



THE
GILES NURSERY
AND
INFANTS'
SCHOOL



Headteacher: Mrs Rouane Mendel
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School Aims: our school is a place where we aim to develop:

- ▶ Positive attitudes to learning
- ▶ Creativity and a sense of self-confidence and self-esteem
- ▶ Equality of opportunity, independence, individuality, tolerance, sensitivity and cooperation
- ▶ Good relations, respect for others and the environment
- ▶ A broad and balanced creative curriculum
- ▶ Pupil achievement by providing quality experiences

Dear Parents/Carers,

Despite it being 'Blue Monday' and apparently the gloomiest week of the year, in school it has been a marvellous week. This term's Big Write got off to a simply thrilling start with a Magical Potions Workshop for each of the year 1 and 2 classes. This was led by a very charismatic witch who instructed the children scientifically at the same time as delivering a truly magical lesson in which balloons filled themselves and lemonade exploded metres into the air, accompanied to children chanting Harry Potter style spells such as 'explosio!' The children loved every minute and several Year 1 children told me the following day that they had spotted the witch flying off on her broomstick afterwards.

The week was inspirationally planned and led by Miss Hill and the children were so motivated by the topic and the 'hook' that the results show writing of exceptional quality.

Nursery children are loving their new topic and you will see from the photograph below in the Ladybird section how fabulous their painting is!

RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch: Our wonderful science leaders, Miss O'Regan and Mrs Humphrey, led a truly informative assembly for Year 1 and Year 2 children this week all about the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch. Everyone is invited to take part. Please visit the RSPB website to [sign-up to participate](#). Our Year 1 children study birds throughout the spring term and this year we would like also to encourage our Year 2 children to build on their learning from last year. The Big Garden Birdwatch is a chance for our children to be scientists with their families, collecting valuable data. If you do not have a garden, you could go to a local park or nature reserve. Some suggestions include Fairlands Valley Park and Sishes Wood in Stevenage, or a short journey away could take you to the RSPB headquarters at Sandy, Fowlmere Nature Reserve, or Jordan's Mill. The RSPB explains the significance of the Birdwatch on its website as follows:

Across the UK, over 600,000 people took part in Big Garden Birdwatch 2024, counting a whopping 9.7 million birds! House Sparrows took the top spot, but counts of these chirpy birds are down by 60% compared to the first Birdwatch in 1979. In fact, we've lost 38 million birds from UK skies in the last 60 years. With birds facing so many challenges, it's

more important than ever to get involved in the Birdwatch. Every bird you do – or don't – count will give us a valuable insight into how garden birds are faring.

Phonics Workshop for Reception will take place in all three classes: This will take place on Thursday 30th January after school. We are aiming to start at 3.30pm so the teachers have time to set up all the lovely phonics activities for the children; we hope you won't need to wait long. The training will take place in Tawny Owl and Snowy Owl classrooms and your children will have an opportunity to try out all the phonics activities. Do come along – you will discover lots of ways you can support your child's progress at home!

Stay-and-read Year 1: Monday January 27th 2.50pm -3.10pm. Please come and join your child's class and share a book with them.

Stay-and-read Year 2: Wednesday January 29th 2.50pm -3.10pm. Please come and join your child's class and share a book with them.

Holocaust Memorial Day: This takes place next Monday January 27th and pupils will be acknowledging this day, if age-appropriate and in age-appropriate ways, within school.

Severe Weather/Public Emergency: If the school has to close due to severe weather/public emergency, we will send you an email and/or text message to advise whether the school remains open. We will also update the school website with important information on the main page www.gilesnurseryandinfants.co.uk

Cold weather: Please make sure your children are wrapped up warmly so that they can really enjoy this bright, cold weather. Please provide your child with a named hat, scarf and gloves for outdoor play - thank you!

Reception Screening Tests: These will take place on 27th January, 3rd February and 25th February.

Year 1 Phonics Screening Check Date 2025: This will take place the week of 9th-13th June. Please can holidays be strictly avoided at this time. Thank you.

