



Castle Newnham

Monthly Matters




BEST
BEDFORDSHIRE
SCHOOLS TRUST

March 2025

David (Year 3) as Captain Hook in
4SIXTEEN Theatre Company's production of
Peter Pan



Message from the Headteachers

Dear Families,

What a wonderful Spring term we've had at Castle Newnham! It feels like the school is all round a more positive place as we embrace the longer days and the promise of warmer weather.

As the daffodils begin to bloom and the sun shines a little brighter, we are also looking ahead to a busy and exciting Summer term including class assemblies in Primary and Sports Days for the whole school as well as many trips across all year groups. Of course, as we move further into the term, our focus will also turn towards assessments. These are an important part of the academic year, providing valuable feedback for both pupils and teachers to support future learning. We will be ensuring that pupils are well-prepared and supported in the lead-up to these assessments, and we encourage them to continue working hard and seeking help from their teachers when needed.

Both of us were absolutely captivated by our recent Year 3 & 4 production of Peter Pan! The talent and dedication of our pupils, both on and off stage, was truly remarkable. From the impressive performances to the intricate set design and seamless technical work, it was a testament to the hard work and collaboration within our school community. Congratulations to all involved – you should be incredibly proud of yourselves!

We are incredibly proud of the positive and proactive attitude we see from our pupils and the tremendous work of our staff. Let's continue to work together to make the most of this school year, embracing both the challenges and the opportunities that lie ahead.

Wishing you all a lovely Easter Break!

Kat Edwards Sara Levesley
Headteacher - Primary Headteacher - Secondary

THANK YOU!

We're saying a fond farewell to **Mollie McAteer**, Primary Class Teacher, who's moving on to a new school at the end of term. We're excited to welcome **Esther Richardson** to the Year 3 team. We're also saying goodbye to **Aisha Johnson-Dass**, Primary Teaching Assistant, and sending best wishes to **Amy Scott**, Head of Secondary Classics, and **Holly Baker**, Primary Teacher, as they begin their maternity leave this Easter.





Chair of Governor News

Dear Families



I am writing to let you know that at the end of this term I will be stepping down as Chair of Governors and leaving the Governing Body altogether at the end of the Summer term. I will be succeeded by my colleague Helen Ryan. I have been involved with the Governance of the school in some way for nearly thirteen years. In that time I have overseen or been involved with many exciting developments including Castle Lower and Newnham Middle joining as a federation and the most recent transition into BEST.

It has been an exceptionally interesting and dynamic position to hold. My motivation through all of this has been to ensure that all our stakeholders - governors, parents, families, pupils and staff have a school to be proud of and which delivers high quality education based on the values of our local community

Thank you for all your support and I am confident that I leave you in good hands under Helen's guidance.

Kind regards,
Tom Barwood

Dear Families

I have been a Castle Newnham governor since Autumn 2022 and it is a great privilege to now become Chair of the Board. I love being part of and serving this local community and can often be seen in a high viz jacket manning 'School Street' or involved in children's and young people's activities at Christ Church. My now adult daughter was part of the first GCSE cohort at Castle Newnham, benefitting hugely from the education and wider opportunities it offered. I have worked in education for over 30 years, including 12 years as a Primary Headteacher in Bedford Borough. Beyond all that, I love to cook, read, travel and change the colour of my hair!

I look forward to working more closely with Mrs Edwards, Mrs Levesley and the wider school leadership and to meeting more of you over the coming terms.

Kind regards,
Helen Ryan





Absolutely fantastic idea! Kids had the opportunity to celebrate their mums, express love and appreciation in a collective and creative environment.



Mothers and Others Event

On Friday 28th March, we invited Mothers (and others!) into school to complete crafting activities alongside their children. It was a fantastic day and so lovely to see so many people in school. We have had some lovely feedback as well as some thoughts on how we can improve events like this in the future.

“Really enjoyed the event. It was a pleasure to be able to join my little ones class. Made me feel more connected to the school and to my child”



“It was a really lovely morning and afternoon. Such a great event!”





World Book Day



Across the primary phase we celebrated World Book Day in a number of ways: children were asked to dress as a character from a book that they have read either this year or in a previous year group and the results were fantastic. Many classes were also lucky to either have a story read to them, or take part in a workshop with illustrator and author David Litchfield.

