

Dear Parents, Carers and Friends,

I am delighted to share our latest newsletter with you as we prepare to break up for the half-term holiday. Oaklands has been as vibrant and full of life as ever since the new year, with lots of things going on and many highlights to share. The school and its community continue to inspire and make me proud in equal measure as we strive to pack as much as possible into every day.

Here are some highlights and updates from the last few weeks.

With warm wishes, as ever,

*Rebecca*

### External verification from Education Scotland and City of Edinburgh Council:

Over the last six months we have been subject to external scrutiny and verification from both Education Scotland, as part of a thematic inspection looking at Literacy and Communication, and the City of Edinburgh Council's Quality Improvement Team, looking at the inspection criteria that schools are inspected on across Scotland.

While we recognise these are a necessary and important part of our job as educators, there is also little doubt that they are nerve wracking and anxiety inducing. This is not because I doubt the fabulous job Team Oaklands does every day, but more about concerns that our setting, which is very different to others, may not translate to those who are not familiar with it or the complexity of need of our wonderful pupils.

I should not have worries, as the feedback was extremely positive with statements including:

*'Health and wellbeing is at the heart of the Oaklands. All staff work together to support young people's wellbeing. They are clear these needs must be met so children are in a place to learn. The Senior Leadership Team lead by example and their dedication, positivity and daily actions exemplify the school values. The vision to be a place where we support our children to dream big, go far and unlock their potential is lived by staff and stakeholders.'*

*Despite communication difficulties, it is evident that children feel safe, respected, included and happy at school. This is evidenced through gestures, smiles and vocalisations. Parents report that the inclusive environment and ethos, the positive 'can do' attitude of the highly skilled staff and caring positive relationships help them and their children to feel part of the Oaklands family.*

*All staff respect the dignity and worth of each child. They don't see the disability they see the person and this is evidenced through daily interactions and the personal responsibility they take to their own learning and development.'*



Once the final council report is released, I shall send it on to you, however the Education Scotland thematic report should be available at [Oaklands School | Inspection Report | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland](#).

(I have chased up the link which was not working on completion of this newsletter. 😊)

### **Building Works and Impact:**

In the coming weeks a large and complex period of works will be taking place both inside and outside the school. These works include major external works to the masonry around the school, installation of new moisture control works around the swimming pool area, upgrades to the roof and internal lights and replacement of the heating system. Once a contractor has been appointed, I will be meeting with them to get a full understanding of the timescale and scope of the works along with the potential impact this will have on the school.

Currently I am aware that the swimming pool will be out of use from the end of March until after the summer holidays and the Holiday Hub will also require to be moved to Braidburn for Easter, summer and October.

I will share an update once I have more details of the plan.

### **New Soft Play Coming Soon!**

You may be aware of the huge amount of work that Jack (Family Link Worker) and Amy (OT), have put in to plan and apply for funding to completely redesign and refurbish our rather tired soft play area. We were thrilled to receive £20,000 from Wooden Spoon and, with some elbow grease from the staff team, particularly our janitor Paul, the room has been ripped out ready to be completely renovated over the February holiday.

This will be a wonderful sensory area for our children and young people to use and will be used for fun and therapeutic interventions.

We will invite you in for our official opening once we have a date in the diary, but there is a sneak preview of the new design below. 😊



### **Trousers!**

We are very short of spare trousers, particularly in larger sizes. If you have any spare adult or young people's jogging bottoms or similar, at home and would be happy to donate them to school, please send them in.



## Eco Group:

The Eco reps are a lively bunch this year and it's been great fun meeting and working towards our Eco goals. This term we are becoming journalists and entering the 'Young Reporters for the Environment' competition. This is an international competition that takes place every year. This year's theme is 'Food and the Environment' and we are taking a close look at where our school food comes. Each Eco rep has taken on a responsible role as either a photographer or an interviewer and in the coming weeks will be out across the school investigating the food we eat. At our most recent meeting, we chose our favourite locally grown fruit and vegetables and at our next meeting we plan to create recipes that include them all. We are confident that with all our hard Eco work, we will achieve our 4<sup>th</sup> Green Flag by the end of the school year.



## Occupational Therapy at Oaklands

We are Amy and Kate, and we are the occupational therapists involved in Oaklands.

We have had a great start to term supporting many of the Oaklands pupils to access play, build their hand skills, work on their independence skills, sit well-supported in the classroom, and so much more!

Please speak to your child's class teacher or call through to the therapy base at school if you have any questions or concerns that occupational therapy might be able to help with.



## Rebound Celebrations!

Hot off the press, we are delighted to have been declared a Centre of Excellence for Rebound Therapy!

