

Walsall Virtual School Newsletter

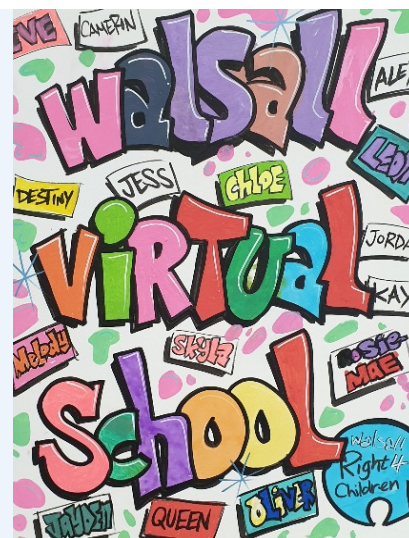
Spring 2024

Welcome!

Hello and welcome to the Walsall Virtual School newsletter! We know this is always a very busy term in school, so we hope this newsletter finds you well, and that you have had a positive start to the year.

In this newsletter please find updates on Virtual School projects, training dates for this term and other information we think you will find useful.

As always, don't hesitate to contact us if you have any thoughts, questions or ideas at WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk



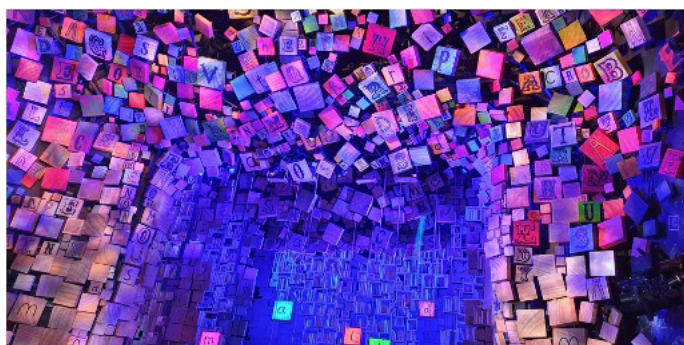
Virtual School Spring Term Projects and Updates

Winter Theatre Trips

We had 3 wonderful theatre trips for children to access in December and January...

Theatre trip to London to see *Matilda*

We took a small group of children to the Cambridge Theatre, London two days before Christmas to see Matilda the musical. We even got to see some of the London monuments and had a bite to eat in a local restaurant. A wonderful time was had by all!



Walsall Council



The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe....almost!

On 5th December, we had a very exciting trip planned to The Rep Theatre in Birmingham to see The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe. Unfortunately, when we arrived at the theatre our show had been cancelled due to actor illness. The children were fantastic despite the disappointment. So after a quick regroup, we went to the cinema to see Wonka! We had a lovely afternoon and a little extra chocolate and a photoshoot with Thor and a minion after the film seemed appropriate!



Theatre trip to Birmingham to see Red Riding Hood

On Saturday 6th January we took a small group of our young children to the REP Theatre in Birmingham to see Red Riding Hood. The children had a wonderful time and even got to join in with other performers to sing happy birthday to Red Riding Hood



Book in a Bag

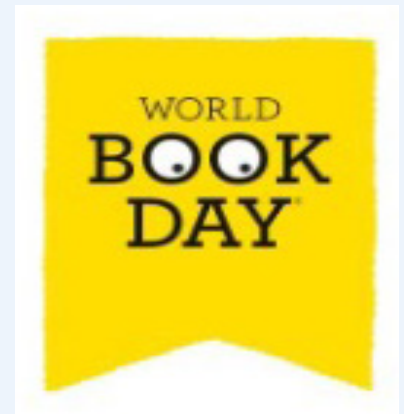
Children in years 1 – 8 have continued to receive a monthly Book in a Bag pack. December's book was Christmas themed (see below for what they looked like. We had great feedback from the children... particularly from the Year 2s who were very pleased with their copy of The Dinosaur that Pooped Christmas!



January's Book in a Bag pack was fairytale themed at different ages and levels...



World Book Day



With World Book Day coming up (Thursday 7th March), every child from nursery to year 8 will receive one of the World Book Day books in March!

EYFS Stay and Play – February Half Term

We had our early stay and play session at Walsall College Little Professors Nursery during the half term break. Children and carers had a lovely time exploring different areas of the early years curriculum together.



