



FEARNHILL SCHOOL



Fearnfile

Issue 621

20 November 2023

Is homework worth the effort?

As a child I always hated homework. I guess that is true for most of us, and I don't see many signs that this is changing. Most students I speak to at Fearnhill don't particularly enjoy their homework either. Which begs the question, is homework worth the effort?

Bad homework is worse than pointless

At Fearnhill, we make an effort to base our practice on robust educational research. In education, some methods are more effective than others. Some ways of teaching are better than others, and the same is true for homework. If homework does not help students to know more and remember more, it is usually a waste of time. Especially if it is not enjoyable either. We have worked hard to remove homework from the curriculum that does not make a difference to students in the long term. We no longer set generic research, project work or activities with a tenuous link to the content we want students to learn (e.g. building a model of a cell). This is because these activities need a large amount of time for a small amount of long-term learning. We have no desire for students to waste their time on activities that will not help them much in the long run.

What makes a good homework activity?

Our homework involves practice of core skills and knowledge retrieval that will be useful in the long term. This is because practice has a big impact on students' performance over time. Reading age is one of the best predictors of GCSE success, even in subjects that seem quite unrelated to reading, such as Science. That's why we use Sparx Reader every week at Key Stage 3. Likewise, the best way to ensure students do as well as possible in Maths is to rack up hours of practice. Homework like this is always worthwhile. It is not fun; like eating well or getting enough exercise. But if students want to build their confidence as learners and improve their self esteem and emotional wellbeing then completing homework is not such a bad place to begin.

How can families help?

Some parents or carers like to do their children's homework for them. As a parent myself, I have been guilty of this! It seems pretty kind after all. The problem is that Fearnhill uses artificial intelligence to set and mark much of the homework that our students are set. If students are successful, the homework gets harder and if they struggle, it gets easier. Of course, when parents do it instead, the students will end up getting set homework that is

continued on page 2



Inside you'll find ...

- Remembrance Parade
- Technology Tournament
- Musical Instrument Trials
- Children in Need
- Cross Country Running

School is closed Friday 24/11 and Monday 27/11

Week beginning 20/11 WEEK 1

Week beginning 27/11 WEEK 2

Student Awards

Have you got what it takes to be Student of the Week? Try your best in all lessons and extra-curricular activities and you could find yourself nominated and crowned!

6th - 10th November

Student of the Week	Dash 7N	11 points
Teacher of the Week	Miss Bossley, Art	170 points
Form of the Week	9N	169 points
House of the Week	Gorst	474 points

Headteacher's Letter *continued*

much too difficult. If you find your child cannot complete their homework, the best thing to do is let us know. It is also true that some students do not even open their homework or put in much effort at all. Again the artificial intelligence shows us how much time each student has spent actively working on their homework. This is where families can work with school to make a difference - by making sure that all homework is properly attempted each week.

Better homework leads to better outcomes

In the end, none of this is rocket science. As long as homework is worthwhile (and we make sure it is), then doing more homework leads to improved knowledge, skills and understanding. And that means better grades too.

I hope that explains our approach to homework and why we hold students to account when they do not do their homework. We are grateful for your support as we try to make sure that every piece of homework is worth the effort, every time.

Tim Spencer, Headteacher



Are you in education to make a real difference to young people's lives? Fearnhill is the place for you. We have staff vacancies for a

Admin Assistant - term time only

Closing date 22 November

See our website for details
fearnhill.herts.sch.uk/staff-vacancies/



Do you follow us on social media? We have changed some of our pages so for an instant fix of all our latest news you can now follow us on the following channels:

[FACEBOOK](https://www.facebook.com/FearnhillSch/) <https://www.facebook.com/FearnhillSch/>

[X \(Twitter\)](https://twitter.com/FearnhillSchool) <https://twitter.com/FearnhillSchool>

[Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/fearnhillsch/) <https://www.instagram.com/fearnhillsch/>

Remembrance Parade

On Friday 10th November the school took time to remember those who had fallen in war, both past and present. Students started the day with an activity in form time where they decorated memorial crosses to make a display in their form rooms.

At break time we came together as a school to hold a short act of remembrance. Mr Cordwell spoke to us about the meaning of remembrance and read a poem. This was followed by the Last Post and a minutes silence.

A number of army cadets came into school in their uniform and led the presentation by parading through the playground. The cadets showed us the discipline and dedication they have to this day through the way they led the parade and wore their uniform with pride.

Thank you to Mr Cordwell for organising the event and Mrs Chilton for playing the Last Post.



