

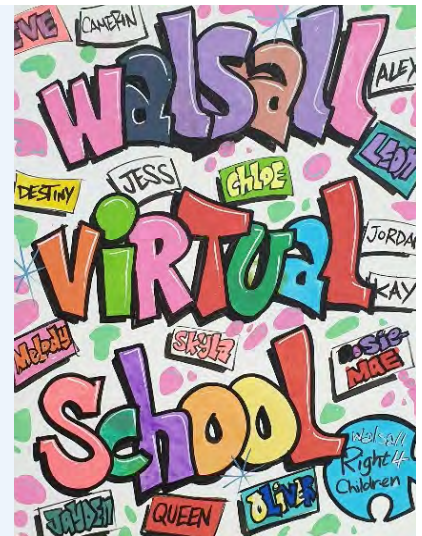
Welcome!

The Autumn Term is now well under way!

We hope this newsletter finds you safe and well and that you have had a good start to the term.

As always, don't hesitate to contact us if you have any thoughts, questions or ideas at:

WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk



Virtual School Spring Term Projects and Updates

New Staff at the Virtual School

Inclusion Education Support Officer – Claire Birch

We have welcomed a new member of staff to the team this term! Claire has joined the Secondary team within the Virtual School.

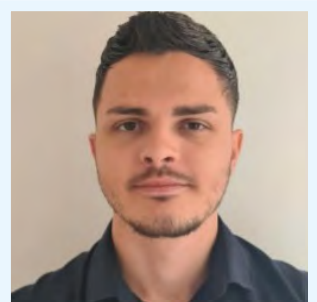
“Hello, I am really excited to begin my new role as Education Support Officer within the Secondary Team. I hope to make a difference to the lives of children who are care experienced in Walsall by ensuring that there is opportunity for them, regardless of any challenges that they may have, to be successful in their education..”



Post 16 Education Support Officer – Dalian Poole

We have also welcomed a new member of staff to the Post 16 team this term!

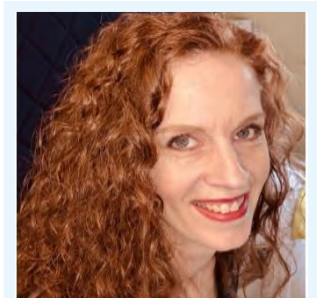
“Hi, my name is Dalian Poole and I am the new Education Support Officer for Post 16. I am beginning to meet our young people and ensure they are supported appropriately during this busy time of year. I will also be working with Kirsten Wilson on developing the work that is needed for Post 16. I am really excited to be part of the team.” – Dalian



Education Advisor – Vicki Stephen

We have also welcomed a new member of staff on secondment to the School Improvement and Pupil Outcomes team:

“Hello - I am an experienced Head of School, leading on Inclusion and Wellbeing within my school setting. This year, I have the privilege to be seconded for 2 days per week to work within the Virtual School School's Improvement and Pupil Outcomes team. I am passionate about providing children and young people with the opportunities and experiences that they need to achieve and I am looking forward to working with the team to further develop the provision offered to vulnerable children.”



New Structure for 2022-2023

This academic year we will be adapting the way we have previously worked in order to have greater impact across our schools and with our children in care.

The overall aim of our team continues focus on producing better educational outcomes, and enhanced personal and social development, so that our children in care have better life chances.

The Virtual School contains four broad teams:

- The School Improvement and Pupil Outcomes Team who will focus on educational outcomes, monitor attainment and progress and support schools to improve the provision offered to vulnerable children by completing School Monitoring Visits. Within this team – there are two Primary Education Support Officers and Two Secondary Support Officers - led by an Education Adviser.
- The Inclusion and Participation Team who will be responsible for ensuring all our children and young people are accessing appropriate education, are attending school, and are not at risk of suspension or exclusion. The team will also be responsible for managing current enrichment and enhancement activities and ensuring that all our children have access to an activity outside of school.
- The Early years Team responsible for ensuring all children in early years have access to good quality EY provision.
- The Post 16 Team responsible for ensuring all year 14-19 young people have access to good quality post 16 provision, are supported to achieve their chosen career pathway.



