

Partnership Press

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Partnership Press: *Half the Year Through...*



Now writing the third edition of the Partnership Press, we find ourselves approaching the midpoint of the school year and taking a moment to reflect on the journey so far. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to every member of the staff team, our governors, and our parents for their support and for the openness with which they have welcomed me into both schools. Your willingness to share your thoughts and ideas has been invaluable as we continue to shape a strong, united educational community across our partnership.

My heartfelt appreciation also goes to the wonderful children in both schools. Their enthusiasm, kindness, and curiosity brighten each day and bring to life. I am hoping that from this mid-year point forward I will be able to spend more time engaging with their learning and enjoying the great opportunities our team provide for all children in the schools.



I still regularly reflect on this image and, for me, it supports the words of Proverbs 22:6: *"Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it."* This reminds us that the guidance, encouragement, and care we offer now lay foundations that will support our children long into adulthood. It is a privilege to play a part in this important work, and I greatly value the collaboration and support from all members of our Limpfield and Oxted community. I do remain very much in the Big Eyes, Big Ears, and Small Mouth stage as I continue to learn about the unique strengths of each school.

At the same time, I am working closely with school leaders to plan how we can keep driving continuous improvement and ensure that both schools remain exceptional places for children to learn, grow, and flourish.

The Power of Music: *Supporting Brain Development and Wellbeing*

Music has long been recognised as a joyful and enriching part of childhood, but modern research continues to reveal just how powerful it truly is for healthy brain development. I am currently reading the remarkable book *Music as Medicine* by Daniel Levitin, and finding even greater scientific evidence for something I have personally observed for many years: playing and listening to different types of music can significantly strengthen cognitive growth, enhance personal development, and support emotional wellbeing. Daniel Levitin himself summarises music's unique impact on the brain with striking clarity, stating that music activates "all the parts of the brain that we have mapped so far".



Neuroscientific research shows that engaging with music lights up multiple regions of the brain simultaneously, strengthening pathways linked to memory, language, attention, coordination, and emotional regulation. These benefits extend far beyond the music curriculum and support learning across all subjects. Music also nurtures creativity, confidence, and emotional expression. It offers children a safe space to process feelings, a calming influence during stressful moments, and a meaningful way to connect with others.

In school, we see the emotional impact of music every day. Just this week, I spent time with a child who was finding the day particularly challenging. We decided to engage in some music together, and the change was remarkable. What began as a difficult morning became a much more positive and productive day. Moments like this remind me how grounding and uplifting music can be for young people.

Music also plays an important role in my own wellbeing. I try to protect my weekly orchestra rehearsals as valuable headspace time. For those precious couple of hours the busyness of life is paused, mobile communication is switched off, and I am able simply to "be". This space for calm focus is deeply restorative.

Given the profound benefits of music, I am very keen to expand musical opportunities for all children across both of our schools. My aim is to ensure every child is able to explore music in a meaningful and enjoyable way, regardless of previous experience or background. However, I would like to extend this ambition further. I hope to bring music not only to our pupils, but also to families within our partnership and the wider community. Both the LSA at Limpfield and PTA at St Mary's are very supportive of this and I am working with Surrey Arts to be plan how we can ensure music flows around both schools in a increasingly tuneful manner!

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Community Music Idea

I am currently mulling over an idea for a community orchestra/band, including the possibility of a workshop style day that would welcome:

- Children and adults who already play an instrument
- Those who once played and are considering returning
- Complete beginners who are keen to have a go
- Anyone who would like to participate through singing or vocal work



The purpose is simple: to bring people together through the shared joy of making music. If this idea interests you, I would be delighted to hear from you. I would especially welcome contact from anyone who could help support the initiative or participate in it as it develops. **If you would like to be involved, please do get in touch.**

Parent and Carer Survey: Autumn 2025



Over the Autumn Term, we invited parents and carers from both Limpfield Infant School and St Mary's Primary School to share their views on a wide range of aspects of school life. The survey offered families the opportunity to comment on what is working well and to raise any areas where further development would be helpful. Thank you to everyone who took the time to contribute. Your feedback has given us valuable insight into the daily experience of pupils and helps governors and leaders to reflect on how well the schools are meeting the needs of all children and families. We have already started to act on some of the perspectives and suggestions made by parents and carers.

Although the responses we received were very positive, thoughtful and highly valuable, we want to ensure that governors and leaders have a full and representative picture of parental views across both schools. The response rate last term was low, with only 20 replies from Limpfield Infant School and 38 from St Mary's. After discussion with school leadership and governors, we have decided to **reopen the survey until the end of February**. We hope that this will allow more families to share their voice and help us build a deeper and more complete understanding.

