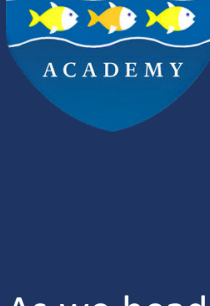




Witham St Hughs Academy
A L.E.A.D. Academy

Witham Newsletter

Headteacher welcome



What a busy end to term we have had! From some absolutely wonderful EYFS and KS1 Christmas Productions, to exciting class Christmas Parties and finally our festive carols on the playground this afternoon. The Christmas spirit has well and truly been present around Witham! We are really proud of how our children have finished their first term this year - positive, hard-working and with unity.

As we head into a well-deserved Christmas break, the whole staff team want to wish all of our families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

As always, if you do have any questions or queries, then please do not hesitate to speak to staff on the playground, or contact the school office.

Mrs Broadley



Welcome from Mr Coy



I am delighted to introduce myself as the new Headteacher of Witham St Hughs Academy from January, and I wanted to share how much I am looking forward to joining the school community. I have already spent time in school and had the pleasure of meeting many of the wonderful children and dedicated staff. Their warmth, enthusiasm, and pride in their school were immediately clear, and it has made me even more excited to become part of the Witham St Hughs family.

Having previously been a Headteacher and Executive Headteacher here in Lincolnshire, and later working in executive roles across London, Oxford, Leicestershire, and Nottinghamshire, I am very much looking forward to returning to a county I know and love. Witham St Hughs already has a strong reputation for excellent learning, care, and community, and it is something I am keen to continue building on as we move forward together.

My heart has always been in seeing children thrive, both academically and pastorally, and I am committed to working closely with families to ensure every child continues to feel safe, challenged, and proud of what they can achieve. I have an open and approachable manner, so please do come and talk to me at the gate; I am always happy to listen, meet families, and hear your thoughts.

Please also remember that Monday 5th January is an INSET day, so children will return to school on Tuesday 6th January, which will be our first day back together. I look forward to welcoming you all then, and I will be arranging opportunities during the first term for parents and carers to come into school so we can get to know each other properly. Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and a very happy New Year.

Warmest regards,
Sam Coy
Headteacher

Witham News



Early arrivals

We have noticed some of our Year 5 and Year 6 pupils arriving to/around school significantly early. This causes a concern around supervision and where incidents occur from lack of supervision, neither school or parents being aware until quite some time afterwards. Our main priority will always be keeping pupils safe, but we also want them to arrive at school ready to learn. If your child has permission to walk to school unaccompanied, please ensure they are arriving at an appropriate time - school gates open at 8:50.

Collection Arrangements

We completely understand that sometimes collection arrangements for children need to change. Wherever possible, please can arrangements for collection be shared directly with class teachers on the classroom door in the morning. If changes occur within the school day, please can these be communicated with the school office by 3pm at the latest. This is to ensure all messages can be passed on by the office team, and to ensure a smooth and safe collection process for all.

Smartphone Safety Session

We were so fortunate to have our Smartphone session last week delivered by the PAPAAYA founder - Dr Susie Davies. She shared some incredibly valuable, insightful and important information around children's mental health linked to smartphone use. Susie also shared a wealth of resources for parents to access to support their children in this area. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, this had a very low parent uptake. Feedback from the parents who did attend was incredibly positive which is brilliant. We are hoping to access the recording of this session to share with parents and carers as this expert-led session did come at a cost to the Academy.

Shoes & Trainers

A reminder that children should be wearing black school shoes and not trainers. Trainers are absolutely fine for PE lessons, but not day to day school wear. Many thanks for your understanding.

Grandparent Events

We were thrilled by the uptake of Grandparents and Grandparent-figures to our events last week - in total we welcomed 323 people to these sessions! All of the children enjoyed taking part in some Christmas crafts, showing our value of 'Enjoyment' in abundance!

Attendance Letters

This week we have sent out attendance letters informing parents and carers of pupil attendance for Autumn Term. This is for information only and includes all absence, both authorised and unauthorised. This is a new system to ensure parents/carers are kept fully informed of their child's attendance.



Uniform Rail

A reminder that our pre-loved uniform rail is available in the front office. Please do help yourself to anything that you may need, there is always lots available and is completely free to a good home!

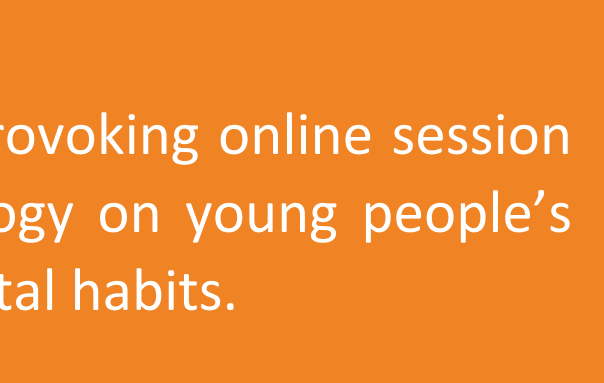


Pupil toilets

Unfortunately, we are again starting to see damage in some of our pupil toilets. We of course speak to the children regularly about our expectations of how all spaces in school are treated, but any additional support from home regarding treating our toilets with respect would be welcomed. Thank you in advance for this!



Online Safety & Wellbeing



Online Safety Workshop – Helping Families Thrive in a Digital World

We were delighted to welcome Papaya Talks for an engaging and thought-provoking online session on online safety. The workshop focused on the growing impact of technology on young people's wellbeing and provided practical strategies for families to create healthier digital habits.

The session began by addressing the pressures children face around smartphone ownership. Many young people feel that "everyone else in my class has a phone," which can make parents feel isolated when delaying access to devices. Papaya Talks encouraged families to work together, highlighting that when a committed minority delay smartphone access reaches 25%, the majority often follows. This collective approach makes it easier to set boundaries and resist social pressure.