Change of date for FROG bake sale: Please note that the FROG Bake Sale will take place from 3.15-4.30 on Wednesday 12th February, not 13th February as originally planned. Please come along and support our bake sale on Wednesday 12th February after school in the dining hall. Store-bought or homemade, all contributions are gratefully accepted; please bring any donations to the school office on the day. Thank you in advance for your generosity. Such events help to raise vital funds to support the school.

Safety on school grounds: Our staff do their very best to make sure all games and equipment are stored safely at the end of the day, to ensure the school grounds are clear for parents to collect / drop off their children safely. On the rare occasion that a toy or ball has been left out, please may we ask that you hand it to a member of school staff, who will be able to store it safely. May we also remind you that children should dismount from bikes and scooters before they enter the school grounds. Thank you for helping us to keep everyone safe.

eSafety: This week's eSafety feature focuses on the use of health and fitness apps. Please see information [here](#). On our website you can find lots of other top tips from Wake Up Wednesday for promoting a healthy balance of physical and digital wellbeing for your children. This is our [Wake up Wednesday webpage library](#).

Volunteer work in school: *We appreciate our volunteers so greatly and it is a role that in turn can give those who volunteer in school a lot of happiness. Our children are so fantastic and the teaching staff so incredible – it's an opportunity to make new friends and to pick up new skills at the same time as supporting our children's learning. Please speak to me if you are interested in doing some volunteer work in our school. Some volunteers also go on to do apprenticeships with us so if you are interested in this, do please speak to me.*

Spare clothing for Reception and Year 1 classes: *Thank you so very much for your hugely-appreciated generosity!*

Nursery: *This week, the children have learnt many interesting facts about Africa. They looked at a globe to see where Africa is located and were excited to learn all about the climate, the animals and their habitat. Marley commented, 'It's really far away, you have to go on a plane.' The children continued to discover different animals, such as snakes, lions, monkeys, and crocodiles in our jungle role-play area. They were fascinated to learn the different names for young animals. The children learnt baby lions are called cubs, baby zebras are called calves and baby monkeys are called infants. Lana remembered an elephant baby is called, 'a calf.'*



The children identified corners and sides on different shapes in mathematics. They showed super knowledge of shape names, identifying squares, triangles, rectangles, ovals, and circles. The children learnt that a corner is where two sides meet. A triangle has three corners and a square has four corners. Murray said, 'A rectangle has four sides and four corners.'

In Expressive Art and Design, the children looked at African rock art paintings and learnt that they were made using natural materials found in the earth, such as clay. They explored mixing red and green powder paint with glue to give their painting a rocky effect. Summer carefully mixed the paint and commented, 'It mixing black.' The children were eager to make a clay pinch pot. They rolled their clay into a ball, used their thumb to press a hole in the middle and pinched the sides to create the shape. The children used tools carefully to add detail and pattern to their pinch pots. Each pot looked beautiful and unique. In Understanding of the World, the children enjoyed listening to African drum music before playing a variety of drums to several beats and rhythms. They showed fantastic hand and eye coordination and timing. Benjamin commented, 'I liked playing the drums.'

The children played a game of 'odd one out' in phonics to build their awareness of rhyming words. They identified which objects rhymed and which one was the odd one out. Triangle group listened carefully and thought 'fox and socks' rhymed and the bat was the odd one out. Our rhyming string this week began with 'rug and slug'.

Next week, we will be celebrating Lunar New Year and will taste some Chinese food. Please let us know if your child has an allergy to any of the ingredients in noodles or prawn crackers.

Reception: *This week in literacy the children continued to apply their expanding phonic knowledge to write a simple sentence and include a 'wow' (adjective) word. This week, they wrote about the dog from the traditional tale of 'The Gingerbread Man'. Some examples of sentences written by the children are, 'The dog has a soft tail,', 'The dog has sharp teeth,' and 'The dog has curved ears.'*

This week's poem is the nursery rhyme, 'Twinkle, Twinkle'.

*Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.*

In mathematics, the children investigated ways to make 6, 7 and 8. They loved creating different combinations of spots to go onto a ladybird shell and began to look at similarities and differences between the combinations on the ladybirds.



In Understanding the World, the children continued to find out more about seasonal changes. They visited the woodland area and looked for signs of winter. The children used iPads to take photographic evidence of this season. When talking about what happens to the animals in winter, Henry O in Tawny Owl class said, 'The animals hibernate. It means they sleep when it's cold,' and Archer in Tawny Owl class said, 'The birds fly to somewhere warm in winter.' Whilst on a winter walk to take photographs using an iPad, Ella Rose in Snowy Owl class said, 'It is foggy because it is winter!' and Maya in Barn Owl class said, 'Because it is winter, sometimes we can see ice. I saw my mummy taking ice off her car.'

The Musician of the Month for January is Abba. The children found out the name Abba comes from the first letter of the name of each member of the group. Throughout Reception, the children have really enjoyed listening, singing, and dancing to Abba's songs in class and at home. The children in Snowy Owl class have enjoyed the song 'Mamma Mia' so much, they have been singing it in the role play area!

Next week in literacy, the children will be using their phonic knowledge to write a descriptive sentence about the cow from 'The Gingerbread Man'. In mathematics, the children will be investigating doubles up to eight, using some dice to play a caterpillar doubling game. On Wednesday, in Understanding the World, the children will celebrate Lunar New Year and participate in many activities linked to this festival.

Year 1: We had the most fantastic start to our week with the visit of a witch who showed us some of her spells! She carefully explained to the children that the spells were in fact science. The children were amazed to see her make clouds with dry ice, turn purple cabbage water red and then blue, and explode a bottle of lemonade using Mentos. The children were astounded and returned to their classrooms extremely inspired for Big Write! The Year 1



children had the task of designing their own magical hat for a witch or wizard and describing it using adjectives. Their designs became their plans, and on Thursday they wrote all about their hat on their special Big Write paper. We are so proud of the progress the children have made. Their hat designs were immensely creative and they generated marvellous adjectives. Well done Year 1!



In phonics, the children continued learning about alternative pronunciations. This week they learnt the three pronunciations of the letter 'u' found in the words 'up', 'unicorn' and 'put'. They also learnt the two pronunciations of the digraph 'ow' as demonstrated in the words 'down' and 'snow'. Our Book of the Week was 'The Dot' by Peter H. Reynolds: a story about a girl who discovers her creative spirit by making a dot on a piece of paper. The book explores themes of art, creativity, resilience and growth mindset. Please click the link if you'd like to listen at home. [🎧 The Dot 📖 Kids Book Read Aloud Story – YouTube Kids](#)

In mathematics, the children practised using a number line. They learnt to put the numbers on a number line, fill in missing numbers and identify numbers on a line that only had the start and end numbers labelled. All this work helps to consolidate children's understanding of the value of numbers, the sequencing of numbers and the composition of numbers. To support your child, you could play lots of counting forwards and backwards games from 0 to 20 and 20 to 0.

The children had a wonderful time making their own binoculars in Forest School. Thank you for sending in cardboard tubes. In their homework this Friday, the children have the opportunity to participate in the 'RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch'. Please use the survey sheet to record how many birds you spot within an hour this weekend. Our science leaders, Miss O'Regan and Mrs Humphrey, led an assembly for the children all about the RSPB and the scientific importance of the Big Garden Birdwatch. Every participant helps to build up a really good idea of the birds living in the neighbourhood.

In computing, the children learnt how information can be presented as text, sound, pictures, signs and symbols. They discussed how they can use information for different purposes. The children made their own pictograms to display their lunch choices using 2Count in Purple Mash. Once the information was entered, they looked closely at their pictograms to work out which lunch choice was the most popular in the class.

Over the next week, the children will be keeping a weather diary as part of their science work on observing seasonal changes. In English they will finish their creative writing inspired by the story 'Bear and Wolf' by Daniel Salmieri. They will finish their unit of learning about place value within 20 in mathematics. On Monday 27th January 2025 parents and carers are most welcome to join us for the Year 1 Stay and Read session from 2.50pm until 3.10pm. Please come to the classroom doors.