- Links to the survey will be shared again through ClassDojo.
- **A QR code will be available at both schools during the parent evening sessions either side of half term.**

Your feedback genuinely matters and plays an important role in shaping school improvement priorities. We are grateful for your continued partnership and support. If you would like any further information, or if you have ideas you wish to share directly, please do speak with a member of staff at any time.

Limpfield C.E. Infant School: Click [here](#) for the survey link ([Limpfield Parent & Carer Survey - Autumn 2025 – Fill out form](#))

St Mary's Primary School: Click [here](#) for the survey link ([St Mary's Parent & Carer Survey - Autumn 2025 – Fill out form](#))



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Online Safety



Feedback from the survey indicated that many parents and carers would value additional support with online safety, particularly in understanding how to help protect children from potential online harm while still embracing the many positive opportunities that technology offers. Families shared that they want clear guidance, practical strategies, and reassurance as they navigate this rapidly changing digital landscape. By working together as a community, we can ensure that children benefit from the wonders of technology while staying safe, informed, and confident in their digital experiences.

With Safer Internet Day being celebrated nationally next **Tuesday 10th February**, our IT providers, EduThing, are hosting a free to attend parent & carer webinar, **7pm - 8pm**, to support our parental community in key areas of online safety including:

- **Parental & Privacy Settings**
- **Introducing Devices & First Phones**
- **Screen Time**
- **Social Media**
- **Artificial Intelligence**



The flyer attached to this email contains the full information, with a registration link at the bottom.

Alternatively, [Click Here to register](#). You will receive the Zoom joining details automatically upon registration.

We are working with EduThing to find a time to have a specific workshop for our school communities in the coming months and will share details of this when we have a date!

An insight on INSET Training: *Use of Screens and Technology in schools*

In our January INSET day I worked with all teachers on our approach to the use of screens in our classrooms. I was hugely impressed with the teams understanding and knowledge about the benefits and challenges of screen use and reassured by the measured discussions we had across both teaching teams. We established that our agreed aim is to ensure that technology supports learning in a meaningful and thoughtful way, while also protecting pupils' health, well-being, and development. Screens can offer powerful learning opportunities bringing lessons to life through videos, images, and interactive tools, and they can provide valuable support for children who need additional help, including those with specific needs or language barriers. Screens can also help pupils develop important digital skills for later life, and they allow teachers to personalise learning and provide quick, effective feedback. We discussed the difference between looking at the big screen (interactive whiteboard) and the use of individual devices.

We also reflected on research that suggests that too much time on screens can limit hands-on learning and reduce opportunities for children to talk, play, and develop social skills. High levels of screen use can also make it more difficult for pupils to concentrate or manage emotions, and it may lead to eye strain or reduced physical activity. As Infant and Primary Schools, it is very important to us that children spend plenty of time engaged in real-world, practical, physical, and social learning experiences. I was very pleased with the introduction from one teacher about the tension between previous initiatives to try and introduce IT and computing in to as many subjects as possible and messages now asking for reduced time. This was a great point of discussion to ensure we are equipping children with the digital skills for their future in a purposeful way while ensuring the retention of a human and personal approach to teaching and learning.

To support this, we have collaborated on a simple and consistent approach to screen use across both schools. We now have a policy that outlines how screens should be used in classrooms, and we are ensuring that all screen-based activities are carefully planned and linked to specific learning goals. Our overall goal is to strike the right balance: using technology when it genuinely adds value, and avoiding it when it does not. We always use screens with purpose, and never simply for the sake of using technology. For your child, this means that screens will be used only when the task is purposeful and planned. Ultimately, they will benefit from a well-balanced mix of digital learning and traditional teaching approaches. In simple terms, technology is one useful tool among many, and it will never replace the high-quality teaching from our great teams or the rich, varied experiences that are essential to childhood.

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Attendance Matters...

The Department for Education (DfE) has recently updated the national rules and expectations regarding school attendance in order to help every child make the most of their educational opportunities. Good attendance is essential for academic progress, personal development, and positive well-being, and we are committed to supporting all families to achieve this.

In response to the updated guidance, the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Bodies have been working together to review and strengthen our School Attendance Policy for both schools. We will share the finalised policy as soon as it is fully checked and ready for publication. Our aim is to ensure that our approach to promoting good attendance is clear, supportive, and focused on helping every child attend school as consistently as possible. As part of this work, during the Parent Evenings taking place either side of the half term break, classteachers will share your child's current attendance level with you. This is intended to raise awareness and, where needed, begin an early and constructive conversation about how we can work together to improve attendance.

The purpose of Parent Evening is, of course, to discuss your child's learning, progress, and well-being. Therefore, any conversation about attendance will be brief and focused. If it becomes clear that further support or discussion would be helpful, a member of the school team may arrange a follow-up meeting with you after Parent Evening. Our priority is to work in partnership with families to remove any barriers to attendance and to ensure that every child benefits from regular, high-quality learning experiences. Thank you for your continued support.