The children enjoyed creating their own masterpieces with the paint. The children were encouraged to mix their own colours, and we learned lots of maths skills as we are talked about colour, shape, size and quantity.

The children used their creative skills to make their own canvas to take home!

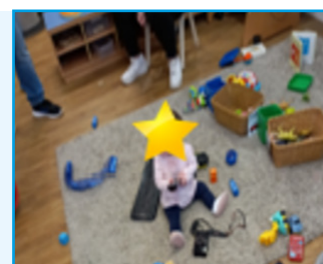
The children had lots of fun making playdough! This again promoted early Maths skills, as well as providing lots of lovely opportunities to hold conversations and develop their language skills.

The children were able to take playdough home with them. This was an excellent activity to develop fine motor skills, which are essential to supporting early writing development.



We practiced counting and estimation skills as we explored the building materials. The children had lots of fun knocking down the giant towers that were built!

We were delighted to welcome some of our youngest children to our Stay & Play. The babies enjoyed exploring the musical instruments and building blocks.



We ended the session with some dancing. This helped to support the children's physical development. The children loved joining in (and so did our amazing Foster Carers!)



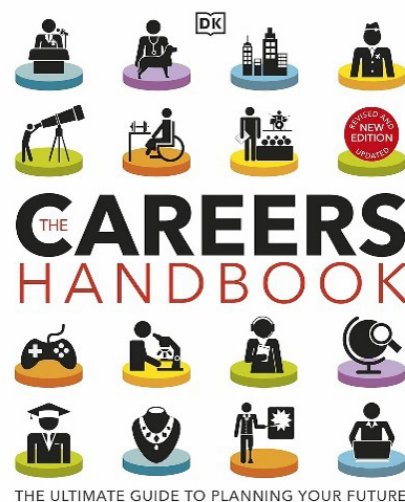
We would like to say a huge 'Thank You' to Amelia and her team at Walsall College Little Professors Nursery for allowing us to access their lovely rooms for the Stay & Play!

Careers Pack

We sent a careers pack out to 30 students in year 9. The pack contained a book about careers, a letter to each young person, some highlighters and some index cards or post-it notes. The pack also contained 3 activity cards that the young person should do with their carer. The activities included:

- reflecting with a carer on their personality, traits, likes and interests; and what type of career that might match
- exploring their and their carers top 3 career choices and some that they would never have thought about doing previously

The focus of the pack was to engage with a carer to explore careers. This is the first time a careers pack has been sent out by us in this way. Another will go out next term and we will gather feedback to see the impact the packs have had.



Understanding Yourself



Turn to page 10 in the careers book.

It is about understanding yourself. Ideally you will have a career that you love and enjoy. A big part of choosing the right career depends on being able to identify your interests, motivations, skills and personal qualities.

Sit with your carer for 30 minutes. Both do this activity. For the first 15 minutes use page 10 in the book to make a list of:

- The subjects you like/liked at school
- The interests you have
- Things that motivate you
- Skills you have
- Your personal qualities
- Your circumstances

- For the next 15 minutes share what you wrote with your carer and ask them to share what they wrote with you.
- Also ask them if they have any advice for you about careers, now that they are an adult.

Explore Careers



Do this activity with your carer.

It will take 30 minutes.

Turn to pages 4-7 of the careers book. Choose an area that appeals to you and an area that really doesn't appeal to you. Ask your carer to choose their own area that they think would appeal to you and an area that they think wouldn't appeal to you.

Within these 4 areas, choose 1 specific job from each. For example you could choose 'Product Designer' from the 'Arts, Crafts, and Design' area and 'Musician' from the 'Performing arts, Media and Journalism' section.

Read the pages on your chosen 2 careers and ask your carer to read their 2. Spend 15 minutes reading about the careers and writing notes about them.

Spend the next 15 minutes telling your carer about the 2 careers you read about and asking them questions about the 2 careers they looked at. Questions might include:

- What skills do you need for the job?
- What is the salary?
- What might your interests be if you had that career?
- What is the career path to that role?

More Exploring



Spend as much time as you like looking at different careers in the book.

Use the post-it notes/index cards to mark the pages of careers you are interested in, and take notes on the skills you need and career paths for each career. See if you can eventually pick your top 3 careers. They don't need to be in one specific area.

