

Learning delivered with

Text Linked Curriculum



Hillcrest Primary School

TLC

NEWSLETTER

Friday 26th September 2025

Dear Parents /Carers,

Parent Consultation Evenings

The first Parent Consultation Evening of the year is now available to book via WisePay.

The dates are Thursday 16th and Tuesday 21st October with 10-minute slots available between 4pm and 7pm on both days.

It provides a welcome opportunity to discuss how your son/daughter has settled into their new class and a chance for parents to share any concerns they may have or, indeed, share any positive signs they have seen within their children since joining their new class.

Panto Trip

A reminder to parents that the annual trip to the Panto in Hunstanton takes place for Years 1, 3 & 5 on Friday 12th December with Years 2, 4 & 6 going on Monday 15th December.

Payments can now be taken on WisePay with the £13 trip money to be paid by Friday 21st November.

Year 4 & 5 Cinema Trips

Emails went out to Year 4 and Year 5 parents this week regarding a Cinema Trip which takes place on Wednesday 12th November to the Year 5 pupils and on Thursday 13th November for Year 4 pupils.

Both year groups will be travelling to the Cineworld in Ely where the Year 4s will see 'How to Train Your Dragon' and the Year 5s will see 'Kensuke's Kingdom.' Both year groups will be watching the movie versions of the TLC texts that they have been reading in class this term.

The Into Film Festival are providing the cinema tickets free of charge and therefore we are only asking parents for a contribution of £4 towards the cost of the transport to Ely. Could parents please pay these contributions via WisePay by Friday 24th October.

Uniform

Please ensure that all items of your children's clothing are labelled so that we can reunite children with lost items.

Inappropriate Use of WhatsApp by Parents

WhatsApp groups have proven a useful tool for parents of children in the same class to share reminders about activities that take place at school so that those who may otherwise have forgotten an important date, can be reminded.

This use of WhatsApp groups is understandable and entirely useful for many parents.

However, when that same WhatsApp group is used to openly criticise a member of staff over decisions that have been taken or, as an outlet for information that the children have come home and shared, then an important line has been crossed.

When it comes to information the children have shared about their school day, of course, it is always important to listen. Hopefully they will share the things they have enjoyed at school first and foremost. However, they may also come home and express unhappiness with something that has happened during the course of their day.

No adult, either based at home or school, would want the children in their care to be worrying unnecessarily about events at school. Teachers, teaching assistants, senior leaders and parents alike should all be able to work together to resolve any issues playing on children's minds.

However, when the child comes home with a complaint about their day whether it be a run-in with another child or a reprimand from a member of staff, it is important that parents get the full story by emailing the class teacher in the first instance. The incident that a child comes home and shares with their parents often needs some context and with the full information to hand puts a different perspective on the matter that has been raised.

The class WhatsApp groups are NOT a platform from which to openly communicate issues that your child has come home and shared. The correct approach if, what your child has told you, concerns you in any way would be to email the class teacher and give them an opportunity to respond.

Once upon a time, parent's unhappy with issues within the classroom may have chatted to a handful of parents in the playground, spoken to the teacher and then moved on. Now, it is easy to engage large numbers of parents in what becomes a long-standing spiral of negative communication which doesn't benefit the staff concerned, the school as a whole or the children involved. Indeed, such online activity by parents can be labelled bullying of staff and is not something that we will tolerate at Hillcrest. Our staff are incredibly vulnerable to communications via social media and what start out as innocent comments on a child's day, soon become personal attacks on a teacher's reputation.

Fortunately, those parents engaging in such online behaviour against staff at Hillcrest is a very small percentage of the parents with the school enjoying extremely positive and warm relationships with the vast majority of families.

However, as in all cases of human behaviour of this nature, it only takes a small number of people to cause a lot of unnecessary upset and anguish for staff whose main roles are to take decisions that help the children to make progress in the classroom and to ensure the children are safe. Those decisions are

not always easy and the avenues that one staff member will pursue compared to another will differ slightly as each teacher has their own personality and teaching style. It is this reason why, especially at the start of a school year when your child's previous teacher is still fresh in the mind, it is not useful to make comparisons between different teacher's approaches and it is definitely not appropriate to make these views known online to a wider audience.

We have long-standing procedures in the event that a parent feels they need to share a concern or have a query about their child's education or care. The vast majority of interactions we have with parents in person have followed these procedures with most resulting in very positive outcomes with all parties happy to have had the opportunity to share concerns and work towards solutions. These procedures are outlined below...

...Complaints

Whilst we believe that the majority of the time, most Hillcrest families are happy with the service that we deliver and the level of care and education that we offer, there are times when we could do better. There are occasions when some parents feel it necessary to inform us about concerns they have for their child whether it be something they are learning in class or an issue they may be having on the playground.

We are always keen to resolve issues when they first emerge so that they do not become huge concerns for the parent or the child.

At Hillcrest, we have a very clear set of procedures which we ask parents to follow when a concern becomes big enough that they feel they need to inform the school.

Route 1: When an issue first arises, please give the class teacher an opportunity to address your concerns. This is most effectively done through dropping them an email. However, if your email doesn't arrive until after 8.30am, it may not be answered until the end of the day as the teachers will be busy getting their classrooms ready to receive the children in the morning.

Route 2: After an initial meeting or email exchange with your child's class teacher about the matter with which you are concerned, you may still believe that the situation hasn't improved. If this is the case, and after allowing a bit of time to have passed to see whether steps put in place by the teacher have had an impact, please approach your child's class teacher again for a second time to make them aware that the same concerns exist. It may be they believe that the steps they have put in place have worked and it isn't until they are told otherwise that they know to consider further measures.