The Rebound Team recently submitted an application for Centre of Excellence status, and we are incredibly proud to announce that our application was described as "quite fittingly, excellent!"

The feedback highlighted the strength of our submission and the way our staff team have embedded training ideas and techniques into everyday practice for the direct benefit of our pupils. Our testimonials were warmly received, reflecting the positive impact this work is having across the school.

The report also recognised Oaklands as an enthusiastic, dedicated, and proactive team, committed to high-quality Continuing Professional Development (CPD), reflective practice, and regular evaluation. We are pleased to have further training and refresher sessions already arranged, ensuring we continue to build on this strong foundation.

We are extremely proud of the collaborative effort that made this possible and grateful to our dedicated staff team for their continued commitment to excellence.

Those of you whose children and young people participate in rebound will know the hugely positive impact it has on their physical health and emotional wellbeing. It also helps with communication, confidence and sensory processing.

Well done to Sharon and our wonderful rebound team for this fantastic acknowledgement of all your hard work!

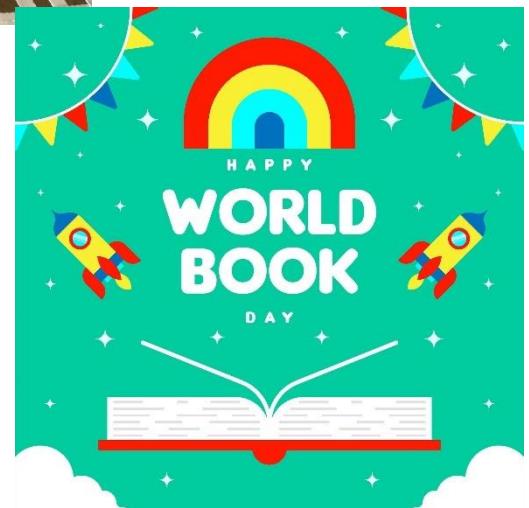


## World Book Day 2026:

'Library Love' is the theme for Oaklands' World Book Day 2026. Oaklands pupils will experience a variety of activities related to the topic the first week of March, which will all come together with an assembly Friday the 6th of March, with fancy dress and a parade.

Your child or young person is invited to dress in a theme related to one of our celebrated books: 'The Incy Wincy Spider', 'The Pirate Song', 'You Cannae Shove Your Granny Off a Bus', 'Take Me Driving in Your Car', 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' or any book of their choosing.

Jill Richardson – Literacy Coordinator



## Little Acorns:

The Little Acorns have been exploring all things Scottish and Chinese since coming back in January!

We have celebrated Burns Day with a Burns supper and loved the bagpipes, we made our very own little Scottish versions of ourselves wearing kilts, made some Scottish thistles and had so much fun making Scotland flags with foam (it was very messy) we also made some delicious shortbread and flapjacks.

This week we have begun our Chinese New Year theme. We made some yummy spring rolls, explored some noodles during our sensory play and made our own Chinese lanterns.



## Holly:

We have had a busy time in Holly class working hard and having laughs. It was so much fun performing 'Santa's a Scotsman' during the Christmas show that we were delighted to be presenting Burns night during assembly. This time we were dancing around the hall to 'Show us Your Haggis', a classic that I am sure Burns himself would have been proud of! We also baked shortbread and made some very cute haggis. Later in the term we will be learning about Chinese New Year and Ramadan.

Holly class have fully embraced this term's topic – Rainbows and Sound. As we all enjoy a bit of science, we have been making string and cup telephones. The class thought it was hilarious to hear each other so clearly from across the room. We have also made a bottle xylophone and played a big Tibetan singing bowl. We thought it was magic when blue tea changed colour and when we made rainbow lava lamps and rainbow bubbles. My favourite was creating rainbow bouncy eggs, but I know others preferred

the yummy rainbow smoothie! We are all excited to see how our rainbow tie dye turns out, fingers crossed it works. It's certainly been very colourful in Holly class this year and looking forward to much more colourful fun and learning in the spring!

