

Executive Headteacher: Ms Sarah Jane Bellerby

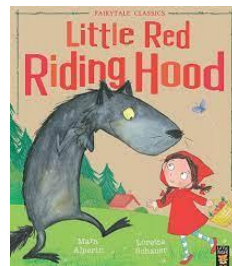
Friday 9th January 2026

Dear families,

We would like to wish you all a Happy New Year! We hope you and all your families had a very enjoyable winter break. With the New Year comes new Dreams and Goals!

This term our big question is '[What if Little Red Riding Hood's Grandma lived in the Arctic?](#)' Each week we will be carrying out an investigation to find out what she should wear, what food she should pack in her basket, the mode of transport she should travel on and who she might meet at Grandma's! Perhaps a polar bear, or maybe an arctic fox? These investigations will support the children in writing their own new versions of the traditional tale of Little Red Riding Hood. While we explore our big question, the children will learn about winter, different environments, comparing similarities and differences between our own local environments and participating in experiments. Experiments give children fantastic opportunities explore new vocabulary, make predictions, ask questions to learn something new and to explain their understanding of the world through science topics.

During our Understanding the World sessions and in our continuous provision, the children will learn all about celebrations such as the Chinese New Year. We will continue to learn that people have different beliefs and celebrate special times in different ways.



This term we will be reading the story '[Little Red Riding Hood.](#)' While the children become familiar with the traditional tale, we will be learning to retell the story orally. Retelling a familiar story provides children with opportunities to share a story in their own words, enabling them to be creative with their own ideas, linking to one of our core values. They will also have the opportunity to invent their own version of the story by changing key events to link to their learning about the Arctic and cold weather.



We will also be reading '[The Gruffalo's Child.](#)' The children will be exploring wintery environments through experiments that involve snow and ice and small world activities and in our Arctic Explorers role play. The

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children will imagine what it would be like in these wintery environments and compare them to where we live. They will explore questions such as:

- How would you keep warm?
- What animals live in cold environments?
- How do animals keep warm there?
- How is this similar or different to how we keep warm?
- What do you like about winter?
- Would you like to travel to Antarctica? Why or why not?
- What is the best cold-weather food? What is your favourite winter drink?
- What words can you use to describe cold weather?

Changing Weather:

As the weather has begun to change for the colder and wetter, we ask that the children come to school in appropriate clothing to ensure that they are able to continue learning outside. Please ensure all hats, mittens/gloves and scarves are labelled and that your child can put them on independently.

Please ensure that your child has a coat that they can put on independently and have begun to learn to do up themselves. By learning to do up their zips or buttons children are learning to persevere when faced with a challenge and to be proud of their accomplishments.

Phonics and Reading

‘The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go’ — Dr. Seuss

Phonics teaching is a big focus, and we will be supporting your children to become great readers and writers. Children will be regrouped and will be taught by either Marwah, Jen, Olga, or Rahena. An Arbor message will be sent out weekly by your child’s phonics teacher detailing what they will learn that week, and video links to support this learning at home.

In your child’s reading folder, they will receive:

1. Library book for enjoyment
2. Yellow reading journal
3. Big Cat reading book (Reading scheme book) or sound book.

Books are changed every Tuesday, however please make sure your child brings their reading folder to school every day.

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Please take at least 10 minutes to read with your child every night. This is so important for them as it will help to develop their communication, language and concentration skills, and fosters curiosity and creativity.

If your child is looking for more books to enjoy, please sign on to Oxford Owl's eLibrary. It has lots of books that they can read. Please see a member of staff if you need your child's login details.

When reading with your child each night you can ask questions before, during and after the reading. Understanding what has been read to us and understanding what we read is an equally important skill to becoming a strong fluent reader. These skills help the children think about what they are reading and being able to talk about or answer questions about the story. Here are a few **reading comprehension** questions that can be tried at home:

- Before:
 - What do you think this story will be about? What might happen in the story?
 - Where do you think the story takes place? How do you know? (Encourage your child to look at the illustrations on the book's cover).
- During
 - What is happening in the picture?
 - What has happened so far? Is it what you expected to happen? Why or why not?
 - What might happen next?
 - How do you think the story might end?
 - How do you think the character is feeling here? How would you feel if you were the character in the story?
- After
 - Did you like this book? Why? (Encourage your child to explain their reasoning in a sentence. This will help them develop their own opinions about books).
 - What happened in the story?
 - What was your favourite part? Why?
 - What was the most exciting part of the story? Can you find it?
 - Why did that character do...(give a situation/event from the story)?

Maths

We will continue to explore numbers beyond 10 in further depth by counting amounts, finding one more and applying our knowledge through problem-solving. Children are natural problem-solvers and learning different strategies or methods provides opportunities for them to apply previous knowledge in new situations. It will also develop their flexibility and creative processes when a problem arises.

