



GAINFORD C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

NEWSLETTER

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FEBRUARY 2026

Together we love, learn and flourish – John 13.34-35

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- **Monday 9th February – Sunday 15th February** – Children’s Mental Health Week
- **Tuesday 10th February** – Safer Internet Day
- **Tuesday 17th February** – Y5/6 Netball Tournament
- **Thursday 19th February** – Y1/2 Multi Skills Festival
- **Friday 20th February** – Last day of Spring Term 1
- **Monday 2nd March** – Return to school for Spring Term 2
- **Thursday 5th March** – World Book Day



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CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

This week in school we will be celebrating Children’s Mental Health Week (**9th – 15th February**)

This year's theme is '**This is My Place**'.

It focuses on fostering a sense of belonging and community, helping children feel seen and understood.

What is Belonging?

- Feeling that you have a place where you are always welcome and valued as either place or set of people.
- A place you belong with your family and friends.
- Feeling included, not left out.
- Belonging means feeling a connection with something, feeling like I am meant to be there with no stresses or worries. It's all about feeling safe.
- Feeling a part of something e.g. a group or society.
- People accepting you as you are.

Parents can access free, expert developed resources including activity ideas and tips to support their child's emotional wellbeing at home - just click on the link below.

<https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/resources/#families>



SAFER INTERNET DAY

We will be celebrating Safer Internet Day on **Tuesday 10th February 2026**. This year's theme is "**Smart tech, safe choices – Exploring the safe and responsible use of AI.**"

Throughout the day, children will be learning about how artificial intelligence, voice assistants and online algorithms work, and how to use technology safely, responsibly and thoughtfully. The focus is on helping children build the skills and confidence they need to navigate an increasingly digital world.

Parents and carers can find helpful guidance and conversation starters at:

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/safer-internet-day-2026/top-tips-for-parents-and-carers>

We would also like to share some additional helpful websites and resources for parents, offering clear and practical guidance on online safety, artificial intelligence and how to support your child online.

Childnet – advice for parents/carers about social media, gaming, online bullying and more.

<https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/parents-and-carers>

Kids Online Safety (UK government campaign) – practical steps and discussion tips to help protect children online.

<https://kidsonlinesafety.campaign.gov.uk/>

Internet Matters – guides on parental controls, starting conversations and understanding AI in kids' digital lives.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/>

Parentkind Online Safety Toolkit – UK-focused advice on screen time, cyberbullying, social media and digital wellbeing.

<https://www.parentkind.org.uk/online-safety-toolkit>

NSPCC – Talking to children about AI – guidance on discussing artificial intelligence and keeping online interactions safe.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-to-children-about-ai/>



saferinternetday.org.uk

SCHOOL UNIFORM

A big thank you to everyone who has provided plimsolls for their child to wear indoors. This has made a real difference in reducing the amount of mud coming into classrooms and corridors, and it really helps us keep the school clean and tidy. We would also like to remind parents that, in line with our school uniform policy, **leggings are not permitted**. Children's uniform must consist of trousers, skirts, or a school dress. Further information can be found on our website: [Gainford C of E Primary School Uniform](https://gainford.cofe.sch.uk/uniform).

Many thanks for your continued support with this.

PRAYER SPACE IN SCHOOL

You may be aware that, sadly in January a former pupil, Sam Coutts passed away. Our thoughts and prayers remain with his family.

In his memory, we have created a prayer space in school, which is open to pupils, parents and former pupils. Visitors are welcome to spend some quiet time there and place a prayer on the prayer tree. This space offers a calm place for reflection and remembrance. May our shared prayers be a source of comfort and peace to all.



PE DAYS – SPRING TERM 2026

- **Swale Class** (EYFS) - Tuesday & Thursday
- **Swale Class** (Y1 & Y2) - Thursday & Friday
- **Wear Class** (Y3 & Y4) Tuesday (swimming) & Thursday
- **Tees Class** (Y5 & Y6) Tuesday & Thursday



Also, for PE lessons, we kindly ask that children either wear trainers to school or have a pair of trainers and socks (especially if they usually wear tights) packed in their PE bags – thank you.