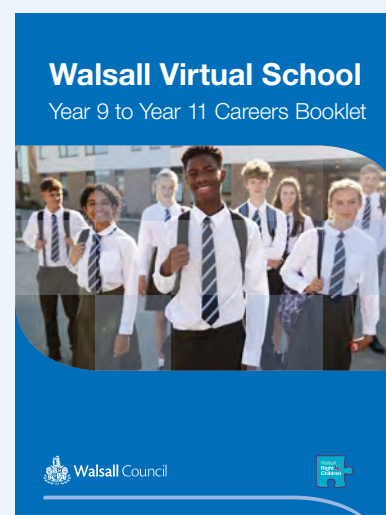
School Visits

This academic Year our School Improvement and Pupil Outcomes Team will be conducting school visits in order to discuss the educational outcomes and support in place for all children in care in their school setting. Over time, this will replace the Education Support Officer (ESO) attending all PEPS. Your allocated ESO will be in touch shortly to share this information and arrange their visits. We very much look forward to visiting schools, sharing good practice, supporting next steps and signposting Designated Teachers to access the updated training offer from the Walsall Virtual School EP's CAMHS and SALT Specialist Support Team.

New Publication – Years 9-11 Careers Booklet

This new informative booklet has been sent to all Year 9, 10, and 11 students and provides guidance on choosing options, work experience, and the post 16 options that will be available to them.

If you would like a copy and haven't received one, please let us know!



Celebration Section

Exam Results:

This summer our Year 11 students all gained excellent results in their exams. We know that following the disruptions to education over the last two years, exams have been extremely challenging but their resilience and determination should be commended. The vast majority of our young people have now moved onto colleges, apprenticeships or other education providers, where we continue to support them. Walsall Virtual School wish all our young people the very best of success in their next ventures.

Drayton Manor

In September, we held our annual celebration event at Drayton Manor Park. This event was organised in order to celebrate the achievements of our children and young people over the past 2 years. Everyone had a wonderful day and it was an excellent turn out with around 370 people in attendance. An extended thank you to all the staff, carers and young people who made the vent such a huge success.



Summit2Success

Last term, ten young people from Year 7 and 8 took part in an 8 week Summit2Success Programme. This included coverage of topics focused upon mental health and wellbeing, supporting the young people to develop their self-esteem, confidence, determination and resilience.



Year 6 Transition Residential

In July several of our young people from Year 6 attended an adventure weekend at Conover Hall. As part of the weekend, they took part in fun activities and evening events overcoming challenges, promoting and building resilience to support their transition to secondary school. We were also joined by two year 9 young people who shared their experience of secondary school.





Enhancement and Enrichment

We are currently organising an exciting programme of activities for October Half Term. The 3 day offer will include opportunities to attend extra -curricular activities such as: swimming, trampolining, cooking, horse riding and go karting. Emails will be sent shortly with further detail about the programme and how our children and young people can get involved.

Other planned activities currently include:

- A visit to Sleeping Beauty at Walsall Arena and Arts Centre. Tickets will be allocated on a first come first served basis so watch out for further information.
- The Gruffalo – A theatre trip to Birmingham Town Hall
- Mentoring opportunities for KS3 and KS4 young people so they can learn to work with and support younger students.

Book In a Bag

We have developed our own book gifting programme for children in primary school. Children will receive books with carefully crafted activities to go with them to cultivate a continued love of reading. They will receive their book in a bag once every term.

Maths on the Move

This will be a termly activity pack for both KS1 and KS2 children with a focus upon developing and practicing maths related objectives whilst on the go! We know that traditional worksheet based home learning can be a challenge for some of our young people and so we wanted to offer something a little bit different. Whilst still educationally planned, the 'Maths on the Move' activity packs will contain themed ideas to link Maths with the real world and will provide practical, hands on ways to reinforce maths skills at home. Activity pack will be send out every term.

Storytime



We will continue to send out Storytime magazine to children in years 3, 4 and 5

When children read for the sheer pleasure of it, it improves their reading, writing, spelling and vocabulary, but best of all it's just fantastic fun!

Each month, Storytime magazine is packed with brilliant tales for boys and girls of all ages. Storytime gives you a quality children's magazine that actually helps to improve literacy with great content you can keep forever.

