

Abacus Primary School

Newsletter 432

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Happy New Year to you all. I hope you've all had a wonderful Christmas break and let's hope for a much more enjoyable 2022.

It was lovely to see the children excited to be back in school on Wednesday—running and skipping up the path and I have loved hearing all about their Christmas adventures over the last few days.

As the new term starts, we welcome

Mrs Crouch and Miss Hassell to our team. Mrs Crouch is our new Deputy Headteacher and SENCo and Miss Hassell joins our teaching team full time as Red Class Teacher.

Following the success of our Craft Fair and Break the Rules day, we've got more exciting ideas coming up. Please keep an eye on our website for events and dates, these are updated regularly. This term we have performances from Years 3 and 4 towards the end of the term. Dates for your diary for the Spring term have been added to our school website: <https://www.abacusprimaryschool.co.uk/term-dates>

We are holding our last open day on Monday for children due to start school in September 2022. If you would like to book on to one of these tours, please contact the school office on 01268 571018. Applications for September 2022 close on 15th January 2022. You must submit an application online—<https://www.essex.gov.uk/admissions-to-essex-schools-for-the-next-school-year>

Applications received after this date are considered late and will reduce your chance of being offered a place at your preferred schools.

**STARTING SCHOOL
IN SEPTEMBER 2022**

WEEK 2

Next week we will be on Week 2 of our menu



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Important COVID-19 update

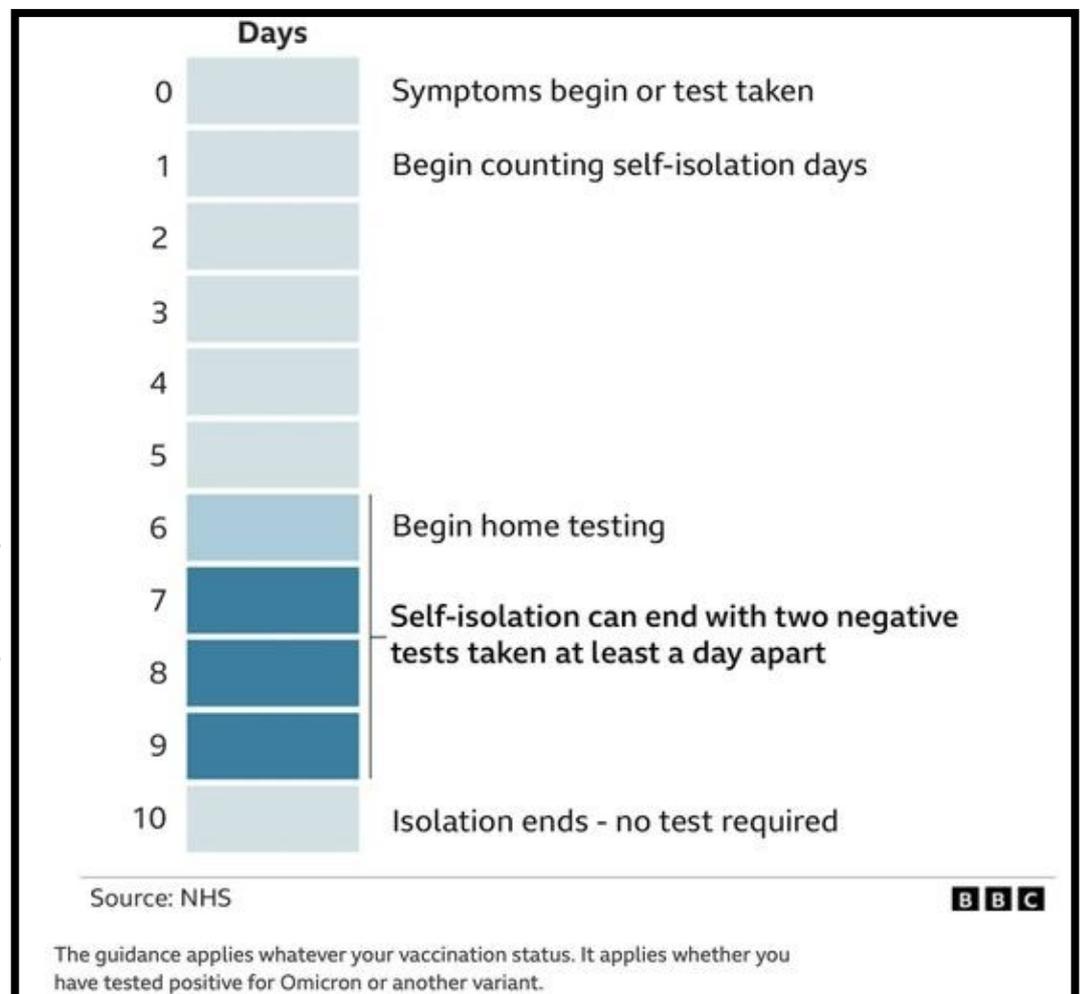
The requirement for confirmatory PCR tests is to be temporarily suspended for positive lateral flow test results. From Tuesday 11 January 2022, in England, people who receive positive lateral flow results for COVID-19 will be required to self-isolate immediately and won't be required to take a confirmatory PCR test. This is a temporary measure while COVID-19 rates remain high across the UK. Whilst levels of COVID-19 are high, the vast majority of people with positive LFD results can be confident that they have COVID-19.