TEES CLASS NETBALL COMPETITION

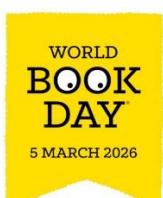
Pupils from Tees Class will be participating in a Y5/Y6 Netball Competition at Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre on **Tuesday 17th February (9.00am-11.30am)**. Our staff will accompany the pupils and parents do not need to attend. This is for your information only.

The bus will leave promptly at 9.00am. Please ensure that pupils come to school in their school PE kits, have a water bottle and wear a warm coat – thank you!



WORLD BOOK DAY

We're excited to celebrate World Book Day on **Thursday 5th March**. Children are invited to **dress up as their favourite book character** and bring in a copy of the book if they can. During the day, we'll have a range of fun reading activities and we're looking forward to seeing everyone's costumes. If you have any old costumes that your child has grown out of and would like to donate, please feel free to send them in. We can let other parents know so they can use them too.



FOGS UNIFORMERLY

Have you visited our preloved uniform shop recently? It's a simple way to find the items you need, save money and support both the environment and Friends of Gainford School. Why not take a look.

[**Gainford Uniformerly**](https://uniformerly.com/gainford-primary-school-uniformerly)



Uniformerly - Helping Parents Pockets and Planet

YEAR 1 & 2 MULTI-SKILLS

Year 1 & 2 pupils will be taking part in a multi-skills festival at Staindrop Academy on **Thursday 19th February (9.30am-11.30am)**.

Our staff will accompany the pupils and parents do not need to attend. This is for your information only.



Dressing up ideas



[**https://www.worldbookday.com/resources/dressing-up-ideas-for-parents-and-carers/**](https://www.worldbookday.com/resources/dressing-up-ideas-for-parents-and-carers/)

HEADTEACHER GOLD AWARDS

Week 8 – Working towards a goal/target

Florence S, Sam & Thea

Week 9 – Creativity

Milo, Charlotte & Isobel

Week 10 – Being Resilient

Esome, Jessica & Phoebe

Week 11 – Showing confidence and perseverance

Beatrice, Bonnie & Kyle

Week 12 – Showing Initiative

Harriet, Camilla & Phoebe

Week 13 – Excellent work in Phonics / Reading

Frankie, Angus & Harry

Week 14 – Fantastic effort in RE

Esome, Sam & Isobel



Keep Up the Fantastic Work!

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCE POLICY

2025-2026

Just a reminder that our **Attendance and Absence Policy 2025-2026** is available on our school website.

https://www.gainfordcofeprimary.co.uk/web/school_policies

This has been updated in line with updated Government guidance and regulations including information linked to issuing fixed penalty notices. I would be grateful if you could ensure you read this document carefully and are fully aware of the legal requirements around attendance - thank you.

ATTENDANCE

Our minimum target is 96%

Well done to Swale & Wear Class who have achieved attendance levels in line / above this target. Class Tees you're nearly there! Fantastic work!

Swale	Wear	Tees
97.8%	97.3%	94.3%

Current Whole School Attendance is **96.4%**
Well Done Everyone!



FRIENDS OF GAINFORD SCHOOL

The Friends of Gainford School (FOGS) do an incredible job raising money that benefits all our children. Their hard work has funded things like Accelerated Reader, school trips and even our stage for performances. This year alone, they've spent nearly £1,000 on transport, allowing every pupil to enjoy exciting trips. Without FOGS, we'd either have to ask for higher contributions from parents or worse, cancel or reduce trips and many of the extras that make Gainford so special might not happen.

The same small group of parents has run FOGS for many years and this is their final year. **TO KEEP FOGS RUNNING, WE URGENTLY NEED NEW PARENTS AND CARERS TO STEP IN. EVEN A LITTLE OF YOUR TIME CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE!**

If you'd like to get involved or just find out more, please contact the school office.



SAFEGUARDING

At Gainford C of E Primary School, we are passionate about and committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and we expect all staff and visitors to share this commitment. Any concerns about children are passed through the members of staff who are trained as Designated Child Protection Leads. In our school, these are myself (Mrs Whitaker) and Miss Smith. We also have two link Safeguarding Academy Councillors - Mr Deakin and Mrs Hawlor.