**CALLING ALL
FORMER FEARNHILL
STUDENTS...**

WE NEED YOU!



Miss Balchin, our Head of Careers, would love former students to share their career stories to inspire our students.

It doesn't matter what your journey has been since leaving school - bank manager or basketball player, barista or barrister - come and let our students talk to you about your career path.

If you'd like more information on how you can be involved in our Careers event early next term please email admin@fearnhill.herts.sch.uk

Do you read Fearnfile?

We're carrying out a quick survey to see how effective Fearnfile is and how many people read it.

If you've got this far - well done! - we'd really appreciate it if you could click on the QR code (right) or click through the hyperlink [HERE](#).



Investin Workshop

On November 5th I attended a Entrepreneurship InvestIn Workshop, where I was given the opportunity to take part in a Dragons Den competition with people my age.

As a group we were given a topic that we had to create a business from. Sustainability was the topic we received, which I found quite difficult to create a business plan out of, however, with all the support from everyone around me, we not only made a good business on sustainability, I also learned great communication skills and gained more confidence throughout the whole experience.

I would recommend the InvestIn workshops to anyone who would like a real insight to what a typical day would be like for the career path you would like to go down in the future. *Anna 11H*



Music

In year 7 we have been looking at Instruments of the Orchestra. This has allowed students to have a go on various instruments, to see how they sound, feel and what it is like to be played.

This week we tried out brass instruments. The students had a great time seeing who could get the loudest and longest notes. For some, just making a sound was a huge achievement but overall the students had fun even if their 'lips and tongues feel funny now'.

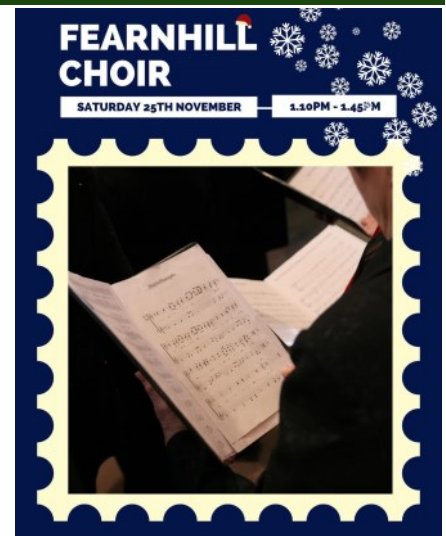
Students have also had the chance to try out string instruments including a double bass and violin. It has also shown us that we have a number of students who would be great at different instruments.

If your child has come home and expressed an interest in learning an instrument then please contact Mr. Marlow.

As well as trying things out in Music lessons our choir have been very busy rehearsing ready to perform with Wilbury primary school at the **Letchworth Light turn on, on Saturday 25th November.**

It would be lovely to see familiar faces there to support us, but if you are busy that day please put the 13th December in the diary as this is when our Christmas Concert is, where choir, instrumentalist and dancers will be showcasing the amazing things they have been doing this term.

Mrs Chilton



Student Support

Mrs Cate Brown, Fearnhill's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator and Head of Inclusion was one of the guest speakers at the Showcase of Autism in Schools programme, held last week in Stevenage.

She spoke about the impact of the programme on the school including student voice, staff training and the impact on teaching and learning and provision. The project is a national pilot and Fearnhill has been part of it for 2 years - this is the third year we will be taking part. The project has meant we have been able to attend free autism training, facilitate sessions for students and coffee mornings for parents. This has been in conjunction with Hertfordshire SEND, NHS and the Herts Parents Carer Involvement (HPCI) <https://hertsparentcarers.org.uk/>.

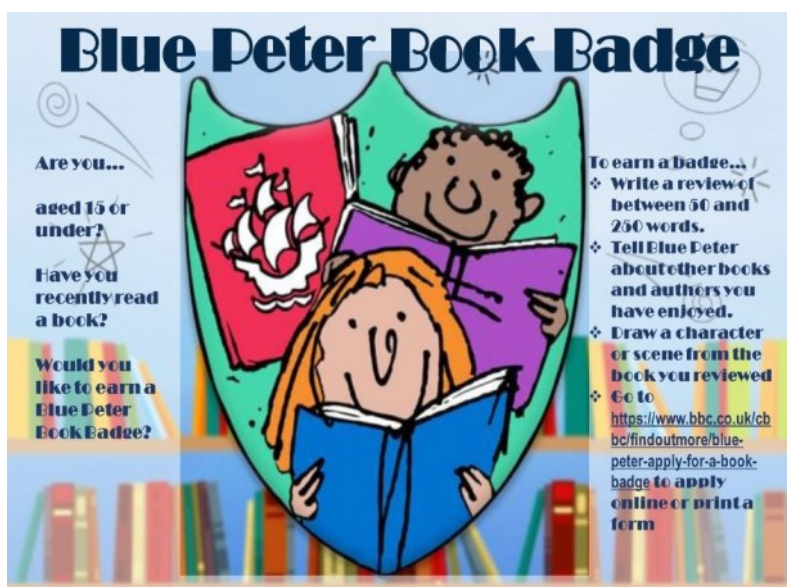


Library

The Library is open before school from 8am and after school until 4pm.