Anyone who develops one of the three main COVID-19 symptoms should stay at home and self-isolate and take a PCR test. They must self-isolate if they get a positive test result, even if they have had a recent negative lateral flow test - these rules have not changed.

Under this new approach, anyone who receives a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test result should report their result on Gov.uk and must self-isolate immediately but will not need to take a follow-up PCR test. After reporting a positive LFD test result, they will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace so that their contacts can be traced and must continue to self-isolate.

In line with the reduced self-isolation approach announced on 22 December, anyone who tests positive will be able to leave self-isolation 7 days after the date of their initial positive test if they receive two negative LFD results, 24 hours apart, on days 6 and 7. The DfE guidance has also been updated in line with the UKHSA announcement, and clarifies that children can return to school after day 7 if they have had two negative LFD tests.

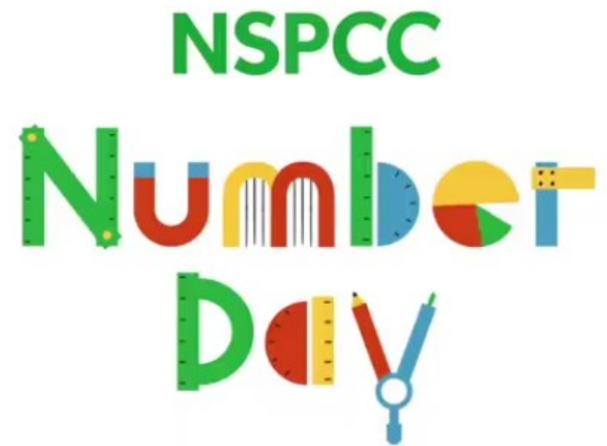
You should continue to report to us and Essex T&T as you are already doing so, treating positive LFDs as a confirmed case. Also as a reminder the test date or symptom start date is day 0, with isolation then being carried out for 10 full days, or LFD testing can start on day 6 but no sooner for release on day 7.





We will be holding our STEM week from 31st January 2022. Children will take part in a number of activities throughout the week which involve Sci-

ence, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. To end the week we invite the children to dress up on the Friday (4/2/22) as a Scientist, Mathematician, Engineer or a Technophile (a person who is enthusiastic about technology). This also coincides with the NSPCC Number day.



Happier January 2022

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
1 Find three things to look forward to this year	2 Make time today to do something kind for yourself	3 Do a kind act for someone else to help brighten their day	4 Write a list of things you feel grateful for and why	5 Look for the good in others and notice their strengths	6 Take five minutes to sit still and just breathe	7 Learn something new and share it with others
8 Say positive things to the people you meet today	9 Get moving. Do something active (Ideally outdoors)	10 Thank someone you're grateful to and tell them why	11 Switch off all your tech at least an hour before bedtime	12 Connect with someone near you - share a smile or chat	13 Take a different route today and see what you notice	14 Eat healthy food which really nourishes you today
15 Get outside and notice five things that are beautiful	16 Contribute positively to your local community	17 Be gentle with yourself when you make mistakes	18 Get back in contact with an old friend	19 Focus on what's good, even if today feels tough	20 Go to bed in good time and allow yourself to recharge	21 Try out something new to get out of your comfort zone
22 Plan something fun and invite others to join you	23 Put away digital devices and focus on being in the moment	24 Take a small step towards an important goal	25 Decide to lift people up rather than put them down	26 Choose one of your strengths and find a way to use it today	27 Challenge your negative thoughts and look for the upside	28 Ask other people about things they've enjoyed recently
29 Say hello to a neighbour and get to know them better	30 See how many people you can smile at today	31 Write down your hopes or plans for the future				

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS **Happier · Kinder · Together**

Hello!

Firstly, please allow me to introduce myself – I am Mrs Crouch and I am the new Deputy Head and SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator). I am a 4th generation local girl, attending North Crescent Primary School in the late 70s/early 80s, my mum being in the first intake to attend Beauchamps Secondary School upon its opening in 1959 and my great grandfather being the 'village bobby' in Crays Hill back in the early 1900s! I qualified as a teacher way back in 1996, starting my career at Wickford Junior School and having worked in Rayleigh, Brentwood, Benfleet and Thurrock over the last 25 ½ years before coming full circle to return to Wickford to continue my career at Abacus.