- Wonderful stories for kids every month, including fairy tales, myths, fables, stories from different cultures and tales from new authors.
- Specially commissioned, full-colour illustrations.
- Puzzles, activities, games and colouring.
- Printed on quality paper so you can read it again and again.
- Kids' competitions every month, win books and much more.
- Beautiful tidy files to store them in.

Reading for pleasure is so important it's now part of the national curriculum, and magazines for kids play an important role in that, as well as books. With Storytime magazine, kids can enjoy an engaging and magical world of stories every month.

Please do explore the Storytime website to find out more: <https://www.storytimemagazine.com/>

If you would like to opt out of the Storytime project, please let us know by emailing Walsall Virtual School (WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk) with your child's name and the reason you would like them to be withdrawn from the project.

We hope you enjoy the Storytime magazine subscription! As always, we welcome feedback from our young people and the adults around them so please let us know how the children get on with the parcels and send any photos/ completed activities to us at WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk.



Britannica Magazine

For our Year 6 and Year 7 readers we have Britannica Magazine. Prepare for your brain to be boggled with amazing facts, extraordinary feats and awe-inspiring true-life stories!

The key question asked throughout every page of this magazine is simply this: What are you interested in? It's a question that children are seldom asked in normal everyday life – rather adults insist on telling them what we think they need to know!

This is what makes Britannica Magazine such an important part of giving young people a lifelong love of learning. For many children the real world is far more fascinating than anything you can make up. And by covering so many different topics in every single issue you can be sure your child's brain will be stimulated with a love of learning all about the remarkable world around them.

- The brilliant factual magazine for all curious minds.
- Bursting with brain-tingling facts and spectacular photos and illustrations.
- Makes children want to read – and say 'wow!' on every page.

For more information visit <https://britannicamagazine.co.uk/>

If you would like to opt out of the Britannica project, please let us know by emailing Walsall Virtual School (WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk) with your child's name and the reason you would like them to be withdrawn from the project.



Aspire to University

This project is run by the University of Wolverhampton for selected Y7-11 students who have the potential to go to University. It is a long term project, so if young people start in Y7, they hopefully continue to be involved until at least Y11. It involves trips to the university and other education providers, and mentoring. All activities are designed to raise the aspirations of our learners and help them learn about what going to University could be like. The below information gives a clearer idea of what students get up to on the project. We are hoping this year will see a return to pre-covid busy, with lots of fun and engaging offers for students.

This will all begin on our relaunch session on Tuesday 27th September 5pm-7pm at the University of Wolverhampton – Walsall Campus.

Access to Music Project

Our Access to Music Project is a joint project with Walsall Music Hub, which offers young people in Walsall schools the opportunity to learn a musical instrument. We launched it in September 2021 and had a phenomenal first year of the project! Children continue to really enjoy and engage with the 1:1 lessons and learning to play an instrument. And the wonderful music tutors have reported that they are also really enjoying the opportunity to work with our students and are really impressed by their enthusiasm!

We finished the first year with a Celebration Event at the Walsall New Art Gallery with 6 children participating in workshops and a performance. We hope to continue this end of year offer this year, hopefully with even more participants.



Imagination Library

The Walsall Virtual School are registered with the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. A book gifting programme devoted to inspiring a love of reading in the hearts of children everywhere. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library works with over 200 affiliate partners and delivers more than 40,000 books every month to children in the UK. Each month children from birth to age five, receive an age appropriate book in the post, free of charge. Idea sheets to accompany the books are emailed out to parents and carers where email addresses have been provided.

Further details of the scheme can be found at <https://imaginationlibrary.com/uk/>

If you have any questions about the book programme please contact us at WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk

We hope you enjoy reading these books together.



Teacher's Tool Room

Walsall Virtual School Training

In September, Virtual School staff have undertaken training in the RADY (Raising Attainment for Disadvantaged Youngsters) approach. This heightened our focus upon creating and maintaining high aspirational targets for our young people in order to reduce barriers and accelerate the progress of our vulnerable learners. We were also introduced to the 'Thinking Differently' Training package, which is freely available to all Walsall Schools. This extensive training package includes a range of modules on various topics to support school staff to ensure children are treated equitably in their education. For details of this programme and to check whether your school is already signed up, please contact you named Virtual School Education Officer.