Here are the key things families need to know that between our families and the school we need to ensure are understood by all:

Coming to school every day matters - Good attendance helps children: Enjoy learning; Build friendships; Make progress; and Feel confident and secure. Schools must promote a positive culture where attending school is seen as essential every day.

Working together with families - Schools are expected to build strong relationships with parents and work with you to understand any barriers that may make it harder for your child to attend. The focus is on support first, not punishment. If you are worried about attendance for any reason, you should talk to school staff as early as possible so they can help.

Clear communication about absences - Parents must:

- Tell the school straight away if their child is unwell or has a valid reason to be absent
- Follow the school's attendance procedures
- Request permission for any planned absence

Schools must follow up any unexplained absence on the same day.

Holidays during term time – Senior Leaders **cannot** approve term-time holidays unless the circumstances are truly exceptional. Unauthorised holidays may lead to a **penalty notice (a fine)**, following the national rules that came into effect in August 2024.

Support for children who find attendance difficult - Schools must give extra support to pupils whose attendance is affected by:

- Physical or mental health needs
- Special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)
- Challenges at home
- Social care involvement

The aim is to understand the reasons behind absence and work with families to put the right help in place.



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How schools monitor attendance

Schools are required to:

- Keep accurate daily registers
- Look at attendance patterns regularly
- Identify pupils who may need more help
- Work with other professionals (like the local authority) if attendance becomes a concern

If attendance becomes persistently low and support is not working or is not engaged with, schools may move to more formal processes.

Attendance is part of safeguarding

Good attendance is strongly linked to children's safety and wellbeing. The DfE now expects all schools to treat attendance as a safeguarding issue and to have a senior leader responsible for overseeing this.

Parents and schools are partners. The DfE expects schools to offer support, and families to communicate openly and bring children to school every day unless there is a genuine reason not to.

Luna around the schools and Ensuring Safe Behaviour Around Dogs



Luna has settled very well into her new schools, and it has been great to see how much she is enjoying meeting the children and families in our community. She has quickly become a part of school life, offering calm companionship, emotional support, and plenty of joyful moments – to children and staff! Many children look forward to seeing her each day, and it is reassuring to see that they continue to ask for permission before approaching or stroking her. This is excellent practice and an important message for all children when interacting with any dog.

As part of our commitment to keeping everyone safe, we would like to remind all parents, carers, and pupils of the importance of safe behaviour around dogs, particularly during busy drop-off and pick-up times. Please ensure that children do not approach or touch any dog without the explicit permission of the owner. This is especially important when a dog is tied up or unattended, as even the calmest and most familiar pets can react unpredictably if they feel unsure, startled, or overwhelmed.

Teaching children to interact safely and respectfully with animals protects both the child and the dog. We strongly encourage families to talk about safe behaviour at home and to model these routines when out in the community.

For further guidance, the following organisations provide helpful advice on how to approach dogs safely:

- **Blue Cross: How to Approach a Dog**
<https://www.bluecross.org.uk/advice/dog/how-to-approach-a-dog>
- **Battersea Dogs and Cats Home: How to Approach a Dog**
<https://www.battersea.org.uk/pet-advice/dog-care-advice/how-approach-dog>
(Battersea also offers a wealth of information about their wonderful work supporting and rehoming animals.)

Thank you for your ongoing support in keeping all members of our school community safe while ensuring that Luna's presence continues to be a positive and enjoyable experience for everyone.



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Dates for 2026 / 2027 Academic Year

I have left these dates in this letter to remind people of the dates for next school year.

Key Dates for next academic year (2026-2027):

Autumn Term (2026):	
Tuesday 1st September 2026	INSET Day – No children in school
Wednesday 2nd September.	All Children in School (Reception Children start dates TBC)
Friday 16th October	Last day of Autumn 1 (2-week half term)
Monday 2nd November	First day of Autumn 2 – all children back to school
Friday 18th December	Last Day of Autumn 2 / Break Up for Christmas
Spring Term (2027):	
Monday 4th January	First day of Spring Term – all children back to school
Friday 13th February	Last day of Spring 1 (1-week half term)
Monday 22nd February	First day of Spring 2 – all children back to school
Thursday 25th March 2027	Last Day of Spring 2 / Break Up for Easter
Summer Term (2027):	
Monday 12th April	First day of Summer Term – all children back to school
Friday 28th May	Last day of Summer 1 (1-week half term)
Monday 7th June	First day of Summer 2 – all children back to school
Friday 23rd July	Last Day of Summer 2 / Break Up for Christmas

Please note we have just 1 further INSET day to plan as we are using the others to align our school term dates with other local schools and will confirm the date of this early in the New Year – We aim to share the date of this additional INSET Day by Easter at the very latest.

