

# Family Newsletter



February 2026



After what has felt like months of non-stop rain (which is probably true), we are looking forward to stepping into the second half of the Spring Term with a little more optimism in the air!

As the weather improves, we will be making the most of our outdoor learning spaces and enjoying the fresh opportunities that only spring can bring.



**MESSAGE FROM PARENTS - Parents Only Coffee Morning** - Come and join us for a coffee morning this Friday (27th) at 10:30 at the designs cafe - over in the cider press shop - for a coffee and a natter - this is an event arranged and run by parents!

We're hoping to build a supportive parent community within Bidwell Brook, so we'd love to invite any parent or carer of a child at Bidwell Brook to come along. It's a relaxed, informal get-together — a chance to chat, share triumphs and challenges, and meet others who are on the same journey.

Halfway through the coffee morning, we're hoping to invite some key members of staff for anyone who would like to talk with them. This may include Monika, Marie, or someone from the family support team.

Everyone is very welcome ❤️

Follow the link for the event or join the Parents of Bidwell Brook Facebook group for more details

[Coffee and cake meet up  
facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/parents-of-bidwell-brook)

## NOTABLE DATES

Friday 27 February -  
Parents Only Coffee Morning  
10.30 am at Designs Cafe

Wednesday 4 March -  
Futures & Transitions Fayre  
open to Years 7-14,  
1.45 pm - 3.15 pm

Thursday 5 March -  
World Book Day /  
BB PTFA Meeting, 9.30 am

Friday 20 March -  
Red Nose Day (Comic Relief)

Saturday 21 March -  
PTFA Disco at BB,  
4 pm - 6 pm

Wed 25-Friday 27 March -  
Year 11 students attending  
Calvert Trust residential

Friday 27 March -  
Easter Raffle Draw at 12 noon

Thursday 2 April -  
Easter Egg Hunt for all  
students in the playground,  
Easter Eggs courtesy of the  
PTFA

Thursday 2 April -  
Last day of term

Tuesday 21 April -  
Students return to school

**Futures & Transitions Fayre** - We hope that all parents of students in Years 7 to 14 will be able to join us at our Fayre this year. There will be opportunities for you to start conversations with education and social care providers, as we are expecting the following to attend:

- South Devon College
- Plymouth City College
- Oakwood Court College
- Safebreaks Devon
- Dawlish Gardens Trust
- Post-16 Participation Team
- DCC Adult Social Care
- Reaching for Independence DCC
- Dame Hannahs Trust
- In Focus
- Lifeworks College
- Learn to Live 19-25
- Foxes Aurora
- ROC College
- DWP



The poster features a light green and blue background with a stylized tree and water graphic. The Bidwell Brook School logo is in the top right corner. The main title 'Futures & Transitions Fair' is prominently displayed in the center. A blue ribbon banner indicates the date 'WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH'. Below the title, it states 'FREE TO ATTEND!' and describes the opportunity to speak with education and social care providers. The bottom section, on a dark blue background, provides the location and time: '@ BIDWELL BROOK SCHOOL 1.45 PM - 3.15 PM' and a note: 'SORRY, NO PARKING AT THE SCHOOL'. A separate line of text on the left side of the bottom section states: 'THIS FAIR IS OF INTEREST TO FAMILIES WITH STUDENTS IN YEARS 7-14'.