Training Calendar

Our Training Calendar is now on the Virtual School website - <https://wvs.sch.life/Page/Calendar>

Please ensure that you as a designated teacher are logged in so that training can be booked online. If there are any issues with this then please email WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk in order to book a space.

Training so far this year includes:

- Improving Educational Outcomes for children with a social worker – 4 sessions
- CAMHS Offer - Emma Osborne, our CAMHS worker has updated her training offer for schools and includes a range of options that will support school to ensure the best outcomes for children in care. Training may be delivered in person or online with either large or small groups, depending upon need. Please discuss this with your Education Support Officer when they make contact with you. Schools will be asked to complete a referral form expressing their needs and the anticipated outcomes of the training they require.

Why attachment-aware teaching matters for every child

Teachers are becoming ever-more comfortable talking about attachment when it comes to students who have experienced trauma, but attachment-aware practice should not just be used with the most vulnerable - every child would benefit, according to Professor Peter Fonagy.

https://www.tes.com/news/why-attachment-aware-teaching-matters-every-child?fbclid=IwAR2IxeOWh7Sd b5X2TuWpn03A8XVSRQHXYOC-1B6roXKwcyIPb6Gq_UwK16l

Some schools are starting to explore the impact of the physical classroom environments upon the ability of children and young people to feel safe within school and access their learning potential.

<https://www.headteacher-update.com/best-practice-article/the-chronicles-of-a-therapeutic-classroom-ten-low-cost-ideas-wellbeing-vulnerable-pupils-attachment-mental-health/246320/>

Please do have a look at these interesting articles about attachment aware practice and the benefits for all pupils. Please contact Lorraine Thompson if you are interested in joining our Attachment Aware Schools programme this term and finding out more how we can become trauma responsive within our school settings.



Carers' Corner

Secondary Transition – Year 6 to Year 7

Children born between 1 September 2011 and 31 August 2012 are due to transfer to a secondary school (year 7) in September 2023.

It is important that you submit your application by the closing date of 31 October 2022.

It is the carer's responsibility, alongside the social worker, to submit the applications for secondary school. However, we are more than happy to support this process and discuss options.

If you have a child in year 6 in mainstream school, you will have heard from one of our primary key workers to check applications for schools will be in by the closing date. For our children in specialist provision, our SEN caseworker has been working on ensuring secondary provision is identified.

As our children are Looked After Children, they do take priority in admissions, but the application does need to be in on time to ensure this. If you are not sure of long term care plans, please speak to your child's social worker to discuss this to identify appropriate schools. As they take priority, you can name just one school on the admissions form.

If you live in Walsall but any of your preferred schools are outside Walsall Borough, you can still apply in the same way. Walsall Council runs a co-ordinated admissions scheme with neighbouring councils and admissions authorities, so you only have to complete one application. The same works vice versa if you live in a neighbouring authority, you use their admissions form but name a Walsall school on it.

Please also find further support here - https://go.walsall.gov.uk/schools_and_learning/schools_in_walsall/school_admissions/apply_for_a_secondary_school_place

Applying for a Reception Place – children who will turn 4 before 1.9.23

Children born between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019 are due to start Reception in September 2023.

Primary school applications (Reception and transfer from Infant to Junior) for September 2023 will open on 15 November 2022.

Having a place in the nursery class attached to a school does not guarantee a place in the reception class at that school. You must send a separate application for a place in the reception class.

If you live outside Walsall you should complete an application from your home local authority, even if you are applying for a Walsall school.

https://go.walsall.gov.uk/schools_and_learning/schools_in_walsall/school_admissions/apply_for_a_reception_place

Applying for a Junior School place for children currently in Year 2 in an Infant School

The same applies as above. Primary school applications (reception and transfer from infant to junior) for September 2023 will open on 15 November 2022.

You will then be able to log on and apply for a junior school place.

https://go.walsall.gov.uk/schools_and_learning/schools_in_walsall/school_admissions/apply_for_a_primary_school_place

E safety

As a parent or carer you play a key role in helping your child to stay safe online.