Upcoming Events

London Residential

In February half term, we have a 3 day residential visit to London for children in Key Stage 2. We are taking 15 children and have a very busy 3 days planned with visits to the following places: Science Museum, Natural History Museum, Pizza Express, Tower of London, London Eye, walking tour including Houses of Parliament/ Westminster Abbey/ Buckingham Place, Byron Burger, The Lion King, HMS Belfast and Madame Tussaud's. Phew! We'll all need a rest after that!



Manchester United and Manchester City Trip

In February half term, we will also be taking a group of children to Manchester to visit the home of both Manchester City and Manchester United football stadiums, to experience a fascinating insight into the operations of high- performing elite level football stadiums. On arrival to the stadiums our children will be guided through a stadium tour, discovering the history and achievements of the clubs. Children can expect to experience: Pitch side standing, changing rooms visit, press rooms experience, Museum and trophy rooms an the club shops.



Easter and May Enrichment Trips

We offer various enrichments throughout the year. Please see below for further upcoming enrichment activities. If your young person would like to take part in any of them, please email walsallvirtualschool@walsall.gov.uk

Trip	Age Group	Date
Seaside trip	Key Stage 2	Easter holidays
Residential London Trip	Key Stage 3	Easter holidays (4.4.24 – 5.4.24)
Warwick Castle	Key Stage 2	May half term
Silverstone	Key Stage 3	May half term



Young Responders

We are looking at facilitating a Young Responders training session with St John's Ambulance.

This would be a 2 hour session, in a centre in Walsall, for young people aged 11-25.

Please see below for more information. If your young person would be interested in taking part in this session, please email walsallvirtualschool@walsall.gov.uk with the young person's name, stating an interest in the Young Responders training.



An immersive street first aid programme

Teaching young people aged 11- 25 life-saving skills

A diverse programme designed to support young people who are:

Carers

Care Experienced

Not in Education Employment or Training

At risk of or exposed to street violence



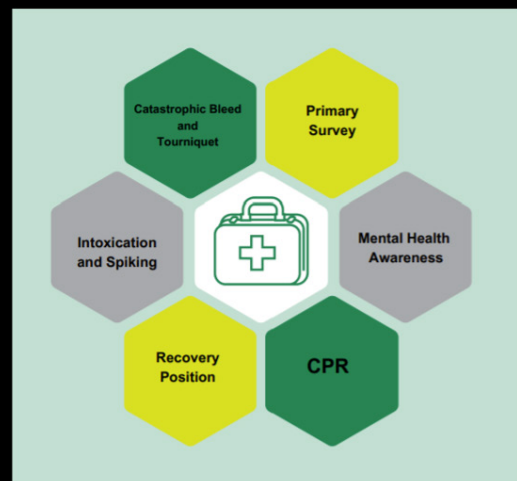
"Being a Young Responder has helped me to feel more confident to help others"

FREE
Street first aid sessions
in your local community

For more information
visit www.sja.org.uk/young-responders



Gain practical street first aid skills
dealing with stab wounds, intoxication and mental health awareness



Recognise risk and learn street first aid skills
that could save a life

Teacher's Tool Room

Training so far

Last term we had briefing sessions entitled, 'Language that Cares' for our Designated Teachers. The sessions focused on how to write the Personal Education Plans (PEPs) to the children, being mindful that these are documents the children should be at the centre of. We can see the impact of these sessions on how staff are writing the PEPs to the children so thank you for your work and effort in doing this.

As a follow up to this session, we are so pleased that we will be joined by Luke Rodgers as our keynote speaker. Luke is lived experience leader, with a passion for and expertise in creating projects that benefit the lives of care experienced young people.

This session will be on Thursday 14th March 2024 at 10:00am. As well as Luke's keynote speech, we will also be providing updates from the Virtual School including pupil premium, enrichment events and PEP updates. If there is something that you think is a particular training need, please let us know by emailing:

WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk

Training Calendar

Please find all upcoming training on our website - **<https://wvs.sch.life/Page/Calendar>**

We will send an invite closer to each event asking people to email **WalsallVirtualSchool@walsall.gov.uk** if they would like to attend.

Nurturing Schools Project

As part of our BRICS Project we have recently launched our Nurturing School Project.