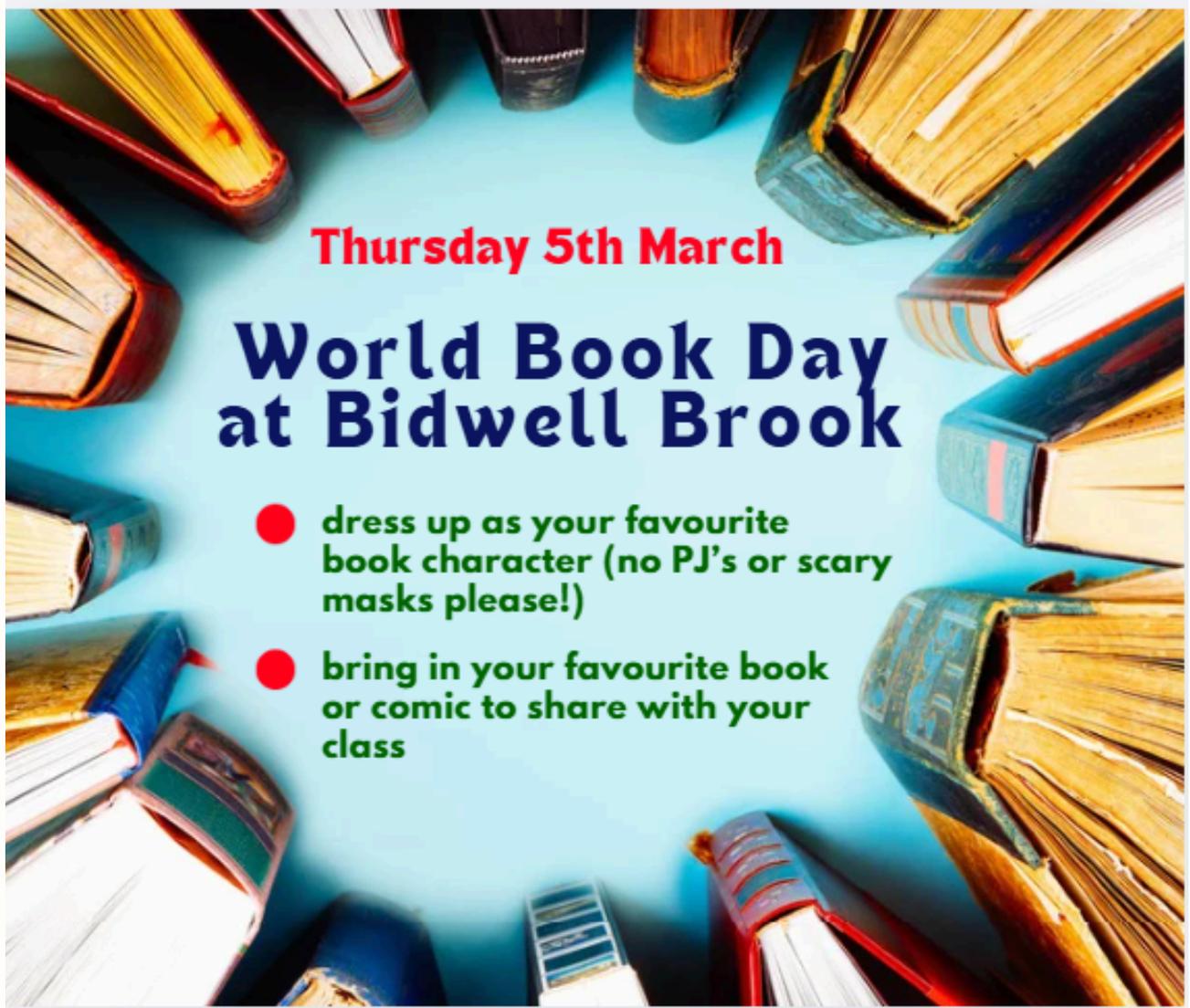
**Futures & Transitions Fair**

**WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH**

**FREE TO ATTEND!**  
Your chance to speak with representatives from education and social care providers from the local area

**THIS FAIR IS OF INTEREST TO FAMILIES WITH STUDENTS IN YEARS 7-14**

**@ BIDWELL BROOK SCHOOL  
1.45 PM - 3.15 PM**  
**SORRY, NO PARKING AT THE SCHOOL**



**Thursday 5th March**

## **World Book Day at Bidwell Brook**

- **dress up as your favourite book character (no PJ's or scary masks please!)**
- **bring in your favourite book or comic to share with your class**

**World Book Day** - Selected Libraries in Devon are running a new initiative for families to donate outgrown, unwanted children's costumes in good, wearable condition. At the same time, you can choose a new costume for free from the World Book Day clothing rail.

Libraries participating in this initiative are:

Barnstaple, Newton Abbot, Chudleigh, South Molton, Dawlish, Torquay, Pinhoe, Sidmouth, Torrington, Kingsbridge, Holsworthy, Tavistock, Exmouth, Paignton and Ivybridge.

At Bidwell Brook, we will also be running our "decorate your classroom door" competition with one lucky class winning a set of books!