You don't need to be an expert on the internet to help keep your child stay safe online. We would like to sign post you to some advice and resources to support you as you support your child to use the internet safely, responsibly and positively.



<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>

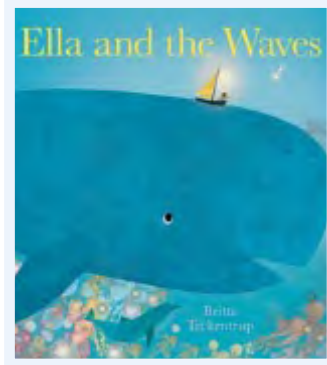


<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

UK Council for Internet Safety

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers-whose-children-are-using-social-media>

Literacy Lounge- Books of the Term



Book of the Month for EYFS - Waves

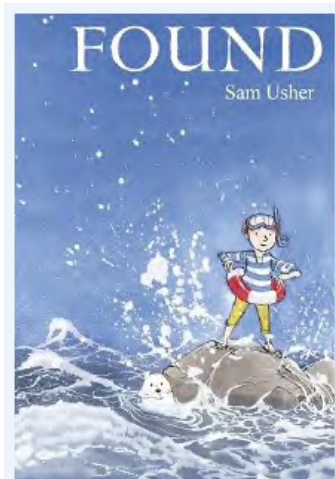
Author: Britta Teckentrup

When Ella is all alone in a small boat on stormy seas, she thinks her situation is hopeless. But from underneath the waves, there are voices of encouragement. Slowly Ella realises she is not alone and there are creatures that will help her overcome her anxiety and fears.

Ella and the Waves is a moving story of finding confidence in the face of adversity. With beautiful and almost luminescent over and underwater illustrations, this is a magically captivating picture book that's full of light and positivity.

Ella sits alone in a boat, battling waves so high they touch the sky. A bodiless voice beneath the surface of the sea tells her it is hopeless, she'll never find land, she'll never be safe... But there are kind voices at sea too - ones that offer encouragement, support and the promise of hope.

With the kindness of a small white bird, a lesson from a pod of porpoises and the support of a gentle whale, Ella finds her courage and discovers she was never alone.



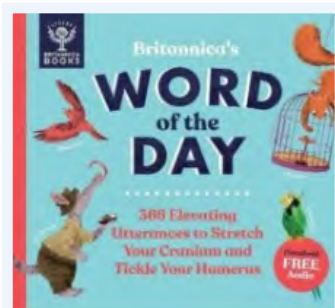
Book of the Month for Key Stage 1 - Found

Author: Sam Usher

'It's a warm summer's day, so Boy and his grandad pack up their provisions and head for the seaside.

There's so much to do, from exploring rock pools to building a magnificent sandcastle. But their day takes a different turn when they go for a swim and find a baby seal caught up in a net. Its rescue leads Boy and Grandad on a thrilling underwater adventure!

When Boy and his grandad set off for a day out on the beach, little can they imagine the spectacular adventure that awaits. A joyful seaside story that celebrates the bond between a grandson and his grandfather. With sandcastle building, a sailing rescue feat and a satisfying twist – all conveyed through short bursts of text and watercolour illustrations – this is a beautiful book to read and share with young children. The fourth in the series – including Wild, Free and Lost – Found does not disappoint.



Book of the Month for Key Stage 2 - Word of the Day

With a different and exciting word for each day – including a pronunciation guide, definition, context sentence and illustration. Words are grouped into themes and there's also a story of the month that uses all the upcoming words.

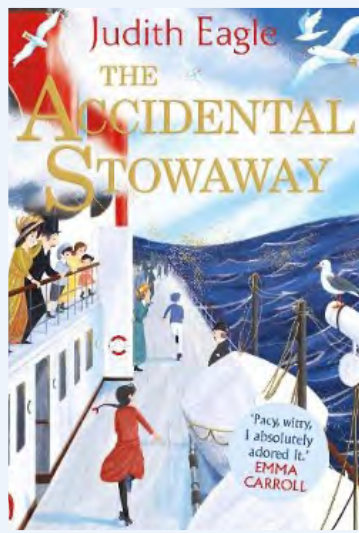
Britannica's Word of the Day is perfect for finding new and exciting words, especially if your curlicue has lost its mojo or your harbinger is woebegone. It's a deliciously addictive book.