In secondary, pupils read Ray Bradbury's short story, *The Veldt*, which sparked thought-provoking discussions on the dangers of artificial intelligence. Adding to the fun, staff embraced the spirit of the day by dressing up as different adjectives—from sporty to sleepy and even sensational! Pupils took on the challenge of a quiz, trying to guess as many adjectives as possible based on the staff's costumes. Congratulations to 9CR, who emerged victorious with their keen eye for detail!





Duke of Edinburgh Award: Bronze



43 Pupils participated in their Bronze training walk. It was a tough 2 days for all, where they have learnt to cook on stoves, put up tents and also navigate around the countryside. After Easter, we will be going on their qualifying expedition.

Performing Arts

VISIT TO PINEAPPLE DANCE STUDIOS

34 secondary pupils went to Pineapple Dance Studios, London.

All pupils participated in a contemporary dance workshop and a commercial dance workshop both led by industry professionals. It was great to see the pupils in one of the world's most famous dance studios.





4SIXTEEN
THEATRE COMPANY

PETER PAN

Congratulations to the Year 3 and 4 cast and crew of Peter Pan, who performed to four sell out audiences, as well as some in school performances to Year 3, 4 and 5.





PE & SPORT UPDATE

Under 11 Netball tournament

Our Year 6 Netball Team competed in a local Under 11 Netball Tournament hosted by Bedford Girls School. The pupils played excellently and showcased some fantastic passing, shooting and defending. The pupils managed to win three games, draw one game and lost two - following these results we finished in 7th place out of the fourteen entered teams. Well done to all those involved in the tournament!

Sports Festivals Year 1 to 4

120 Pupils from Year 1 to 4 have been lucky enough to experience and attend one of our Multi-Sport Competitions, held by the School Sports Partnership, in the last few weeks. The children took part in activities including dance, invasion games, sports hall athletics, inclusive activities and scoreball. All the children demonstrated the School Games values throughout their trip and when they returned to school there were lots of smiling faces!

Year 5 and 6 Flag Football Tournament

10 Pupils attended their first ever Flag Football competition. This sport is American Football without the contact. They played four games in the group stages, winning two and losing two. We progressed into the quarter-finals and unfortunately lost to the eventual winners. Everyone had a really enjoyable time and there is lots to look forward to!

Sports Hall Athletics County Finals

All 3 of our girls teams attended this event at the start of the half term. Our Year 9 and 10 pupils narrowly missed out on a medal finishing 4th. Our Year 8 pupils finished 9th and our standout performers were our Year 7 team who finished 2nd. Well done everyone!

Year 7 Boys Rugby Tournament

We took Year 7 pupils to their first rugby tournament. It was a tough day for the pupils where they lost all their matches but they finished the day in high spirits.



Year 8 Boys Football

An excellent season for the team. Six games played, three won, one draw and two defeats. The pupils have played exceptionally well and it has been great to see their progress throughout the 6 matches.

Year 9 Boys Football

A tough group for the Year 9 team has seen us lose all of our 4 matches. The pupils have worked extremely hard throughout and we cannot fault their efforts. Next year should see them in a more competitive league. A real bonus is that we have used 20 players throughout the four games.

Girls Football Festival

We attended the Let Girls Play Football Festival at Biddenham. The pupils who took part were mixed up in teams with Anya and Erin on the winning team at the end of the festival.

Year 7 and 8 Girls Football tournament

16 Girls attend where we had a Year 7 team and a Year 8 team. Our Year 7 girls performed the best by finishing in 6th place out of 18 teams. Well done girls!

Year 9 & 10 Girls Futsal County Finals

Our pupils competed at the County finals and ended up 4th on goal difference, narrowly missing out on a medal. They played really well and the standard of the competition was very high. Well done to all involved.

Year 7 & 8 Netball

This year has seen us enter an A and a B team for both Year 7 and 8 Netball. It is fantastic to see so many girls wanting to play for the school team. We have competed well in all of our matches this season in both the district league and also the district tournament. Our Year 7 pupils continue to impress as they finished 3rd in the tournament, missing out on 2nd place on goal difference! We look forward to what the future holds.