Every week we will have a 'number of the week'. The children will learn all about the number and at the end of the week they will solve a problem independently. We will then explore the concept of 'one more'

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and 'one less' through games and problems. Being able to recall one more or less than a number demonstrates our understanding of number and their relationship with other numbers.

Here are a few activities that can be done at home to support your child's understanding of numbers:

- **More or less:** place a number of two different types of items either on the table or on the floor and ask your child to guess which one has more or less. Ask them to explain their reasoning and then how they can find out how many items there actually are. Then count them. Repeat. (Up to 5/10).
- **Number Matching:** write numbers onto some pieces of paper and get some objects/toys. Place the numbers upside down on the floor and choose one. Say the number and then count out the objects. Can you tell your adult what one more than this number is? One less?
- **Teddy Sorting:** Start with 5 or more teddies and provide 2 circles (can use string to make a circle on the ground). Ask your child 'How many teddies are there?' After counting ask 'Can you find a way to sort the teddies?' Once the teddies have been sorted into two groups, chat about how many teddies are in each circle; which one has more or less teddies and how they know. How many teddies are there? How can you check? Can you find a different way of sorting the teddies? Spend time exploring different ways of sorting the teddies into 2 groups. If you're up for a challenge you can also try it in groups of 3. Try drawing a picture of the groups of teddies, labelling the groups with numbers. As an additional challenge ask your child to sort the teddies into three groups and explore if the teddies can be equally shared this way.

Here are important days of our week:

Thursday - The children will be having PE with a sports coach each week. The children will not need PE clothing at this point of the year. The coach will be developing the children's coordination and gross motor skills.

Friday- Every Friday we will cook or bake something as a class.

Friday – Celebration assembly where we celebrate what has happened in the Early Years. Your child will get a chance to be 'star of the week' and get a certificate. They will also get a sticker if they come to school every day. Also, one child from each class will take Goldy/Stripy or Bluey/Bingo home for the weekend. During our Celebration assembly each class will have the opportunity to win the attendance trophy for their class and keep the trophy for the week.

Home Learning

Home Learning is an effective tool used to support the learning in the classroom and to help children develop into independent learners. In EYFS, children learn through experiences, hands-on learning and play. Home Learning will focus on developing and supporting communication/language skills, understanding of the world, and physical development. Take a look on the school website to find out more about what we will be busy learning at school, and how you can further develop your child's learning at home: [Early Years Curriculum – Mulberry Wood Wharf](#). Home Learning will be set as projects where the children will be able to learn or create something to share with their classmates. This half term's home learning will be:

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- **What is winter?:** explore the season of winter by making lists or drawing pictures of clothing we use in the winter. Can you think of a meal that you like the best in winter? Try making it with your family. What cooking utensils or ingredients do you need? Go for a walk and compare how nature in winter looks in comparison to summer. What is the same or different?
- **Maps:** Maps help us know where to go or show us how to get the places. Can you make a map of your local area? Where do you live? What is nearby (shops, library, parks, etc...)? Can you label your map using your phonics?
- **Helping Hand:** Winter can be a difficult time for many animals. How can we help them through these dark cold months? Can you make a feeder or home for birds or small animals? What materials could you use from your home (bottles, cartons, honey, seeds, cotton wool, etc...)? Can you draw a plan/design and explain how you will make it?

Please share your home learning on Tapestry. We look forward to seeing your home learning projects and sharing them with the class.

School Trip

Exciting news! The children will be visiting Cubitt Town Library to support their growing love of reading.

Tiger class – Monday 12th January

Blue Whale class – Tuesday 13th January

We will be leaving school at 10:50am and returning by 12:30pm.

We have also planned a fun trip for Blue Whale and Tiger class to visit the Soanes Centre to support our Scientific enquiry and exploration.

Blue whale class – Tuesday 20th January

Tiger class – Wednesday 21st January

We will be leaving school at 9:15am and returning by 12.30pm. We ask that the **children arrive at school at 8:30am** on their trip day to ensure that we leave on time.

Learning Journeys – Tapestry

We are uploading photos and videos of your child's learning in school to their learning journals. Also, feel free to add your own photos if you wish; it is always wonderful to see the learning that goes on outside of school too. Please speak to a member of the team if you haven't accessed your Tapestry account.

Healthy bodies, healthy minds.

A gentle reminder that healthy children need:

- Plenty of sleep: 10-12 hours every night. This means bedtime at 7pm!
- Fresh fruit and vegetables every day.
- Lots of water to drink.
- Clean, healthy teeth – your child must brush their teeth **every morning** and **every night** before bed to stay healthy.

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PLEASE ENSURE YOUR CHILD HAS A WATER BOTTLE WITH THEM EACH DAY so they can drink freely throughout the day.

Important events / diary dates:

Cubitt town library visit – 13th January (Blue whale) 12th January (Tiger class)
Soanes Centre trip – 20th January (Blue Whale) and 21st January (Tiger class)
Chinese New Year – 17th February

Thank you for your continued support!

The Reception Team