Become a word virtuoso in just one year with 366 crackerjack words aimed to impress. This charmingly illustrated book features boffo words selected by the masterminds at Britannica to highlight the best of the English language.

Follow a menagerie of animals as they teach one new word for each day of the year, including a pronunciation guide, definition, sample sentence, and interesting trivia about the word's usage or etymology. Each month concludes with an outlandish story that features all the new words learned.

This delightfully challenging and surprising book will turn word aficionados into passionate logophiles!

Literacy Lounge- Books of the Term



Book of the Month for Key Stage 3 – The Accidental Stowaway

Author: Judith Eagle

Trapped onboard an ocean liner bound for New York, Patch must think on her feet to solve a fiendish mystery in Eagle's slice of gripping historical fiction.

Liverpool, 1910 - When Patch runs up the gangway of steamship, RMS Glorious, she isn't planning to hang around. But if she leaves her hiding place the constable might catch her: sitting tight is worth the risk. Too late, she realises the ship is setting sail! Patch has become an accidental stowaway.

Luckily, Patch's unconventional past has made her pretty fearless when it comes to fending for herself, and besides there are friends in high and low places to be made onboard. But hiding away becomes less and less easy: her new friends urgently need her help and there's a mystery that needs solving, all before they reach New York . . .



Book of the Month for Key Stage 4 – Stone

Author: Finbar Hawkins

Overwhelmed by grief from losing his father in Afghanistan, Sam stumbles upon a stone with strange and supernatural properties on a hillside that holds special memories for him and a special place in local history. He is thrust into a beautifully realised and mysterious world of legends and bravery where relationships are tested.

The second, and standalone, novel by the multiple award-nominated and bestselling author Finbar Hawkins does not disappoint. Stone is a compelling study of grief, thought and family, suitable for fans of Norse myths and Halloween. Good, evil, magic, tarot mysticism and a mysterious girl with the key to Sam's fate await in this bewitching novel with a refreshing splash of darkness.



Our Learning Platforms

Primary learning Platforms

Just a quick reminder that as part of our Virtual School Offer, children have access to the following learning platforms. We are more than happy for these to be used in school and at home.

Reading Eggs / Doodle Maths – Years 1 – 6

We continue to have subscriptions for Reading Eggs and Doodle Maths for all children in Reception – Year 6 so you have these to access thousands of phonics activities, reading books, activities and games!

Doodle Maths is a digital learning platform which creates individual work plans for children from Reception to Year 6, with curriculum-aligned questions delivered in short, fun and snappy exercises on computer, tablet or phone. Little and often works best – just 10 minutes a day is all you need to boost your child's confidence and ability in maths.

Please do log in to these platforms and explore them with your children. Your children's schools have also been given the login details!

- <https://readingeggs.co.uk/>
- <https://www.doodlemaths.com/>

Please do log in to these platforms and explore them with your children. Your children's schools have also been given the login details!



The login details for the children are below, should you also wish to use them with the children in school:

Username:

All children's usernames have been changed so that they are their First names, followed by the first letter of their second names, followed by Walsall.

So a child called Joe Bloggs would have the username JoeBWalsall.

Password:

The password has been set as WalsallVirtualSchool

Secondary Learning Platform:

Mathletics - Years 7 - 11

For young people in years 7 – 11, you have access to Mathletics.

Support your students' mathematics learning at home! The best learning is enjoyable learning. Mathletics blends rewards with creative adventures to create captivating experiences that will test learners' knowledge and abilities. Built on a foundation of solid curriculum-led content and designed by a team of veteran educators, Mathletics complements and reinforces schoolwork and classroom learning.

We hope you have a wonderful term. Should you need any help or support with anything please get in touch at: WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk

The Mathletics logo consists of the word 'Mathletics' in a white, bold, sans-serif font, centered within a blue, rounded rectangular shape that has a slight gradient and a shadow effect.