Excellence in Science

This year marked Castle Newnham's first entry to international Chemistry Olympiad Competition. Designed to challenge and inspire, the UK Chemistry Olympiad (UKChO) is a unique opportunity for students to push themselves further and excel in the chemistry field. Participating in this competition will support pupils in accessing the highest quality STEM courses for their further education.



Castle Newnham entered five Year 11 pupils who have consistently achieved excellence in their chemistry GCSE and as a school we wanted to offer them the opportunity to compete in this challenge, usually only by private schools in Bedfordshire.

While all five pupils rose to the challenge, two pupils have managed to qualify for a bronze award, which only 1/3 of all pupils who entered managed to achieve, most of which are current A level pupils.

Congratulations to Filip T, Ben A, Bilal S, Arbri M and Leo H on taking the opportunity to take part and a special mention for Leo and Filip who qualified for a Bronze Award.



Science Week

Science Week was based on the theme 'Change and Adapt'. In primary, all year groups from Early Years to Year 6 took part in activities based on the theme. One activity was to make a poster based on the theme. Some of these will be entered into a national competition with possible prizes for both the school and individuals.

In secondary, pupils also took part in activities based around the 'Adapt and Change' theme. Pupils entered 2 competitions, one to design a labcoat based around how the development in robotics could help in areas of daily life and one to design a new device to improve air quality, after learning from the COVID pandemic. Key stage 3 pupils also looked at how animals are adapted for their environment and were challenged to design their own animal!



Year 3 PTA funded ceramic workshop

Year 3 pupils made ceramic dragon eyes this month with Miss Haddon. Linked to their Shang Dynasty topic, they featured shiny eyeballs and textured scales!



**PRIMARY SPONSORED READ
£2,560.93 raised**

HOUSE POINTS



31,018



30,926



30,604



Having read the story of Jack and the Beanstalk we really enjoyed getting to see and use a real life harp just like the Giant's. A parent of one of our children brought in her harp to show us and we joined in with playing and singing. We loved joining in with the interactive story, meeting Disney characters along the way. It was really fun guessing the character from the music and joining in with singing.



Pupils rise to the challenge starting bakery



PRECIOUS, AAI AND CHLOE BAKE THE ITEMS ON A WEDNESDAY IN CASTLE NEWNHAM'S KITCHEN

Alex Pope
BBC News, Bedfordshire
Reporting from
Bedford

30 March 2025

A school has created its very own bakery to sell cakes and breads direct to a coffee shop to help develop children's real-life business skills.

CASTLE NEWNHAM IN THE NEWS



Read the article here!

WEAR RED DAY





It's that time of year again! Please see the poster below for all the info on this year's CNS Fest. If you or your child would like to take part in the event by running a stall, please email cnperformingarts@bestacademies.org.uk


Castle Newnham and
the PTA presents...

CNS FEST

£3 Adult | Children Free
All proceeds shared between the PTA and school
departments for school development

LIVE MUSIC | FOOD | BAR
FACE PAINTING | BOUNCY CASTLE AND LOTS MORE!

**SATURDAY
28 June
12-4PM**

**Castle Newnham, North Site
Polhill Avenue**

**Hollands
Smith**



BEST appoints new Chief Operating Officer



We are pleased to announce that Mark Liddiard has been appointed as Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Bedfordshire Schools Trust.

Mark is currently a Senior Development Manager at The Football Association, where he has held a variety of roles in grassroots football over the last 24 years.

He is a long-standing governor at local schools, including being the current Chair of Governors at Robert Bloomfield Academy, and is also a Central Bedfordshire Councillor.

Mark was appointed following a two-day interview and selection process last month.

BEST Chief Executive Officer Dr Alan Lee said: "We are delighted to appoint Mark to be our next COO, following a rigorous recruitment process, and I look forward to him joining our trust. Mark particularly impressed us with his passion for education, commitment to the community and a proven record of hard work and delivery."

Mark said: "In my governance role at Robert Bloomfield I am already deeply rooted in the ethos and values of BEST, and I am delighted to be offered the opportunity to now work with all at the trust to support our young people. "I have a long-standing passion for education, which is often the gateway to widening the range of opportunities for young people to succeed in life."

Mark will succeed Craig Smith, who is retiring at the end of the academic year after eight years in the post.

