thursday

Children should come in on those days in their PE kits.

Sopley's PE days will be emailed to parents/carers before we return to school in September.

Key Dates for the start of the Autumn Term

Tuesday 1st September - INSET Day 1

Wednesday 2nd September - Back to School

Wednesday 2nd September - Meet the Class Teacher 2.30pm

Wednesday 16th September - Parent Forums, Burley 9am and Sopley 2.30pm

Monday 21st - Tuesday 22nd September - Year 6 Bikeability (Both schools)

Wednesday 30th September - Individual & Sibling School Photographs

Wednesday 21st October - Break Up

Monday 26th - Friday 30th October - Half Term

Summer Learning

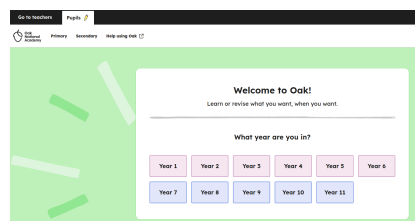
Summer is a wonderful opportunity to rest, relax and reconnect. However, we also know that there are many children (and parents!) who enjoy continuing their learning at home.

If you feel that your child would benefit from keeping their learning ticking over during the holidays, please remember that your **Reading Eggs** (KS1) and **Century** (KS2) subscriptions will remain active throughout the summer.

You can also access some excellent learning activities through the **Oak National Academy** pupil section:

<https://www.thenational.academy/pupils/years>

Alternatively, if your summer plans involve lovely walks in the forest, building dens, visiting the beach and spending quality time together, that's fantastic too! Some of the best learning opportunities come through exploration, curiosity and real-life experiences.



Thank you for your continued support throughout the year. We wish all of our families a wonderful summer break and look forward to welcoming everyone back in September.

Best wishes,

Mr Mathew Bowen

Executive Headteacher

The Federation of Burley and Sopley Primary Schools.