

Friday 2nd May 2025

HCJS NEWS



HEADTEACHER

----- ANDY LEACH -----

Financial Pressures and How You Can Help

The **2024 National Governors Survey** (covering over 3,000 governors and trustees in England) has revealed that **60% of schools and trusts see balancing their budgets as their biggest current challenge**—a significant rise from 44% in 2022. Alarming, only **18% consider themselves financially sustainable**, and **50% report that the condition of their school buildings negatively impacts the learning environment**.

These findings certainly reflect our own experience here at HCJS. Like many others, we are facing growing financial pressures and difficult decisions as we work to maintain and improve the learning environment for our children.

You may have seen our recent message via Weduc about the **Nest Garden project**. If you're able to donate any of the requested items, we'd be incredibly grateful. In the past, we haven't often had to ask for help, but with current budget constraints, we're finding it increasingly difficult to fund improvements to our grounds and facilities. We may need to reach out more often—and if you're able to support us in any way, shape, or form, please do get in touch. We'd love to hear from you.

One more challenge we're navigating is the **loss of our former PTA**, which has had a significant impact on our ability to run events and fundraise. Please see the separate article below for more on this and how we're hoping to move forward.

Smartphone Free Childhood

As I have written about a fair bit recently, there is a growing group of parents in our local area who are concerned about the effects of smartphones / social media on our children's mental wellbeing, academic progress and lost opportunities. Once a "rite of passage" in Yr 6, now the reasons for getting a phone are being questioned.

The Thame Partnership Smartphone Free Childhood group (and indeed, we as a school) would be interested to know your thoughts on the matter.

Please can I encourage you to fill out this 2-minute survey. <https://forms.gle/6byxeeayWi5awUp47>

We will of course share the results with you when they are out.

Friends of Haddenham Juniors (FoHJs)

I'm still debating the name, but one thing is clear—we really miss the energy and fundraising power of a PTA. That said, I wonder if the term "*Parent Teacher Association*" might feel a little outdated, or even off-putting, for some. One of my previous schools used the name "*Friends of...*", which I think better reflects the kind of group we're hoping to build: welcoming, flexible, and community-focused. So, I'd like to plant the seed here and give you a bit of time to think about it...

Are you a Friend of Haddenham Junior School?

And if so, could you spare a little time, or perhaps some creative energy to help us raise funds that will enrich and improve our school? We'll be sharing more details soon, including an invitation to an initial meeting. In the meantime, if this idea sparks your interest, we'd love to hear from you.

Attendance Matters

Regular school attendance is crucial to every child's academic success, emotional development, and overall well-being. A consistent presence in the classroom ensures that students benefit fully from the structured learning environment, peer interaction, and the continuity of education that underpins long-term achievement.

Research consistently shows that even small amounts of missed school can significantly affect a child's performance and confidence, particularly when absences occur during term time. Gaps in learning can lead to difficulties keeping up with work, disrupted routines, and increased anxiety when returning to school.

I wrote to you earlier this academic year explaining my concern on how term time holidays and unauthorised days were impacting our school's attendance. We understand that many families have booked holidays or made travel plans and we have honoured any booked pre-existing holidays for this academic year. However, from September 2025 we will be implementing penalty notices in line with the local authority guidance for unauthorised days taken during term time.

Penalty notices are fines and will be issued for more than 5 unauthorised days (or 10 sessions) of recreational or holiday-related absences taken during term time within any rolling 10-week period. This includes non-consecutive absences. For example, taking the last 2 days of one term and the first 3 days of the following term would count as 5 days and fall within the scope of this policy. The fine is typically £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if not. This change is being made to encourage families to plan holidays outside of term time, ensuring that pupils can access the full benefit of their education without interruption.

We recognise that occasional absences are sometimes unavoidable, and all requests for leave during term time should continue to be submitted in writing. We retain the discretion to authorise absences under exceptional circumstances.

We appreciate your cooperation and commitment to your child's education. By working together, we can support a learning environment where all students thrive and reach their full potential.

Many thanks for your support and cooperation.

Achievements and 'shout outs'

HCJS Pupils Honoured with Chief Scout Bronze Award

We were delighted to learn that five HCJS pupils—Cooper Rattray, Marcus Harris, Will Baimbridge, Rohan Thompson, and Arlo Dawson—have been awarded the prestigious **Chief Scout Bronze Award**. This recognition was presented at a special ceremony held on Saturday, 17th May. Each of the boys completed more than 100 challenging activities as part of their journey to achieving this remarkable milestone.

We were pleased to hear from the Cub leader volunteer team that the event was attended by the Lady Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire and the MP for Aylesbury. Both dignitaries offered their congratulations and praised the boys for their outstanding accomplishments. The Lady Lieutenant also shared with the boys a message of congratulations from His Majesty the King!

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNORS

We are delighted to announce that following the recent Parent Governor election process we have a new Governor. Mr Gavin Williams (whose child is currently at HCIS) will be joining the Board with immediate effect. We welcome Gavin and look forward to working with him.

Important Announcement: Upcoming Changes to School Communications

We know how important communication is to our parents and we are continually making changes to improve our methods of communication.

During the first few weeks after half term we will cease to use **Weduc** as our communication platform and will instead be using **ARBOR**. (Many of you may remember receiving your child's school report via Arbor last year). We will be sending out further details over the next couple of weeks but in the meantime please make sure you let the School Office staff know if you have recently changed your email address.

Breaktime Snacks

Just a reminder to send your child in with a healthy snack for breaktime. No chocolate, sweets or fizzy drinks please.

Upcoming dates:

Monday 2nd June: Open Books 3.30 – 4pm

Monday 9th - Friday 13th June: Year 6 Residential Trip

Monday 23rd – Friday 27th June: Sports Week

Friday 27th June: School Games Day
(Y3 & Y4 morning session – Y5 & Y6 afternoon session)

Tuesday 1st July – Bucks Transition Day

Monday 7th July: Open Books 3.30 – 4pm

Friday 11th July: Reports out to parents

Thursday 17th July: Year 6 Leavers assembly

Wednesday 23rd July: End of term, school closes at 1.30pm

HAVE A LOVELY HALF TERM BREAK

You can reach us at...

Haddenham Community Junior School.

Woodways

Haddenham, Aylesbury

Bucks, HP17 8DS

01844291829

office@haddenhamjun.co.uk

<http://www.haddenhamjun.co.uk>