Mrs Whitaker



Miss Smith



Mr Deakin



Mrs Hawlor

We have robust policies in place to ensure the well-being of our children. These policies underpin our practice and values shared by every single member of staff in our school.

Copies are available from the school office or via our website

<https://www.gainfordcofeprimary.co.uk/web/safeguarding/> &

https://www.gainfordcofeprimary.co.uk/web/school_policies/

Please note that if you are ever worried or concerned about a child's safety, please do not hesitate to speak to the Designated Safeguarding Leads straight away.

WELL DONE SARAH!

We're delighted to share that Sarah, our School Cook, has achieved the top rating of 5 (Very Good) in her recent Food Premises Inspection and Food Hygiene check.

A huge well done, Sarah! Your hard work and dedication make our school meals safe, healthy and absolutely delicious.

We're lucky to have you! 😊



For children aged 7 – 12 years

Come and Join YOUTH SAINTS



Thursday 12th March 2026

Theme – All About Families

6.30pm - 8.00pm

New children especially welcome
Contact Sheila Jones for more information: sheilajones.nbvtd@gmail.com

Love to SING?

Ages 5-13

Mondays 5.30-7.00 pm

Cleasby & Stapleton Village Hall

CRESCENDO JUNIOR CHOIR

Songs and games
 Expert coaching
 Make new friends
 Build confidence
 Perform
 Have fun!

PLACES AVAILABLE

FIRST WEEK FREE

CONTACT: 07586321193

www.musicforall-darlington.co.uk /choirs/CJC

www.facebook.com/MissAnnaCSmith

Come and try

SCOTTISH DANCING

For children in School Years 3-12

Come and try

SCOTTISH DANCING

For children in School Years 3-12

No experience needed
 First week free
 Great fun!

A68 YOUNG SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCERS

FRIDAYS 4.30-5.30 pm HUMMERSKNOTT ACADEMY DARLINGTON

Places available now!

CONTACT MISS SMITH ON 07586321193

Affiliated to the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society

Places available now!

CONTACT MISS SMITH ON 07586321193

Parent Carer (of children and young people aged 0-25yrs)

TRAINING & information Sessions

Emotional Wellbeing

Tuesday 13th January 2026 9.30 am—11.30 am

This session will focus on emotional wellbeing, what is it and how can we improve it for ourselves and our children.

Understanding Behaviour Development in Children & Young People

Tuesday 3rd February 2026, 9.30 am—11.30 am

This session will look at behavioural norms in the developing child and how adult behaviour influences this. We will look at the challenges parents and carers may face and how they can support their children and young people to develop resilience and manage risk as they grow to adulthood and independence.

Understanding Why Children Might Be Anxious About School

Tuesday 17th February 2026, 9.30 am—11.30 am

This is an awareness session to increase understanding of why children might be anxious about school, identify potential triggers and look at available support and strategies. This session is suitable for parents/carers of all school aged children but may be of limited value to parents of children with more complex needs.

Anxiety (Two age groups)

Over 11 years

Tuesday 3rd March 2026, 9.30am—11.30am

Tuesday 31st March 2026, 9.30am—11.30am

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Over 11 years

Tuesday 24th March 2026, 9.30 am—11.30 am

Tuesday 28th April 2026, 9.30 am—11.30 am

This session looks at what anxiety is, what the triggers might be, how to identify it and how we can support our children and young people.

Please book a place using the link or QR code directly below:

[CAMHS Training Booking Form - Parents Carers](https://www.yourmancamhs.org/training/parents-careers)

To visit our Trust website, for further information, please scan the QR code at the bottom of this page. The sessions are aimed at parents of school aged children but parents of younger/older children are very welcome. The sessions will be led by a CAMHS trainer and run on Microsoft Teams. If you have any additional needs, please email tearv.countyyourmancamhs@nhs.net

NHS

Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys
NHS Foundation Trust

MCT DURHAM PCF
Durham County Council

DURHAM SEND iASS
www.durhamsendiass.info
0191 5873541

Together for Better
Darlington Board Care Forum

carers support
www.darlingtonpcf.co.uk
Tel: 0300 0051213

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Parent and carer support group in County Durham and Darlington

Do you care for a child or young person with emotional or mental health difficulties?