New homework will come home today. Please complete the homework and return it to school by Wednesday 5th February.

We wish you a wonderful weekend.

Year 2:



It has been such an exciting Big Write week in Year 2! The theme for the week was 'magic potions' and it started with a thrilling workshop on Monday. The children were visited by a magical witch who showed the children how to make lots of potions, including colour changing potions, bubbling potions and bubbles that turned into clouds. The highlight of the workshop was an exploding bottle of lemonade, that shot high into the air! Kairi in Pelican class exclaimed, 'It was so exciting! We had to step back as it shot so far up!'



As well as providing a stunning start to the Big Write week, the workshop also introduced the children to simple chemistry as they learnt about chemical reactions.

Following on from the workshop, the children imagined their own magic potion. They decided what their potion would be made from and the effect it would have. They had some fantastic ideas. Isaac in Penguin class designed a potion that gives sonic speed and Arlowe in Puffin class designed a potion that would turn someone into a bubble.

The children heard a story about Wendel the Wizard and how he created a potion that could turn someone into a dragon. His pet rabbit Snuffles accidentally drank it, with hilarious effects! The children used the story as a model for their own magic stories, which they wrote independently for their Big Write piece. They wrote some beautiful pieces of work – well done Year 2!

The children also enjoyed a magical afternoon in their classrooms, making their own potions, designing a wizard's hat and creating a magic cauldron. The week finished with a magic-themed dress-up day. The children thoroughly enjoyed showing off their wonderful costumes. Thank you, parents and carers, for your support with the outfits.



In mathematics this week, the children learnt about vertical symmetry. They learnt that a shape is symmetrical if a line can be drawn through it and either side is a reflection of the other. They checked whether shapes were symmetrical and had a go at completing drawings using symmetry. They used mirrors to check that they could see the whole shape in the reflection.

In geography, the children learnt more about the Arctic and Antarctica. They explored some of the similarities and differences between them. In RE, they learnt that Muslims worship at a mosque and found out about the rituals that take place inside. In PSHCE, the children chose a goal and thought of steps that could help them achieve it. In science, they compared the suitability of materials for different purposes and in art and design, they learnt about Blaze Cyan, a local artist who works with charcoal.

Next week in English, the children will learn about the features of fact files and look at fact files about polar animals. In mathematics, they will finish the unit of work on shape and begin to learn about money. In geography, they will learn about the human and physical features of Antarctica. In science, they will look closely at the properties of materials. In RE, they will learn about a Sikh Gurdwara. In PSHCE, they will spend time working towards their chosen goal. In art and design, they will learn how to add

perspective to a picture and in history, they will learn about the race to be the first person to reach the South Pole.

All parents and carers are invited to the Year 2 'stay and read', which takes place at 2.50pm next Wednesday 29th January. This is a great chance for you to visit your child's classroom and spend some time reading with them. We look forward to seeing you.

CLASS ATTENDANCE TROPHY

TROPHY-BEARING CLASS WITH THE BEST ATTENDANCE FOR THIS WEEK

RED FOXES

98.3%

FANTASTIC ATTENDANCE – WELL DONE!!