The project consists of

- Identifying and developing 4 Nurture Hubs to provide short term nurturing support to vulnerable children and young people in their own locality. This includes the option for commissioned places within the Nurture Hub for children from other schools.
- A Virtual Team of Nurture Specialists to support the development and delivery of training to schools. This will include whole school training, school audits and support in setting up nurture provision in schools. This team will consist of Locality Nurture Hub staff, Specialist EPS, Nurture UK trained Practitioners from the Virtual School and Inclusion Hub.
- Training for all school staff to provide a basic awareness of and the impact of Nurture on a child's development and learning.

The aim of the project is to support schools to deliver the 6 principles of nurture

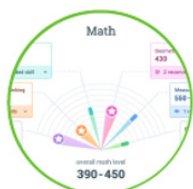
1. Children's learning is understood developmentally
2. The classroom offers a safe base
3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing
4. Language is vital as a means of communication
5. All behaviour is communication
6. The importance of transition in children's lives programme this term and finding out more how we can become trauma responsive within our school settings.

Carers' Corner



We have subscribed to the learning platform IXL, so all of our children and young people in Years 1-11 have access to the IXL English and maths programmes. IXL is personalised learning. With a comprehensive curriculum, individualised guidance and real-time analytics, IXL meets the unique needs of each learner.

Learning designed for your child



Real-Time Diagnostic

Find out what your child knows and next steps for growth with IXL's Real-Time Diagnostic



Unlimited Practice

Build a strong foundation of knowledge with unlimited practice in over 6,500 topics



Targeted Guidance

Diagnostic personalised skill recommendations based on your child's practice



Mobile Apps

Take learning on the go with IXL's mobile apps



Awards & Certificates

Earn fun awards and certificates that celebrate hard work

The usernames are mostly the child's first name and initial of their last name, e.g. Joe Bloggs would have the username JoeB.

The passwords are all walsallvs but you can log in and change this.

If you have any issues logging onto IXL, please contact your child's/school's Education Support Officer.



Secondary Transition – Year 6 to Year 7

If your young person is in Year 6, they will be moving to Year 7 and their next adventure in secondary school in September.

The deadline for applications for children without an EHCP was 31st October 2023. You will receive your offer by email on 1 March 2024. The emails are sent automatically over the course of the day.

The admissions system for children with EHC plans is different; you do not go through the normal admissions system. Our SEN are working on ensuring children in year 6 have their annual reviews of their EHCPs to then consult with secondary schools.

Reception Transition – Nursery to Reception

Children born between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020 are due to start reception in September 2024.

The 15th January 2024 was the closing date for all primary 2024 applications. Carers/ the person who submitted the application will receive an email notification on the National Notification Date, 16 April 2024 (or next working day).

Year 11 Transition

If you have a young person in year 11, now is the time to be supporting them to think about what they will be doing when they leave school and start year 12. They may have already seen our careers advisor, but they will also have one within their school. If you are worried that they don't know what they want to, you can contact their school and ask for them to see the school careers advisor.

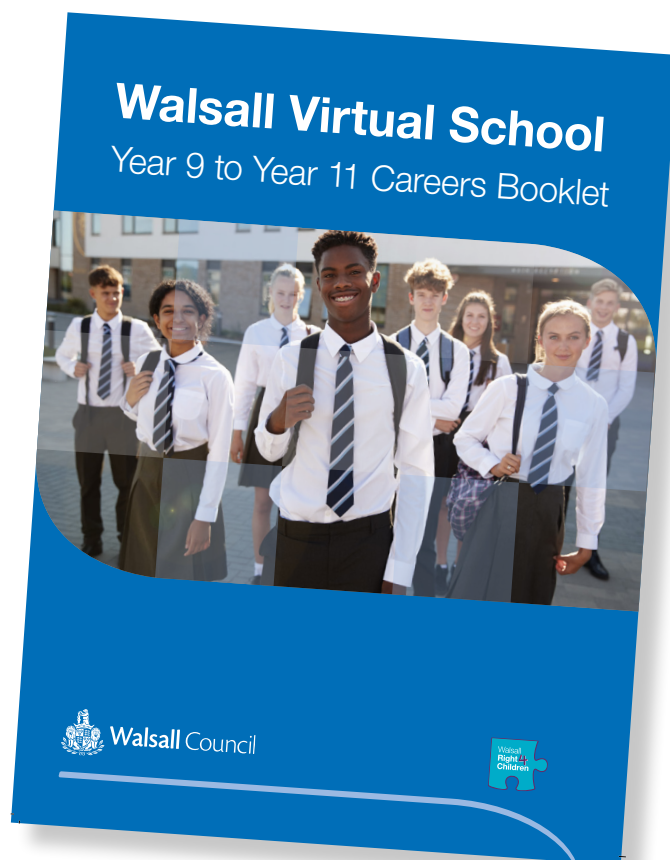
By the end of May we would hope that all our year 11 students have applied to a school/college/apprenticeship/training provider and been offered a conditional place.