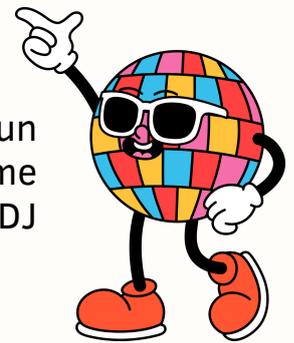


**Next BB PTFA Meeting** - Join the newly elected PTFA committee on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March at 9.30 am in school. The Committee will be running through the plans for the next School Disco and looking at exciting new events to run during the summer months! **EVERYONE WELCOME**



**Red Nose Day / Comic Relief** - The Student Council will be putting their thinking caps on and coming up with ideas for celebrating Red Nose Day at Bidwell Brook later in March. Details to follow. but we guarantee it will be fun!

**Saturday 21 March - 4-6 pm** - The PTFA is adding some extra fun to the weekend with a school disco! Get ready to bust some moves on the dance floor and have an amazing time with DJ Pedro! Tickets will be on sale soon via School Gateway.



**Easter Raffle** - Tickets have been sent home and we really hope you will be able to support us again this term. Perhaps you could persuade your extended family and friends to buy tickets too!

We would also be grateful for any sweet treat donations for our hamper! **Thank you.**

The draw will take place at noon on Friday 27 March, and you could be one of our lucky, lucky winners!



**Georgina Allen**

**New Parent Governor** - As well as being the new PTFA Chair, Georgina Allen is also a new Parent Governor for the Federation.

Georgina joined the Governing Body as she wanted to “give something back to the school community”, and is passionate about ensuring the best outcomes for all children.

Georgina has experience in an alternative provision as well as a mainstream setting, so brings a large range of relevant skills and experiences to the Governing Body.

Georgina has a child in Bees class at Bidwell Brook and if you wish to contact her, the email address is [georgina.allen@learntolivefederation.co.uk](mailto:georgina.allen@learntolivefederation.co.uk)

## Devon Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)



### Amending an EHCP (Education, Health & Care Plan)

As we continue with our EHCP annual reviews at Bidwell Brook, questions are coming up about the EHCP and the timings when plans can be amended.

If there are any amendments to an existing EHCP, we'll talk about them at the annual review meeting.

EHCPs will be amended by the SEND Operations Team (previously known as the 0-25 Team) when:

- there are significant changes identified;
- your child is moving onto their next phase of their education. For example, nursery into reception, Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2, Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 and post-16;
- there is a change of address or school;
- there are changes in health and/or social care provision.

The Code of Practice says that it is not expected that the EHCP will be amended on a very frequent basis. When we hold the annual review, we look at the whole EHCP. The Class Teacher's report, the 'Listen to Me' booklet and parents' comments contribute to this. If an EHCP is amended, all information goes into the Plan and stays there until the EHCP is amended again. So if your child's EHCP is not amended frequently, the information will stay the same. This is why sometimes the information is quite out of date and can mention things that no longer apply.

As part of the annual review, we always want to know from you how things are going, so we'll talk about that in the review even if the EHCP isn't due to be changed. The comments you make go onto the EHCP Hub each time under the parents / carers views. The 'Listen to Me' booklet is also uploaded to the Hub.

If you need help getting onto the EHCP Hub, there is a Helpline number you can call - 01392 380434 option 2.

# Annual Review Timeline

**THE ANNUAL REVIEW WILL BE HELD**

The school must hold the annual review meeting once invitations are sent and reports shared.

*(SEND Regs 2014 Reg 20(1)/21(2); Code of Practice paras 9.176-9.177)*

Attendees must review the child or young person's progress and whether the EHCP support is working effectively.



**LOCAL AUTHORITY DECISION (WITHIN 4 WEEKS)**

Within four weeks of the review meeting, the Local Authority must write to you confirming whether they will maintain, amend, or cease the EHCP. This letter is the decision notice and starts the amendment or appeal process. Missing this deadline is a breach of the law.

*(Children and Families Act 2014 s44(1); SEND Regs 2014 Reg 20(10))*



**FINAL EHCP ISSUED**

As soon as practicable, and within 8 weeks of sending the draft amendments, the Local Authority must issue the final EHCP or confirm they will not amend it after all.

*(SEND Regs 2014 Reg 22(3)-(4); SEND Code of Practice paras 9.196-9.197)*



**1**

**2-4 WEEKS BEFORE THE REVIEW**

You will receive an invitation to attend the annual review meeting.

