

# MILTON ABBOT SCHOOL



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11<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Dear Milton Abbot families,

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you. Although I have met some parents on the gate at the morning drop-off or afternoon pick-up, many of you, I have only seen some from afar. My name is Mrs Elizabeth Underwood, and I am one of the Primary Executive Principals working for the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust.



It is my privilege to spend some time at Milton Abbot Primary School over the next few weeks and I have enjoyed myself enormously this week; I have felt very much welcomed into this school community, for which I am very grateful. The children are just delightful and there is such a lovely buzz of learning and activity as I walk between the classrooms.

The school has experienced some significant challenges over recent times, but it is apparent that the community has really pulled together with everyone supporting one another.

As mentioned briefly yesterday in my Dojo message to you all, we had an end of week assembly this morning where I was able to talk to all of the children and staff together, to properly introduce myself and for everyone to get to know me a little better. We focussed on being a Milton Abbot 'family' where every person whether a staff member or child is part of that family. The family grows as new people join, and changes as someone leaves, but they remain a member of the family; even if they have changed school or moved away, for example.



We remembered Seth Baker, a special friend to many of the children and we talked about how important it is to talk and support each other. What a *gorgeous* smile! All of the children were able to share who they would turn to in school for support if they felt sad; many felt there were lots of people – friends and members of staff. Classes followed up later how we might be gentle with each other and ensure that we support sensitively, as some of us might prefer to have quiet time alone whilst others need a hug or someone to make us smile. I am sure everyone will continue to remember the joy and happiness that Seth brought to this community – I have heard so many lovely thoughts being shared.

Over the coming days, we will establish a reflection space near the library where children can go to sit, reflect, read a book, draw or write. Together in classes, children will explore what they want the space to be, what it might consist of. Already some lovely ideas have been forthcoming, and I am sure this space will continue to evolve to be a really useful and supportive area.

## Parents Forum

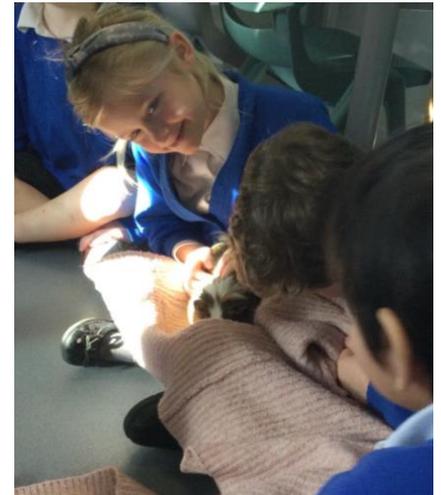
It has been really interesting to meet some parents this week and talk briefly about the school. In order to further these conversations and enable you to contribute your thoughts, you may be interested in joining a forum for parents and carers after half term. These occasions enable us to talk about the school together, in support of its onward journey and future development. We certainly value your thoughts and opinions. Everyone who has a child at the school is welcome to attend. More details about this and a proposed date and agenda will be issued in due course.

## EYFS news

Little Owls and Reception have had a very exciting 'love' themed week! We have been making nature hearts, handprint bouquets and enjoyed tasting our homemade cornflake cakes!

## Barn Owls news

We have had a busy week in Barn Owls. In maths, Year 1 have been looking at place value to 100 while Year 2 have been looking at statistics with tally charts and pictograms. Meanwhile in English we have been revising punctuation by marking Miss King's letter for mistakes (so many missing full stops!) and beginning to look at commas. Inspired by Children's Mental Health Week this week, we have set time aside every afternoon for acts of self-care, including exercising, talking about our feelings and practising gratitude. We also spent time with our resident guinea-pigs, Cookie and Coco and discussed who in the school we could talk to (and had lots of fluffy cuddles). Next week is Random Acts of Kindness week, so we've been brainstorming different ways we can spread kindness, love and joy within school. Watch this space!



## Tawny Owls news



We have been very busy in Tawny Owls this week! Within art we explored how to use and manipulate sand into different sculptures, based on our work about the artist Andy Goldsworthy.

Within our science lesson we had to present our knowledge and understanding regarding a certain endangered animal to a very large audience which included both our class, teachers and some special visitors from Marjon University.

We also enjoyed a very muddy Forest School session in which we all made bird feeders using oranges, bamboo sticks and string!



- tiredness, increased apathy
- Anxiety
- Symptoms of depression
- Seemingly inexplicable outbursts
- Increased difficulties in friendship groups
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns

There is some useful advice here - [Anxiety in children - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

## The Aim Group: Support for Parents & Carers



The AIM group have just started to support all of the **Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust** schools and as such have also extended their offer to Milton Abbot.

Chris Greenfield (seen on the left here) has asked me to forward this message to parents and carers to explain exactly what this platform can do to help you and how it could ensure a further understanding of anything that might be troubling your children, or even help to give you a new skill and provide 'a leg up' into a new line of work.

"Hello, I am Chris and I work for a company called the AIM group. By using some funding that the government has in a pot called **the adult education budget**, we can offer parents and families an opportunity to learn more ways to identify and support their children for free.

I am on hand to discuss any questions you might have about what we do, and how the courses could help. It could be that you have experienced a noticeable change as a result of covid, or sadly suffered a bereavement which has affected you and your family, or perhaps you have noticed a particular new or reoccurring behaviour pattern. The courses we have on offer are designed to help you gain a much better understanding on each individual topic.

To be eligible to access the courses, the only criteria the learner must meet is the following:

- To be aged 19 or over on or before 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021
- Have lived in the UK/EU for 3+ years
- Not already on a government funded course (Apprenticeship. for example)"

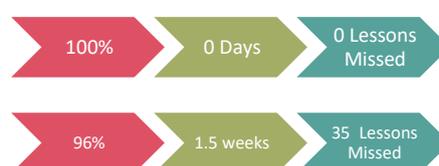
**If you are interested in undertaking one of these Free Online courses, then please complete the following link [Milton Abbot School Link](#) This will then allow Chris Greenfield to contact you and discuss how this might help to support.** Any questions you may have, **Chris Greenfield** will be in touch on **0203 900 3091** once you have registered your interest.

## Attendance

I have spent some time this week looking at attendance information and data at Milton Abbot Primary. The link between a child's attendance at school and improved outcomes and life chances is well documented. We want to help all children and young people to fulfil their potential and get the most out of their education. Children make the best progress when they attend school everyday as they build on the knowledge and skills being developed throughout each sequence of lessons. Every day in school counts. Even a small drop in attendance can lead to a child missing a significant part of their education.

Of course, there will be unavoidable absences for illness or medical appointments, but we want to minimise these where possible. Pupils and families will not be penalised for legitimate non-attendance due to Covid 19.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with school at any time if you have any queries around attendance expectations and procedures.





## Thank you

Thank you for welcoming me to Milton Abbot. It is a lovely school!

It only remains for me to wish you all a restful weekend and I look forward to seeing children, staff and parents for a brand-new week starting on Monday. I am keen to spend some time with the children in classrooms, looking at their books and talking about their learning.

Kindest regards,

**Mrs Elizabeth Underwood**

DMAT Primary Executive Principal