On a personal level, I have one husband, two children (a daughter aged 22 & a son of 19), one cat & one dog...but a class of 30 is still easier to manage than being a wife & mum! However, as a result I like to think that I am sympathetic to the worries and concerns of parents so please feel free to contact me if you believe I can help alleviate any that you may have. I am in school full time, working Monday to Friday. SENCo Surgeries are still being held - an appointment can be booked in the usual manner via the office but please speak to a member of the office staff if you wish to speak or meet with me sooner.

I have already been made to feel very welcome by the staff and children at Abacus and am really looking forward to working with you all.

With kind regards Mrs Crouch



Thank you so much to everyone who donated a gift for Silvana Court before Christmas. The residents were overwhelmed by your generosity and kindness.

Spring Term

TOPICS

Early Years Foundation Stage	What makes things grow?
Year 1	Paws and Claws
Year 2	Pirates!
Year 3	The Blue Planet
Year 4	Our UK
Year 5	Intriguing Inventions
Year 6	Darwin's Delights

Lots of prizes to be won!

Essex

Library

Services

Read, learn, connect.

Winter Reading Challenge

Saturday 27 November 2021 - Saturday 19 February 2022



Pick up a giant bookmark from any Essex library. Read six books to complete the challenge and collect a stamp for each library book you read!

Visit libraries.essex.gov.uk for more information

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

FORTNITE

CHAPTER
3

AGE RATING
PEGI
12

First released in 2017, Fortnite has become one of the most popular games in the world. It currently has around 350 million registered players. Developed by Epic Games, it began life exclusively as a 'battle royale' contest, where up to 100 online player characters would fight – with weaponry including rifles, handguns and rocket launchers – to be the last one standing. Today, it features multiple modes which each offer something different (although some modes, such as 'Save the World', are only available on certain platforms).

IN-APP PURCHASES

Not all of Fortnite is free. Save the World mode, for example, can become quite costly. An in-game currency called V-Bucks is used to buy items such as cosmetics, which are not a necessity to play the game. It can feel like buying them is essential, however – even for adult players. Making sure no payment methods are linked to the game's store is a good idea when children are playing Fortnite.

REPEAT SUBSCRIPTIONS

Fortnite now offers a monthly repeat subscription which costs £9.99 (or equivalent). This package offers different non-essential benefits every month – including fancy cosmetics, rare weapons, V-Bucks and special bonuses. Signing up, therefore, can be tempting for dedicated players. However, subscriptions cannot be paid for with V-Bucks earned in the game, only with real-world money.

COMPETITIVE COMMUNITY

Fortnite isn't purely a competitive experience (some modes prioritise cooperation), but the rivalry aspect remains central. Battle Royale is an especially ruthless mode, where the last player or squad left standing wins. Games can become heated, and players' desire to win can often cause excessively aggressive or "toxic" behaviour towards others – via the game's audio chat, for instance.

POSSIBILITY OF SCAMS

Popular games like Fortnite are often targeted by unscrupulous individuals trying to trick or exploit genuine fans. In Fortnite, scammers have been known to offer children free V-Bucks or vast amounts of V-Bucks in exchange for rare items – often asking the player to click a particular link. These scammers are seeking access to your child's account, personal information and payment details.

USER-CONTROLLED CONTENT

Some elements of online video games can't be rated for age appropriateness because the developer doesn't have control over them. In Fortnite, for instance, things like voice or text chat, usernames, trades and other player-generated content may not always be suitable for children. It also means that the makers aren't liable for anything a stranger might say to young Fortnite players online.

Advice for Parents & Carers

STAY AWARE OF SPENDING

Free-to-play games (that is, ones without up-front costs) can still be big financial drains. In Fortnite, for example, the Battle Pass – a set of rewards to improve players' experience in the game – can be either earned through playing or bought with real money (with additional incentives for the latter). With supervision, however, this can be a great lesson in money management for young people.

ENCOURAGE BREAKS

Gaming sessions can reach marathon lengths, especially when your child is on a winning streak and doesn't want to stop. Sitting in the same position for hours isn't healthy, of course, but it's an easy habit to form. Encouraging young ones to break regularly for drinks and so on will help them stay hydrated, rest their eyes and release some of the tension from competitive gameplay.

Meet Our Expert

Clare Godwin (a.k.a. Lunawolf) has worked as an editor and journalist in the gaming industry since 2015, providing websites with event coverage, reviews and gaming guides. She is the owner of Lunawolf Gaming and is currently working on various gaming-related projects including game development and writing non-fiction books.



TALK ABOUT TALKING

Communication is key in the squad-based Fortnite modes, and children will quickly realise that talking with team-mates online helps to increase their win rate. It's a good idea, therefore, to chat with your child first about speaking to strangers online, trading, scammers and other potential risks. Remind them that they can always come to you for help if they run into problems online.

DISCUSS OTHER APPS

Games like Fortnite can lead on to third-party apps (Discord, for example) where players can join a voice, text or – in some cases – video chat about the game. Certain add-ons also let children talk with other players from their local area, which clearly presents a potential risk. When discussing Fortnite with your child, you might also want to ask them about other apps they use while playing.