This is also the time when you can submit your parental advice and ensure your child's views, wishes, and feelings are included.

The school must collect advice and reports from all invited professionals and parents, and circulate these to everyone attending the review.

*(SEND Regulations 2014, Reg 20(4) ; SEND Code of Practice 2015, paras 9.176)*



**2**

**3**

**WITHIN 2 WEEKS AFTER THE ANNUAL REVIEW**

Within two weeks, the school must send a written report to all attendees summarising recommendations, any disagreements, and all advice gathered.

*(SEND Regs 2014 Reg 20(7)-(9) 21(7)-(8); SEND Code of Practice para 9.176)*



**4**

**5**

**FOLLOWING THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES' DECISION**

**6**

**IF LA KEEPS OR CEASES THE EHCP:**

The decision letter must include your right to appeal, mediation information, and details of advice and disagreement services.

*(SEND Regs 2014 Reg 20(11)/21(10); SEND Code of Practice paras 9.199-9.210)*

**IF THE LA DECIDES TO AMEND THE EHCP**

The LA must send a draft amended plan with proposed changes, supporting evidence, and your right to comment and request a school.

*(SEND Regs 2014 Reg 20(10), 22(1)-(2); SEND Code of Practice paras 9.176, 9.193-9.194)*



A polite reminder that Bidwell Brook is a "nut free" school. Please check ingredients of snacks and food items before sending them in. Thank you!





**Hydropool at BB** - Our students benefit greatly from their sessions in the hydropool and our maintenance team ensure the pool is clean, hygienic and the water is at the correct temperature. A robust Risk Assessment is in place for all users of the pool.

All students using the hydropool must wear suitable, close fitting swimwear at each session.

Students who wear incontinence pads during the school day must wear specialist swimwear when in the pool to prevent any accidents occurring. If accidents do happen, the pool is closed for everyone until the maintenance team is able to carry out the necessary cleaning needed.

Below are links to companies which sell the appropriate and necessary swimwear:

<https://www.fledglings.org.uk/>

<https://www.incywincy.net/>

Thank you for your support.

**FACE - Family Advice / Communication / Education** - We have been sent information to pass on to families from FACE.

FACE is running free online parent training sessions. We do not endorse this company or recommend you attend these sessions, but if you are interested, you can find out more by clicking [here](#).



Online FREE talk by Jane Keyworth

## Anxiety Based School Avoidance

March 26th 7-8pm



Book online

[www.facefamilyadvice.co.uk](http://www.facefamilyadvice.co.uk)  
go to PARENTS - Live Talks page



All 16 parent talks **FREE** with our School Membership



**New Federation Finance Manager** - At the end of January, we officially said goodbye to Anne Davies, our Federation Finance Manager. Anne had worked for the Federation for over 15 years before deciding to retire. You may have seen Anne at our Fayres as she was always selling raffle tickets! We wish her well in her retirement.



We are delighted to announce that Warren Smart is our newly appointed Federation Finance Manager! Warren has previously worked in finance with both the Local Authority and at a Exeter-based Primary School, so joins us with lots of experience.

Welcome to the team Warren!

**Free School Meals** - Devon schools provide free school meal (FSM) holiday vouchers to low-income families, usually via email/letter with a unique code for supermarkets like Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's during school breaks.

To get them, apply online through the [Devon Citizen's Portal](#) for FSM eligibility, or contact Devon County Council's free school meals team if you're already registered but haven't received them. These vouchers help cover food costs for children who would otherwise receive free school meals during holidays.

### How to Get Vouchers

1. Check Eligibility/Apply: Apply for Free School Meals via the [Devon Citizen's Portal](#) for an instant decision.
2. Receive Voucher: If eligible, you'll get a letter or email with a voucher code for the school holidays.
3. Redeem: Use the code to exchange for an eGift card at participating supermarkets (Sainsbury's, Iceland, Tesco, Asda, etc.).

### Key Contacts & Info

- [freeschoolmeals@devon.gov.uk](mailto:freeschoolmeals@devon.gov.uk)
- 0345 155 1019 (Education Helpline)
- <https://www.devon.gov.uk/children-families-education/education/school-meals/>

Codes do expire, so please redeem them before they become invalid.

**Free Car Seat Straps** - Devon & Cornwall Police are offering drivers and passengers with additional needs, free seatbelt covers to help make communication easier after incidents including road traffic collisions.