Mark will join BEST in June and will work together with Craig for the second half of the summer term to ensure a smooth handover.

Craig said: "This is a strong appointment for BEST and I'm really pleased to be handing over the baton to Mark.

"Being invested in our communities is a core value that runs right through BEST. As a trust we are always keen to continue strengthening our community links and I am sure Mark, with his knowledge and connections in the area, will drive this forward over the coming years."



At The National College, our **WakeUpWednesday** guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, lists and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

SNAP STREAK

97 DAYS

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

SNAPCHAT

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

Snapchat is a messaging app which allows users to send images, videos and texts to others. Its best-known feature is that anything sent 'disappears' 24 hours after it's been viewed; however, users are known to take screenshots or use another device to obtain a photo of their screen. In 2023, Snapchat added a chatbot function called 'My AI'.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

My AI is Snapchat's new chatbot, which replies to questions in a human-like manner. However, the software is still in its infancy and has significant drawbacks, such as biased, incorrect or misleading responses. There have already been numerous reports of young users relying on AI for medical help and diagnoses, which could be inaccurate and therefore potentially dangerous.

PREDATORS AND SCAMS

Predators can exploit Snapchat's disappearing messages by, for example, telling a user they have leaked photos of them and will post them unless they're paid. Snapchat's own research found that 83% of teenagers had experienced this - in this app or others. This likely isn't helped by 'SnapMap' - a feature which highlights your exact position in real-time. This is useful to help friends keep track of each other, but could be used for more sinister reasons.

MY EYES ONLY

Snapchat has a hidden photo vault called 'My Eyes Only'. Users can conceal sensitive photos and videos from parents and carers in this folder, which is protected by a PIN. You can check for this by clicking on the icon which looks like two playing cards. This takes you to the 'Memories' folder which stores photos, stories and the My Eyes Only folder.

SCREEN TIME ADDICTION

Snapchat prioritises user engagement, with features like streaks (messaging the same person every day to build up a high score). The app also has sections called 'Discover' and 'Spotlight', which show tailored content to each user. However, this could also be seen as an attempt to hook users into watching videos endlessly. Furthermore, constant notifications can lure people into using the app.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some content on Snapchat simply isn't suitable for children. The hashtags used to group content are determined by the poster, so even an innocent search term could still yield age-inappropriate results. The app's 'disappearing messages' feature also makes it easy for young people to share explicit images on impulse - so setting continues to be a risk associated with Snapchat.

ONLINE PRESSURES

Although many of Snapchat's filters are designed to entertain or amuse, the 'beauty' effects on photos can set unrealistic body image expectations - creating feelings of inadequacy in younger users. Snapchat now also has 'priority' notifications (which will get displayed even if a device is in 'do not disturb' mode), increasing the pressure on users to log back in and interact.

Advice for Parents & Educators

UTILISE PARENTAL CONTROLS

Snapchat's 'Family Centre' lets you view the details of the child's account - their friends list and who they've spoken to in the last week - and report any concerns. You must invite a child to the Family Centre for them to join. To keep the child's location hidden on the app, go into settings and turn on 'GhostMode' and 'Hide Live Location', and ensure they know not to share their location with anyone.

BLOCK AND REPORT

If a stranger does connect with a child on Snapchat and begins to make them feel uncomfortable through bullying, pressure to send explicit images or by sending sexual images to them, the child can tap the three dots on that person's profile and report or block them. There are options to state why they're reporting that user - such as annoying or malicious messages, spam or misgendering as someone else.

FAMILIARISE YOURSELF

Before you allow a child to download Snapchat, download it yourself and familiarise yourself with the app. Snapchat has produced a parents' guide to the app to help you understand how it works and any protections they have in place. A link for this can be found in the resources below.

ENCOURAGE OPEN DISCUSSIONS

Snapchat's risks can be easier to handle if you nurture an open dialogue. For example, discuss My AI's responses to questions and how reliable they are. Talk about scams and blackmail before letting children sign up. If they're faced with a scam, encourage them to tell you immediately, not openly and non-judgementally about seeing, emphasising its inherent risks. Furthermore, explain how popular 'challenges' on the platform can have harmful consequences.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Buchanan 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.



Source: See full reference list on guide page at <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/snapchat-2025>



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