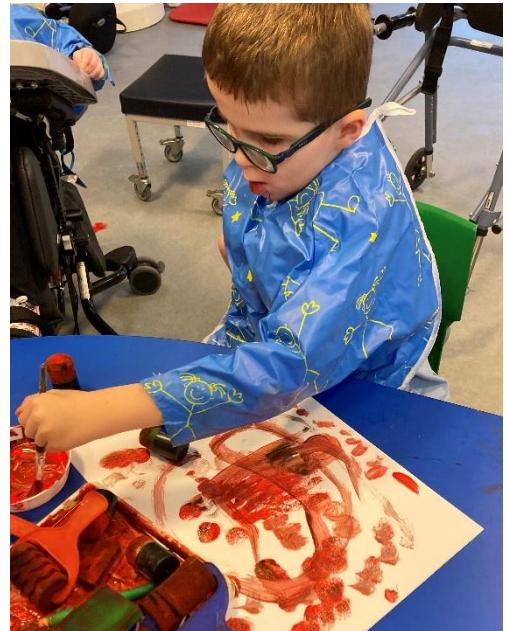


## Pine:

Pine Class have been enjoying the Topic of Rainbows and Sounds this term. For this half term our focus is rainbows and learning about each colour of the rainbow, alongside books that have a focus on Rainbows or Colour. The first week of term our focus was the whole rainbow, and we read the Rainbow Fish, learning all about sharing and friendship. Together, we created a large tissue paper rainbow for the classroom and a big Rainbow Fish for our corridor display. When our weekly focus was the colour red, we did some beautiful mark making with red paint and rollers, we celebrated Burns with all things Scottish and tartan and for "yellow week", we used lots of different textiles to create bright yellow collages.

Each week for our class music session we have been listening to songs about each colour. Our favourite so far has been yellow, where we listened to the Beatles song "Yellow Submarine", Elton John's "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" and Dolly Parton's "Yellow Roses". We also made some yellow playdough during our messy play session which was a big hit!

Pine class have also been given the opportunity to be part of a dance project where we will be working with two dancers to create a dance performance for the Lothian Dance Festival! The pupils are thoroughly enjoying these sessions, and we are looking forward to the festival.



## Willow:

Willow class have had a busy start to 2026, getting stuck into the new year and enjoying a one-off spell of beautiful snow, which we were all fascinated by!

Another favourite time is Performing Arts, exploring, discovering and using our vision with all the bright lights capturing our attention. This term we have a weekly science session on a Thursday and have enjoyed exploring colours and sounds. We are using every opportunity to develop movement through walking, rolling, crawling, swimming and rebound.



## Maple:

Maple class have had a busy start to 2026, getting stuck into the new year and enjoying a one-off spell of beautiful snow, which we were all fascinated by!

Burns Night celebrations followed the new year, and we loved hearing the bagpipes (although some ear-covering was necessary!) as the haggis was piped around the school!

We've been exploring our theme 'Rainbows and Sound' through a variety of art, sensory play and group activities. We love getting messy in Maple class and particularly enjoyed decorating the classroom with cornflour and water gloop!



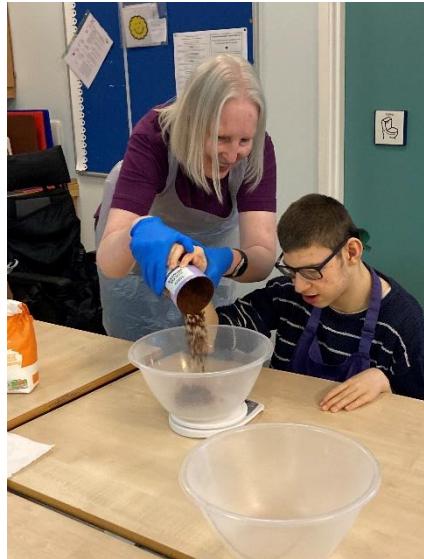
Despite the cold weather, we are still bundling up and going to the park when we can. Some of us are braving the water at Ainslie Park pool, developing our swimming and independence skills as we learn to use this public pool.

### Spruce:

Spruce Class quickly settled into this term, getting up to our usual activities, including baking our famous brownies and exploring a new topic, rainbows and sound. We have had music sessions in class and have managed to score sessions this term with Julia Main, of Youth Music Initiative, which are always great fun.

We have also experimented painting colours with rather unusual media – coloured bubbles and ice cubes. We all had a great time visiting Holyrood Park Ranger Lily Laing, leading a Holyrood Challenge Session at Holyrood Park. We all played the part of migrating swans and visited Spain, where we danced and took part in a ‘bullfight’. We also visited Egypt, where we were wrapped up as mummies and we also did some ice fishing at the North Pole!

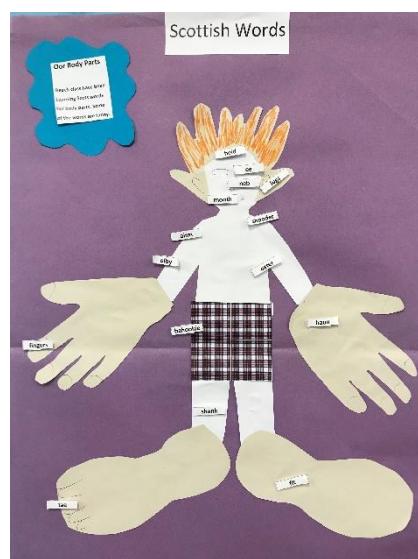
We enjoy our Circus Skills sessions on Thursdays with Aryadaya, getting up to all sorts. We also took part in a Scots Book Week, when we explored the Scots Language via our own sensory story library, and celebrated The Bard with song, national dress, bagpipes and an address to the Haggis, before enjoying a feast of haggis, neeps and tatties in our classrooms.