The seatbelt cover can be personalised and wrapped around an adult seatbelt using Velcro. A card inside the seatbelt cover allows the user to add their name, age, address, medical conditions or other information about how they like to be communicated with. In the event of an emergency a first responder (someone from the blue light services) or a member of the public can look inside the seatbelt cover to get more information and understand how they can respond appropriately to a person's individual needs to help make them feel safe again.



The covers are attached to adult seatbelts and then easily removed if you want to use them in a different vehicle. The lightweight covers are also easy to pop into a bag and transport around.

Seat belt covers can be obtained from any Police Enquiry Office (PEO) across Devon and Cornwall. To check where your nearest PEO is and their opening hours, click here [Find a police station | Devon & Cornwall Police](#)

**Enjoy the rest of your week.**



# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about POKÉMON TCG POCKET



## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Pokémon TCG Pocket is a mobile version of the hugely popular Pokémon Trading Card Game, downloaded over 100 million times on Android and iOS. Players collect cards, battle others online, and open packs of cards – known as booster packs – to expand their decks. While the core game can be fun and helps develop tactical and numeracy skills, its design encourages spending and can feed addictive behaviours – making it important for adults to understand the risks.

### ADDICTIVE PACK OPENING



Booster packs rely on probability to provide rare or powerful cards. The excitement of opening them – and the dopamine rush when finding a sought-after card – can become addictive. Unlike purely cosmetic loot boxes, the cards here are integral to competitive gameplay, adding extra pressure for serious gamers to collect more.

### ENDLESS PACK LOOPS



New themed sets of cards are released each month, ranging from around 85 to over 370 cards per expansion. This constant cycle encourages players to keep opening packs in an effort to complete collections or improve their battle decks, potentially promoting unhealthy spending habits. With the introduction of limited-time booster packs, some players may feel increased pressure to collect these cards while they're still available.

### QUICK BUT ABSORBING



Card battles last around five to six minutes, making it easy to fit in "just one more game". This quick format, combined with the drive to win, can lead to prolonged play sessions and increased screen time without noticing. With limited-time Ranked Match seasons constantly being refreshed – an opportunity to accumulate points and earn profile emblems – players may find themselves drawn into this game mechanic repeatedly.

### COST OF BOOSTER PACKS



Although free to play, with set rewards and two free booster packs given daily, players can exchange Pokémon Gold if they wish to open more, and a small amount of Pokémon Gold is rewarded for free as the player levels up. Pokémon Gold is also sold in bundles that are often just short of what players need to open extra packs, encouraging them to buy additional bundles.

### PREMIUM PASS PRESSURE



A monthly subscription gives players access to exclusive missions, rewards, and an extra daily booster pack. Missions and rewards are replaced each month, providing an incentive to stay subscribed. While some premium rewards are exclusive, others are available through free play – making the pass more about faster progression and obtaining cosmetic items than true necessity.

### COMPETITIVE ONLINE PLAY



Interactions in Pokémon TCG Pocket are relatively safe – there's no messaging between players, friend requests require player approval, no real names are used, and card trading is restricted to fair trades between friends. On the other hand, the competitive nature of online play can still cause frustration, over-investment, and isolation if children spend too much time focused on the game.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### MONITOR SPENDING HABITS



Set clear boundaries around in-game purchases. Treat Poké Gold as an occasional rather than routine reward, helping children develop healthier attitudes towards digital spend.

### PLAY TOGETHER



Card battles can help children learn tactics, problem-solving, and rule-following, as well as numeracy skills. Playing alongside them is a great way to share in their enjoyment, while also modelling balanced play and keeping an eye on how much they're investing in the game.

### SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS



Talk about the unpredictable nature of booster packs and prepare children for disappointment when duplicates appear or rare cards don't surface. Understanding probability can help minimise disappointment – use the game's built-in offering rates guides to find out more about it.

### TEACH FAIRNESS



Losing a battle can be discouraging, especially when money has been spent on collecting the cards to build a deck. Support children in recognising the importance of fairness, learning from both wins and losses, and making considered choices when trading cards.

### Meet Our Expert

Dan Lipscombe is a videogame journalist and children's book author with over 15 years of experience. Specialising in technology and gaming, he has written extensively on how digital platforms affect young people and has been playing games for more than three decades.