STARS OF THE WEEK

Ladybird Nursery Classes	<p><i>Benjamin for fantastic concentration when using the drums.</i></p> <p><i>Reggie for brilliant participation in using the drums.</i></p> <p><i>Hendrix for creating a super lion.</i></p> <p><i>Summer for fantastic observations whilst creating rock art.</i></p> <p><i>Billy for independently putting on your coat.</i></p> <p><i>Ottilie for super participation at group time.</i></p>
Snowy Owls	<p><i>Mya for applying your phonic knowledge to write a wonderful sentence.</i></p> <p><i>Fife for making progress with your writing.</i></p>
Tawny Owls	<p><i>Myles for being very kind to your friends when they are upset.</i></p> <p><i>Finley for demonstrating different ways to make 6, 7 and 8.</i></p>
Barn Owls	<p><i>Kiara for using your phonic knowledge to write a super sentence about a dog using 'wow' words.</i></p> <p><i>Vincent for demonstrating fantastic skills in gymnastics.</i></p>
Red Foxes	<p><i>Harrie for super independent writing using lots of different adjectives to describe your wizard's hat.</i></p> <p><i>Thelya for always being ready for learning.</i></p>
Big Cats	<p><i>Reggie for writing wonderful descriptive sentences about a wizard's hat.</i></p> <p><i>Albie for having a fantastic week in Year 1.</i></p>
Walker Bears	<p><i>Jeremiah for demonstrating a good understanding of how to use a number line.</i></p> <p><i>Mia for super ball control when practising bouncing and passing a ball in PE.</i></p>
Pelicans	<p><i>Ava for great contributions in lessons.</i></p> <p><i>Kairi for showing hard work and resilience.</i></p>
Puffins	<p><i>Charlie for writing a detailed plan for your magic story.</i></p> <p><i>Lauren for your mathematics learning on how to sort 2D shapes.</i></p>

Penguins	<p><i>Alana for creating a wonderful charcoal picture and being positive throughout January.</i></p> <p><i>James for being imaginative all week and generating excellent adjectives for your Big Write story.</i></p>
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I hope you all have a restful and happy weekend.

Kindest regards,

Rouane Mendel
Headteacher



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SCHOOL DATES AND EVENTS SPRING TERM 1 2025

Monday 27th January 2025 Reception Screening

Monday 27th January Holocaust Memorial Day

2.50 - 3.10 Monday 27th January 2025 Stay and Read Year 1

Wednesday 29th January 2025 Lunar New Year Assembly for pupils only

2.50 - 3.10 Wednesday 29th January 2025 Stay and Read, Year 2

3.30 Thursday 30th January 2025 Phonics Workshop for Reception parents

Week of 3rd February 2025 Big Write Reception classes

8.50 – 9.50 Tuesday 4th February 2025 INCo/FROG Coffee Morning

Week of 10th February 2025 E-safety Week

2.40 Tuesday 11th February 2025 Safer Internet Day assembly for pupils

3.15 Wednesday 12th February 2025 FROG/PTA Bake Sale

Monday 17th February 2025 - Friday 21st February 2025 HALF TERM

Monday 24th February 2025 Children return to school

TERM DATES 2024/25

Autumn Term: Monday 2nd September 2024 – 20th December 2024

School finishes on Friday 20th December 2024 at 1.00pm

[Christmas Holidays: Monday 23rd December 2024 – Friday 3rd January 2025]

Children return to school on Monday 6th January 2025

Spring Term: Monday 6th January 2025 – Friday 4th April 2025

[Half term: Monday 17th February 2025 – Friday 21st February 2025]

Children return to school on Monday 24th February 2025

School finishes on Friday 4th April 2025 at 1.00pm

[Easter Holidays: Monday 7th April 2025 – Monday 21st April 2025]

Children return to school on Tuesday 22nd April 2025

Summer Term: Tuesday 22nd April 2025 – Wednesday 23rd July 2025

Monday 5th May 2025 Bank Holiday SCHOOL CLOSED

Monday 26th May 2025 Bank Holiday SCHOOL CLOSED

[Half term: Monday 26th May 2025 – Friday 30th May 2025]

Monday 2nd June 2025 INSET Day SCHOOL CLOSED

Children return to school on Tuesday 3rd June 2025

Monday 30th June 2025 INSET Day SCHOOL CLOSED

School finishes on Wednesday 23rd July 2025 at 1.00pm

2024 / 25 School Calendar

September '24						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

October '24						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

November '24						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

December '24						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1
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16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

January '25						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

February '25						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
					1	2
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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

March '25						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

April '25						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

May '25						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

June '25						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

July '25						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

August '25						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

- = Term Time
- = 23/24 Pupil Holidays
- = Bank and Public Holidays
- = 2024/25 Pupil Holidays
- = Inset Day - school closed to pupils
- = Occasional Day - (school closed to pupils)