### Beech:

It's been a busy past few months, with Beech class taking full advantage of the festive fun in the run up to Christmas. There was lots of time to get together and celebrate with friends. Everyone was making sure they were on Santa's good list, apart from Cheeky Elf, who always seemed to get up to some sort of mischief. The Christmas lunch was a great time for everyone to get together.

We started the year with a bang - celebrating the New Year countdown in style. Beech class created their own Edinburgh Street party for a wall display outside of the classroom, piper and fireworks included. The celebrations didn't stop there, and we threw ourselves into remembering Burns and the Scots language. It gave us a great chance to learn some new words, as well as display some tartan.

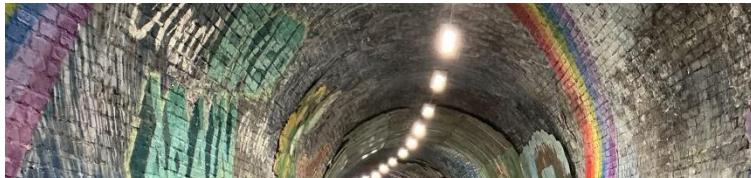


## Rowan:

Rowan Class have had a brilliant start to 2026. We have enjoyed plenty of trips out and about in the community. Highlights have included going to The Museum of Scotland, The Gyle, The Foodbank to volunteer and exploring the Colinton Tunnel. Our current topic is 'Rainbows and Sounds' and the class enjoyed finding a beautiful rainbow within the tunnel. We enjoyed making sounds which echoed and bounced from the walls.

Over the last few weeks, the class have been learning about Scots poetry and celebrating Burns Night. Everyone had great fun exploring these poems through immersive sensory play opportunities. Who knew Scots poetry could be such fun! Pupils had lots of fun listening to these poems and taking part in messy play sessions, trying haggis and tatties and enjoying the different smells and sounds relating to these poems. Pupils have been encouraged to share their opinions about whether they liked these different sensory experiences. The haggis and tatties were definitely a favourite!

What a brilliant start to the new year and we are looking forward to much more fun and learning this term.



## Aspen:

In Aspen class we have been super busy over the winter term, filling the term with lots of experiences. Aspen managed to get out and about this term. When we got back from the Christmas holidays, we were lucky enough to go to see the panto, Jack and the Beanstalk. The young people had the best time and loved the music, lights and all the jokes. We have also started our new National 1 unit exploring and engaging with the community. Pupils have been going out on the bus to visit the supermarket and purchase ingredients for our class cooking. This has been a great opportunity for the young people to practise and use life skills in the wider community.

Another topic that Aspen class have been exploring is Rainbow and Sounds. Over the term, the pupils have been exploring the different colours of the rainbow in our art lessons from making red collage love hearts, orange Irn Bru monoprints to yellow Van Gogh sunflowers. The pupils will continue to explore the rest of the rainbow after the February break. We have also enjoyed exploring sounds, the pupils have explored sounds through; copying different sound patterns, loud and quiet sounds and controlling the pace of music.



We also recently celebrated Burns night by having a Scottish themed week in Aspen Class. From exploring Scottish art, music and stories, the young people loved taking part in parachute games with Scottish rhymes. We also explored Scottish food, from making tiffin and enjoying a Burns Lunch. Overall, a fantastic term full of fun, we can't wait to see what spring brings for Aspen Class.

### Performing Arts:

Everyone is enjoying our new theme, Winter/Spring Garden. One side of the hall is all icey and snowy with the lovely new fairy lights donated from John Lewis. Walk through the curtain, and the garden is growing already, with flower mobiles, a grass mat and bulbs to plant. In the drama, 'What's in the garden?' we choose the weather – everyone laughs when it rains on them.



In art, we've made felted flowers and started to build a giant sculpture with twigs and branches. We all loved painting on ice and made pictures with ice that had paint inside. The lovely patterns we made, were then transformed into magical flowers and added to the flower wall.

We've been working hard on the Qualifications Scotland modules with our older learners, who are choosing their favourite instruments and then their favourite songs to play along to. These teenagers make some very cool choices in music.

What a busy term so far!

Angela and Jac