We have a booklet to help to information and guidance during this important time, so get in touch if you would like a copy:

walsallvirtualschool@walsall.gov.uk

It is important that you support your young person to visit colleges, find out about courses, and apply for their next educational step. If you have a young person with an EHCP, this process needs to be completed by March.

It gives a checklist on what students and carers need to do during years 9, 10 and 11, to make sure they are fully prepared for their P16 education.



Literacy Lounge



Magazine and Book Projects:

As part of our Virtual School offer we have various magazine subscriptions and book projects. Please see below for the projects that started (or continued) in September:

- Children in years 1-8, have received their September and October Book in a Bag pack. This will continue monthly for the rest of the year. In September, the children received a range of fiction and non fiction books depending on their age and in October every child received an age appropriate book about Black History Month.
- Children in years 2, 3 and 4 have received their first 2 monthly copies of Storytime magazine.
- Children in years 7 and 8 have received their first 2 monthly copies of What on Earth!, a magazine created by Britannica.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library continues to grow in the UK and across the world having reached it's 200 millionth book gifted in 2023.
- With over 29 million books gifted in 2023 this equates to a book mailed every 1.07 seconds.
- The UK celebrated its 15th year and 5 millionth book gifted.
- In 2023 over 647,000 books were gifted in the UK with over 2,600 books to Walsall children aged between 0 and 5.

See below for the books chosen for 2024...



The first book a child receives is **The Tale of Peter Rabbit** (customised version)
 The month a child turns 5 they will receive **Just Imagine** (customised version)
 Titles on this list are subject to change.



GROUP 6 Children born in 2019

- Clean Up
- The Beastly Bunch
- When I Grow Up... Doctor
- The Three Wishes
- Wild Wild Wood
- Dog Loves Fairy Tales
- Pumpkin Soup
- Drama Llama
- The Artist
- Bog Baby
- The Greatest Show on Earth



GROUP 5 Children born in 2020

- Funnybones: Bumps in the Night
- Do You Know? Level 1 – BBC Earth Animal Families
- We're Going to Find the Monster
- Gretel the Wonder Mammoth
- Grumpy Monkey
- The Truth About Yeticorns
- 5 Funny Animals
- Don't Say Elephant!
- Diggersaurs: Mission to Mars
- My Magic Family
- Harriet the Strongest Girl in the World
- Poems Out Loud



GROUP 4 Children born in 2021

- 100 Birds
- Who's Going to Bed
- The Little Red Hen (Ladybird First Favourites)
- Flora and Nora Hunt for Treasure
- Geoffrey Gets the Jitters
- Flip, Flap, Find! Counting 1, 2, 3
- The Pirates on the Bus
- Crash! Bang! Wallop!
- There's a Dragon in Your Book
- Hey Duggee The Football Badge
- Alfie Gets in First
- If You're Happy and You Know It



GROUP 3 Children born in 2022

- Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?
- Shark in the Park
- Busy Day: Astronaut
- Find Spot: The Rainy Day
- Meg & Mog
- Magic Windows: My Body
- Pom Pom Gets the Grumps
- Little World: On the Train
- Mina and the Big Bite
- Little Pop-Ups: Little Red Riding Hood
- Ladybird First Favourite Nursery Rhymes
- My World, Your World



GROUP 2 Children born in 2023

- Peekaboo! Farm
- Where is the Very Hungry Caterpillar?
- Roald Dahl: Shapes
- Say Goodnight, Little Kitten
- Ladybird Photographic - 123
- Whose Nose?
- Baby Touch: Rainbow
- Baby Touch: Nursery Rhymes
- Ladybird Photographic - My Body
- Spot Goes to the Farm
- My First 100 Words
- Baby Touch: Night-Night