Route 3: If your original concerns still exist after having given your child's class teacher a couple of opportunities to deal with the issue, then please email either Mrs White, Assistant Head on SENDCO@hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk or Mr Martin, Deputy Head on DMartin@hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk At this stage both Mr Martin and Mrs White will consider the nature of your complaint and triage it. They will then pass your concern or complaint on to the relevant Senior Teacher who will give you a response once they have looked into the matter.

Route 4: Should you continue to experience problems after one of the Senior Teachers have been involved then please contact either Mr Martin or Mrs White again who will look further into your query.

Route 5: If you remain dissatisfied after taking all of these steps, then please contact Mr Try who will look into matters further.

In the event that you feel a parent, or a group of parents, online activity via WhatsApp, Facebook or any other form of social media is concerning and verging on inappropriate about any particular staff member, then please share your concerns, in the first instance, with the Deputy Head, Mr Martin who can be contacted at DMartin@hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk

Class Drop-In

The Wednesday morning class drop-ins will take place between 8.45 and 8.55am on the following dates...

- Wednesday 22nd October
- Wednesday 26th November
- Wednesday 17th December

Registering for Free School Meals

At present, the parents of children within Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 attending schools across England are entitled to Universal Infant Free School Meals. This means that no parent of any child within those year groups has to pay for a school meal.

However, this is different to benefits-related Free School Meals. There are many families in the community who could be benefitting from some additional support if they were to apply for Free School Meals.

At present, all families who have registered for Free School Meals, receive £15 supermarket food vouchers every month. This goes up to £30 over Christmas and the Summer holidays. In households with more than one school-aged child, you also receive a voucher for every child that you have.

The vouchers can be used at all of Downham's major supermarkets along with other chains that are available elsewhere



Please check the list below to see whether your family qualifies for Free School Meals.

The qualifying benefits are:

- Universal Credit - with an annual earned income of no more than £7,400 after tax
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for the four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Child Tax Credit (with no Working Tax Credit) with an annual gross income of no more than £16,190

If you have checked the list above and feel that you would qualify for Free School Meals and the additional support that comes with this, then you can either register online at <https://fiso.norfolk.gov.uk/synergy/Enquiries/Citizen/FreeSchoolMeals.aspx/>

or...

you can alternatively complete a paper copy of the application form that is available from the school office and either post it directly to the address at the bottom of the form or hand it back in to the school office and we can arrange to send it off for you.

If you would like some support with completing the forms either online or in hard copy, then please contact Mrs White, Assistant Headteacher at sendco@hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk

Attendance Matters

We have registered some fabulous attendance percentages across most classes since returning in September. It is great to have such a high proportion of the school in regular attendance and long may it continue.

Class	ACTUAL FOR SEPTEMBER	Target for October
Moons	99.31%	100%
Suns	97.16%	97.50%
Meteors	97.04%	97.50%
Nebulas	97.04%	97.50%
Comets	97.15%	97.50%
Planets	97.81%	98.50%
Mercury	98.02%	98.50%
Pluto	96.04%	96.50%
Mars	95.92%	96.50%
Saturn	96.93%	97.50%
Jupiter	96.67%	97%
Venus	99.36%	100%
Earth	94.69%	96%
Neptune	96.53%	97%

A massive congratulations to Venus Class in Year 5 who have recorded an attendance of 99.36% this month followed incredibly closely by Moons in Reception with 99.31%.

Norfolk County Council: Penalty Notices regarding school absence - Guidance for parents

Date: 25th September 2025

Regular school attendance and parent's legal responsibilities

At **Hillcrest Primary School** our aim is to collaborate with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

This guidance is to remind all parents about the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government is clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

The important legal information

The Government have introduced a single national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England. This threshold is **10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period**. These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence. The period of 10 school weeks can span different terms or school years.

In line with national guidance, the Local Authority (LA) retains the discretion to issue a penalty notice before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, where parents have taken several term time holidays below the national threshold. The LA also retains the discretion to consider going straight to prosecution where appropriate.

A maximum of 2 penalty notices per parent, per child can be issued within a rolling 3-year period. This period will start from the issue of the 1st penalty notice. The national framework also sets out the escalation process which applies to such penalty notices. If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. In Norfolk, where a pupil's attendance has met the national threshold for a third time within 3 years and the parent/s have already been issued with 2 penalty notices within that period, consideration will be given to prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which can result in a criminal conviction and fine of up to £2,500.

A parent includes any person who is not a natural parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty notices will usually be issued to the parent/s with day-to-day responsibility for the child's attendance or the parent/s who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

The first penalty notice issued to a parent for a child will be charged at £160 to be paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice, the second penalty notice to the same parent for the same child within 3 years of the first offence, is charged at a flat rate of £160 and is payable within 28 days. **There is no reduced sum available in this instance.**

Part payments or payment plans are not acceptable, and fines must be paid in full within 21 or 28 days, at the rate specified within the penalty notice. There is no right of appeal against a penalty notice.

Requests for leave of absence

[Working together to improve school attendance](#) advises all schools that they should only grant a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances, considering each request on a case-by-case basis. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school. Although we recognise the value and benefits of family holidays, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for a family holiday as the Government 'does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.'

Requests for leave must be made in advance, otherwise schools will be unable to consider your individual circumstances and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Headteachers are not obligated to reconsider authorising leave if an application was not made in advance.

Support with ensuring regular school attendance

If you require any support with ensuring your child's attendance, please contact **Mr Martin, Deputy Headteacher** at DMartin@hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk

NEXT NEWSLETTER IS OUT ON FRIDAY 24th OCTOBER