Join Waves, our parent and carer support group, in County Durham and Darlington

Led by a friendly parent peer practitioner and supported by a CAMHS staff member, the group will listen, support and give advice and guidance based on their own lived experiences.

There's no need to book.

If you have any questions, email the team at TEWW.waves@nhs.net



2026 locations and dates:

Acley Centre, Carers Way, Newton Aycliffe, DL5 4PE

6pm - 8pm

21st January	15th July
18th February	19th August
18th March	16th September
15th April	21st October
20th May	18th November
17th June	16th December

Lanchester Road Hospital, Durham, DH1 5RD

10am - 12noon

7th January	1st July
4th February	5th August
4th March	2nd September
1st April	7th October
6th May	4th November
3rd June	2nd December

SENDIASS, Lee House, Lee Terrace, Easington Village, Peterlee, SR8 3AB

10am - 12noon

20th January	21st July
17th February	18th August
17th March	15th September
21st April	20th October
19th May	17th November
16th June	15th December

Mulberry Centre, Rowan Building, Darlington Memorial Hospital, DL3 6HX

10am - 12noon

6th January	7th July
3rd February	4th August
3rd March	1st September
7th April	6th October
5th May	3rd November
2nd June	1st December

NHS
Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys
NHS Foundation Trust

Fancy snapping up a bargain?

Join us at our

Tots to Teens: Pre-loved Sale

A brilliant chance to browse quality second-hand toys and clothes for babies, children and teens.



For One
Day
ONLY

TOTS TO TEENS:
PRELOVED SALE

CASH
ONLY

Saturday 21st February
10am - 2pm

the **Witham** Barnard Castle | DL12 8LY

EARLY REMINDER STANDARDISED TESTS

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/primary-assessments-future-dates#academic-year-2025-to-2026>

If you have a child in either Year 1 / Year 2 / Year 4 or Year 6 please click on the following links below for further information:

- [Key Stage 1 SATS Parents Guide](#)
- [Key Stage 2 SATS Parents Guide](#)
- [Assessment Results at the end of key stage 2: information for parents](#)
- [Year 4 Multiplication Check Information for Parents Guide](#)
- [Year 1 Phonics Screening Check Parents Guide](#)

KEY DATES

STANDARDISED TEST	WEEK COMMENCING
Year 6 SATs	Monday 11th May 2026 – Thursday 14th May 2026.
Year 2 SATs (optional)	It is recommended that the optional key stage 1 tests are administered during May 2026 .
Year 4 Multiplication Check	Schools must administer the multiplication tables check within the 2-week period from Monday 1st June 2026 .
Year 1 Phonic Screening Check	Schools must administer the phonics screening check within the 1-week period from Monday 8th June 2026 .

Term Dates 2025-2026

Holiday	Closing date	Date re-opens
Spring half-term 2026	Friday 20 th February 2026	Monday 2 nd March 2026
Easter 2026	Thursday 2 nd April 2026	Monday 20 th April 2026
May Day 2026	Friday 1 st May 2026	Tuesday 5 th May 2026
Summer half-term 2026	Thursday 21 st May 2026	Monday 1 st June 2026
Summer 2026	Friday 17 th July 2026	TBC

Teacher Training Days

2025-2026

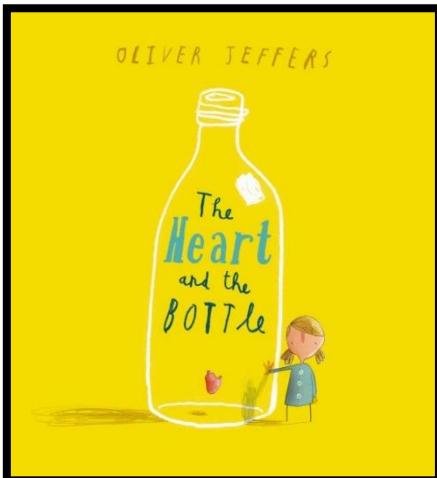
- ~~Monday 1st September 2025~~
- ~~Tuesday 2nd September 2025~~
- Friday 22nd May 2026
- Monday 20th July 2026



Many thanks for your continued support.