GROUP 1 Children born in 2024

- Baby Touch B&W Faces
- Peter Rabbit: Hello Peter!
- Moomin Baby: Words Tummy Time
- Concertina Book
- Baby Touch: Toys: A Black-and-White Book
- All About Me
- Baby Touch Colours
- Ladybird Photographic - Baby Animals
- How to Feed Your Cheeky Monkey
- Whose... Stripes?
- Baby Touch: I Love You



Penguin
Random House
PENGUIN YOUNG READERS

• Signifies a new book to the programme



FREE BOOKS FOR UNDER 5S!

HOW IT WORKS

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a book gifting programme. Registered children will receive **a free book to keep every month until they turn five**. The books are specially chosen for the child's age and stage of development. The books are delivered through the post direct to the child, with their name on.

ELIGIBILITY

Children under five who are in care with Walsall Council can register for the books. **Children who have been adopted can also sign up or keep receiving the books**. The books will continue until the child turns five, as long as the address is up to date!

SIGN UP

In **Walsall** the programme is administered by the Virtual School. If you have a child who could be eligible **get in touch with Raj Patel or signpost the carer**. We will need to know the child's name, address and date of birth so we can send the right books each month.

For more information on how to sign up or about the programme, contact **Raj Patel, 01922 655913 or 07876 398236 or email Raj.patel@walsall.gov.uk**

Reception Transition – Nursery to Reception

Children born between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020 are due to start reception in September 2024.

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.

The **portal for Reception 2024 applications opens on 6th November 2023**. If you live outside Walsall, you should complete an application from your home local authority (even if you are applying for a Walsall school).

The 15th January 2024 is the closing date for all primary 2024 applications. Your application along with any additional forms or supporting evidence must be submitted by this date.

Carers apply for the school places. When this has been completed, please send confirmation and the school preferences to Amun Bains (amun.bains@walsall.gov.uk).

Infant to Junior Transitions – Year 2 to Year 3

If your child goes to a primary school, you do not have to make another application. However if your child attends an infant school, you will need to apply to a junior or primary school for year 3.

The **portal for Junior 2024 applications opens on 6th November 2023**. If you live outside Walsall, you should complete an application from your home local authority (even if you are applying for a Walsall school).

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Year 11 Transition

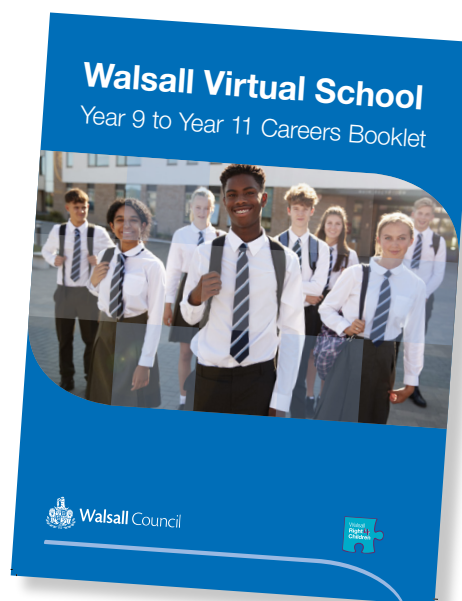
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Let's Talk!

Language is at the heart of everything, it is what is needed to thrive at home, school and in life in general. Sometimes it can be difficult to develop the skill of speaking and listening with our children and young people. In order to promote conversations, we are including a discussion box that might have a question, idea or picture to stimulate ideas and develop vocabulary.

This term we have a question about what you would rather chose.

Would you rather..

Find a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow.

or

Have the ability to listen to animals talk?

Discuss this question with your child or young person.

Discussion prompts:

- What option would you choose and why? Give your ideas and reasons as an adult too!
- If you did find a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow, what would you do with it? What would the gold look like? Would you find bars of solid gold or coins? What interesting words can you use to describe the gold?
- If you could listen to animals talk, what would they be saying? What would they sound like? Would you like to help the animals in some way, if you discovered they were in danger or needed help? Would interfering with nature be ethical?

Try creating a picture or story around your chosen idea.

