



# The EPICentre of Learning

A very warm welcome back to all our families for the start of the Spring Term 2026! It has been wonderful to see the children returning to school with such smiles and enthusiasm this week. The Spring term is a wonderful time in the school year—a season where we often see the great growth spurts in both confidence and learning. We are grateful for the continued support you show our school community. Whether it is through daily reading at home, attending school events, or simply your kind words at the gate, it all makes a real difference to the environment we build for our pupils. We look forward to a successful and productive term ahead with you all.

**Data collection and Parental Consent:** Next **Thursday, January 15th**, is National School Census Day. While it might sound like just another piece of admin, it is actually a very important day in our school calendar for future funding. The government uses the data we submit on this day—including pupil numbers, free school meal eligibility, children who have English as an additional language, take up of school meals in Reception, Y1 and Y2—to calculate our school's budget for the coming year.

**How you can help:** Please log in to MCAS by Tuesday to ensure your data is 100% up to date. You will already have received a request for this earlier this week. Accurate data also ensures we receive the correct funding to support the children's learning and resources.

Your review and consent are crucial for ensuring your child can fully participate in all school activities and that you receive all school communications.

**School Menu – January 2026:** A quick reminder to order lunches for the week of 26<sup>th</sup> January by **Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January**.



**Movie dates for the diary!** Our parent association, the ESA, will be organising two movie nights. You can book a ticket via clubs on MCAS!

Reception and KS1 will be on Friday 23rd January and KS2 will be Friday 30th January, straight after school. We will be holding a vote for the children to help select the film.

Tickets are £3 each and will include the film and sweets. Children should bring their own water bottles for refills.

**ESA meeting:** don't miss the next meeting on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January, 7pm at the Royal Oak.

**National Online Safety Guides:** Please see attached this week's guide on Top Tips for supporting children to return to routine.

**Friday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

## Future Dates

**Mon 19<sup>th</sup> Jan – Deadline to order**  
lunches for w/c 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 2025

**Fri 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan – Movie night FS/KS1**

**Fri 30<sup>th</sup> Jan – Movie night KS2**

**Thurs 5<sup>th</sup> Feb – Family Learning**  
**Conference – details to follow**

**Monday 9<sup>th</sup> Feb – Family Learning**  
**Conference – details to follow**

**Headteachers: Mrs S Whalley and Mr I Moore**



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**Train to Teach in Devon:** As a partner school with Exeter Consortium Schools' Alliance, we are proud to support their Primary Teacher Training programme. If you've ever thought about becoming a primary school teacher, this school-based training offers classroom placements across Devon, expert guidance and hands-on experience from day one.

Applications are now open for training starting in September 2026. Find out more here:

[www.exeterconsortium.com/train-to-teach](http://www.exeterconsortium.com/train-to-teach)

**Westbank Stay and Play sessions:** Please see the following message from the community hub at Westbank.

Stay and Play sessions take place every **Thursday morning from 10:00am to 12:00pm**. We offer tea, coffee, and biscuits for a small donation, along with designated areas for toys for younger children and board games for older children and their families. Our aim is to create a **safe, welcoming, and inclusive space for all families**.

In addition, we will be running a **Watercolour Art Group on Thursday afternoons from 2:00pm to 4:00pm**. This group is designed for **young people aged 11 years old and over** who are home educated or on the autism spectrum, offering a calm, creative, and supportive environment.

As a community hub, we will also be offering **Family Social Lunches 12.30pm-2.00pm**. These lunches are open to all families and aim to encourage conversation, connection, and the development of knife and fork skills in a comfortable and accepting setting. **This will be £5 per adult and £1 per child**. Please note that lunches must be **booked 24hours in advance** by phoning our reception team.

We look forward to welcoming families into the space and building a supportive community together.



## Calling all Athletes and Sports Professionals!

We are looking for members of our parent community with sporting career experience to join us as guest speakers. We want to inspire our students by hearing about your journey—specifically the challenges you've faced and the **resilience** required to reach your goals.

Real-world examples from the world of sport make a powerful impact on children. We would love for you to share your story, weaving in themes such as:

- **Overcoming adversity** and staying motivated.
- **Inclusivity** and breaking down barriers in your field.
- The importance of **diversity** within a team environment.

If you have a story to inspire the next generation—or know another parent/friend or family member who does—we would be thrilled to host you, please contact the school office for more information.

**Family Printing Workshop at Thelma Hulbert Gallery:** To celebrate the opening of our new exhibition, please join us for a printmaking activity for all ages. Please see the attached advert for this workshop taking place on Saturday 17 January, drop in between 11 – 3. Free, suggested donation £2.

**Plymouth Brick Festival:** Please see the attached flier for information on this Lego extravaganza on 7<sup>th</sup> February at the Life Centre. Book now at [www.PlymouthBrickFestival.com](http://www.PlymouthBrickFestival.com)

**Oral Health Improvement:** Please see the attached flier about supporting children with their oral health.

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## **Mental Health Update:** Week 1: Supporting Your Child Through Bereavement 💔

This week, we share essential tips for supporting families facing the loss of a loved one. It is a topic that affects nearly all children—around 90% of children will experience a significant bereavement before the age of 16.

Babies and young children are highly attuned to their environment and the emotions of those around them. If they notice an absence or sense the grief of adults without being given clear information, they may try to make sense of the situation on their own, often leading to anxiety or confusion.

### **Top Tips for Parents**

- Acknowledge Their Awareness: Young children (and even small babies) will be aware of the loss and the resulting adult grief. They may express their feelings through changes in behaviour like clinginess, sleep/eating disturbances, restlessness, or increased tantrums. Talking about the loss is crucial.
- Tell Them Directly: Deliver the news in person, as soon as possible, in a safe and intimate setting where they can express their feelings freely. Explain simply that the loved one has died and will not be coming back.
- Encourage Questions: Give your child space to ask questions. If you don't know the answer, it is completely okay to say, "That's a very good question. I need to think about it, and we will talk again later when I have more information."
- Maintain Routine: Keep home routines as stable and predictable as you can. Predictability provides a sense of security during a time of chaos.
- Prioritise Play: Spend quality time together and make time for play. Play is a natural and important way for children to process strong feelings and emotions.
- Care for Yourself: Look after your own well-being as much as possible. The more resources you have, the better you can support your child.
- Create Rituals: If you were unable to say goodbye (especially relevant in situations like COVID-19 related loss), performing grief rituals can help. This could include drawing pictures, planting a tree, or starting a memory box with significant items (photos, a piece of clothing).

### **Recommended Books on Loss**

Stories are powerful tools to help shape a child's understanding. Consider these titles:

- *Someone I Know Has Died* (Trish Phillips)
- *Missing Mummy* (Rebecca Cobb)
- *I Miss You: a First Look at Death* (Pat Thomas)
- *The Little Flower Bulb: Helping Children Bereaved by Suicide* (Eleanor Gormally)

**Librarian Club:** a quick reminder that Librarian Club starts up next week on alternate Tuesdays 3.30 – 4.15pm. Year 2/3 starts back next Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January. Librarians know who they are and Mrs Fuller looks forward to seeing them.

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## Exminster Community Garden

*Reconnecting our community  
with nature, with food and with each other.*

*Join us in the garden to mark our first  
anniversary and to officially open our new sheds  
and social space.*

*Saturday 17 January - 11 am*

**Find us in St  
Martin's allotments  
adjacent to the  
churchyard**



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