Mrs Whitaker & The Gainford Team x

Recommended Reads

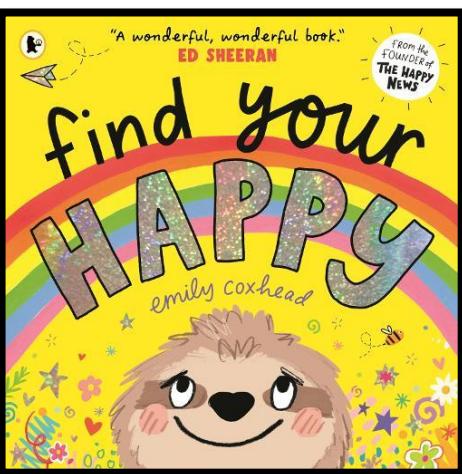


[The Heart and the Bottle by Oliver Jeffers](#)

Award-winning picture book star Oliver Jeffers explores themes of love and loss in this life-affirming and uplifting tale.

Once there was a girl whose life was filled with wonder at the world around her...

Then one day something happened that made the girl take her heart and put it in a safe place. However, after that it seemed that the world was emptier than before. But would she know how to get her heart back? In this deeply moving story, Oliver Jeffers deals with the weighty themes of love and loss with an extraordinary lightness of touch and shows us, ultimately, that there is always hope.

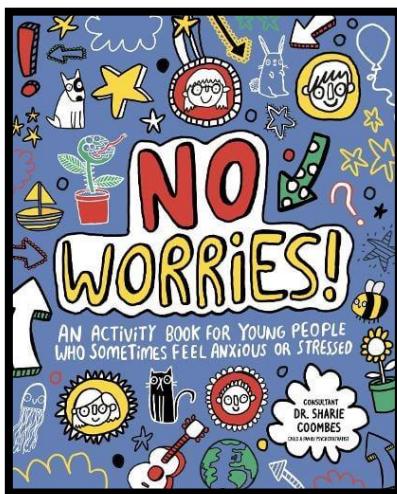


[Find Your Happy - My Happy Feelings by Emily Coxhead](#)

A joyful exploration of our emotions to help children feel calm by Emily Coxhead, the much-loved creator of *The Happy News*

Feeling happy is a wonderful thing! But do you ever feel sad or angry, frightened or shy? Everyone does sometimes, but with a little help from Sloth and the people you love, there is always a way to FIND YOUR HAPPY!

Full of vibrant illustrations and practical ideas, this is an accessible, friendly, reassuring and uplifting book of feelings, from the much-loved creator of *The Happy News*.

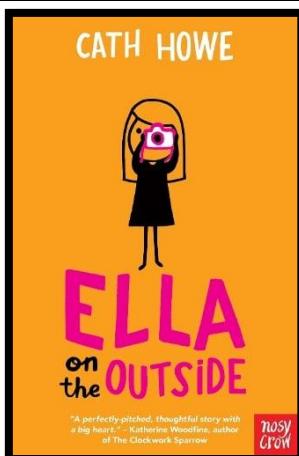


[No Worries! Mindful Kids: An activity book for children who sometimes feel anxious or stressed - Mindful Kids](#)

No Worries! is an interactive self-care activity book for children aged 7+ to colour and doodle their way to happiness, calm and confidence.

The encouraging and simple activities and exercises tackle anxiety, sadness and stress; children will enjoy using their creativity to combat negative feelings, work out why they feel worried and how to put stress back in its place through writing, colouring, doodling and drawing.

Featuring the charming and quirky illustrations of Katie Abey, a UK-based illustrator. Her quirky pictures will keep the reader entertained and focused as they work through the book or simply dip into the pages for ten minutes of calm colouring.



[Ella on the Outside by Cath Howe](#)

Ella is the new girl at school. She doesn't know anyone and she doesn't have any friends. And she has a terrible secret. Ella can't believe her luck when Lydia, the most popular girl in school, decides to be her new best friend - but what does Lydia really want? And what does it all have to do with Molly, the quiet, shy girl who won't talk to anyone?

Her time at this new school is a gripping story filled with secrets, lies and friendship...