One of the key messages was the importance of delaying the first smartphone for as long as possible. Research shows that mental wellbeing improves when smartphone ownership is delayed, and the younger the age of first ownership, the poorer the mental health outcomes for children. NHS data shows that self-harm among teens has risen by 93%, while outdoor accidents have dropped by 70%, reflecting a shift from physical to digital spaces for our children.

For families who do introduce smartphones, Papaya Talks recommended a stepwise progression: start with a basic phone for calls and texts, then move to a smartphone with strict parental controls, followed by a cautious trial of selected social media apps with time limits, and finally, gradual responsibility and freedom online. The workshop shared striking figures: UK children now spend an average of 4.5 hours per day on screens, which adds up to 75 full days each year.

Practical advice included modelling good habits as parents, such as limiting personal screen time and keeping devices out of bedrooms at night. The workshop also covered preventative actions like using parental control software (e.g., Google Family Link or Norton Family), blocking adult content, and monitoring downloads. Families were encouraged to create screen-free spaces during mealtimes and bedtime, and to promote hobbies and activities that do not involve screens. 73% of teens take their phone to bed, reducing sleep by the equivalent of one full night per week. These statistics underline the urgency of setting healthy boundaries.

Papaya Talks reminded us that we have the power to make positive changes. By working together and supporting one another, we can help children navigate the digital world safely and confidently.

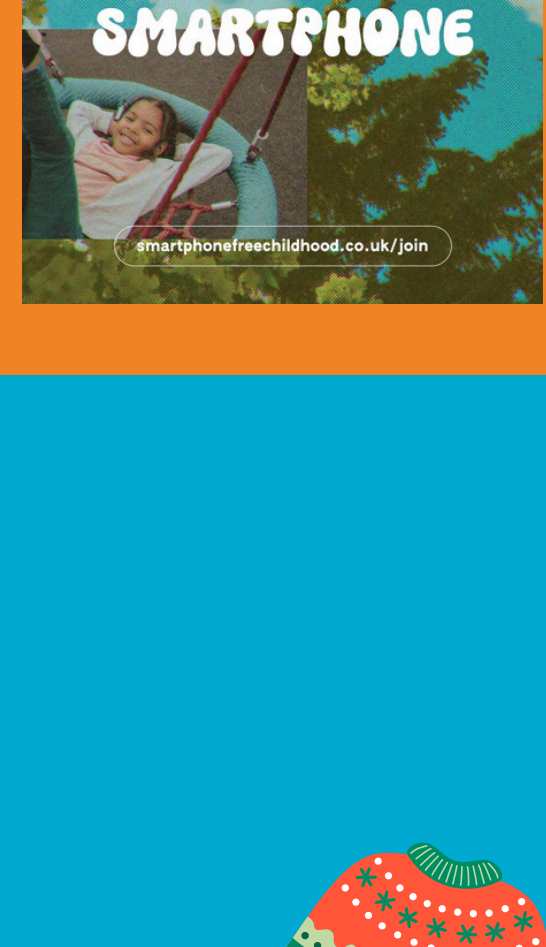
C.S. Lewis wisely said: "You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending."

Useful links:

- <https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/>
- <https://www.papayatalks.com/>
- <https://healthprofessionalsforsaferscreens.org/>

Useful books:

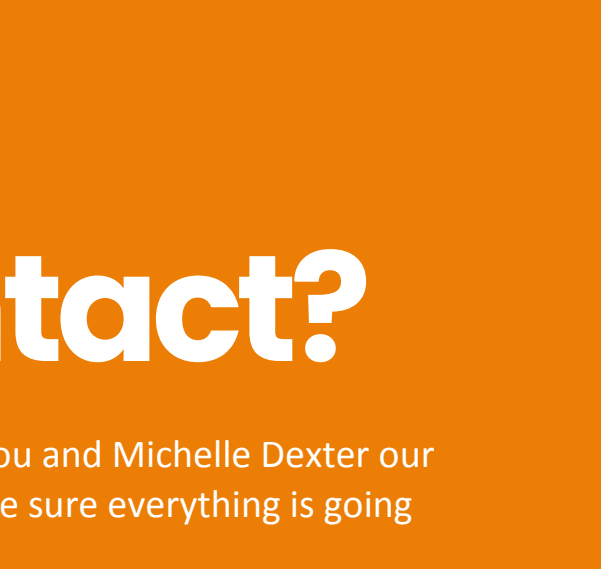
- The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt
- The Healthy Selfie by Dr Susie Davies



Diary Dates



DEC 2-3 EYFS Christmas Production	DEC 8 PTFA Breakfast with Santa	DEC 9-10 KS1 Christmas Production	DEC 11-15 Grandparent Events	DEC 12 Christmas Jumper Day
DEC 15 Christmas Lunch	DEC 16-19 Class Christmas Parties	DEC 19 Carols on the playground	DEC 19 Last day of term - 2pm finish	
JAN 5 INSET day	JAN 6 First day of term 3 for pupils	JAN 12 Spring term clubs begin	JAN 19-23 Maths in Action sessions	JAN 27 Y1 phonics parent meeting
FEB 9-13 Mental Health Week	FEB 10 & 12 Y6 Parents' Evenings	FEB 10 Safer Internet Day		
FEB 13 Last day of term				



Who to contact?

Remember that we are always here to support you and Michelle Dexter our SENDCo, contacts many parents regularly to make sure everything is going well.

Her email address is: michelle.dexter@withamsthughscademy.co.uk If you think that you need further support, then do not hesitate to contact the school on: 01522 869590 or admin@withamsthughscademy.co.uk

Witham St Hughs Academy
11-13, The Meadows

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