You can also visit the library during break and lunch times to read a book, do some homework on the computer or play a card or board game (sorry, no computer games!)

Mrs Thurlby, Library & Literacy Assistant



CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

**THE LIBRARY CHRISTMAS TREE
IS LOOKING BARE
CAN YOU HELP?
WE NEED
HOME MADE BOOK THEMED
DECORATIONS**

FOR THE 1ST DEC

THANK YOU

Catering



Yr10 have been testing their whisking method sponges and precision by making their homemade jaffa cakes. With melting the chocolate and shaping the jelly, lots of skills were tested.

Sixth Form Applications

Applications for Sixth Form entry 2023 has opened. A link to the application form can be found on our website:

www.fearnhill.herts.sch.uk/sixth-form/application-process/

The deadline for applications will be 8th December. There will be interviews for all applicants in January and conditional offers will be made. Our Sixth Form Induction will be taking place in July to give students a taste of what Sixth Form has to offer.

If you have any questions about entry to the Sixth Form, please contact the Director of Post 16, Mr Marlow
thomas.marlow10@fearnhill.herts.sch.uk



Scan to view our Prospectus

Technology Tournament

Fearnhill was invited back to participate in this years Rotary Technology Tournament which took place at The Priory School last Thursday.

This years competitors were Priory, Hitchin Boys, Hitchin Girls and Knights Templar.

- Key stage 3 pupils were challenged with gearing down a motorised mechanism which could collect and lift a weight and be operated remotely.
- Key stage 4 pupils had the additional challenge of a limited sized build
- Key stage 5 pupils had the extra challenge of lowering and detaching the weight.

I am very happy to report that our key stage 4 pupils dominated their task and came 1st.

KS3 produced a well constructed build and placed 3rd.

Overall Fearnhill performed excellent throughout the tournament and should be extremely happy with themselves.

Bring on next year!

Mr Rayner



Children In Need



Staff and students supported Children in Need this year by donating £1 each to wear casual clothes - with hundreds of Pudsey cookies being sold thanks to our catering department and the Fearnhill Food Hall. Over £600 was raised for the charity.

A message from BBC Children in Need: *BBC Children in Need believes that every child should have the chance to thrive and be the best they can be. We are committed to being there for children across the UK when they need us the most. Together with the BBC and our partners, we inspire the nation to support this work. BBC Children in Need is here to make sure that every child has the childhood they deserve – and the support they need to thrive.*



Knowledge Organisers

At Fearnhill, we believe in the power of knowledge. Teachers in every subject have put together a Knowledge Organiser which has all the key knowledge students need to learn to understand that topic.

In school, they are used in lessons to support learning as a reference and as a way of checking answers. Knowledge Organisers (KO's) are also an excellent homework tool for self-quizzing and revising.

KO's have been updated on our website for this half term and can be accessed by clicking on the QR codes below:



Year 7



Year 8



Year 9



Year 10



Year 11

Sport



Well done to Fearnhill students who took part in the cross country meeting at Fairlands Valley Park earlier this month.

All performed admirably and did themselves and the school proud.



PE SPORTS CLUBS/PRACTICES Autumn Term 2 2023



	Netball	Basketball	Rugby	Football	Badminton/ Table Tennis	Other
Mon	Year 7&8 SSN			Year 8&9 SMY	All years MTR	
Tues			Year 7&8 GMD			KS3 Dance 1:25-1:55pm JMN
Weds	Year 9-13 SSN	Year 8&9 OSD		Year 7 Boys SMY Year 7&8 Girls MTR		Student Choice 1:25-1:55pm SMY
Thurs		Year 7 OSD		Year 10-13 AWS		Year 11 Intervention • Practical 1:25-1:55pm OSD • Theory 3:00-4:00pm SSN Year 8/9 Girls Rugby 1:25-1:55pm SSN
Fri		Year 10-13 1:25-1:55pm MTR				

SSN = Ms Straughn OSD = Mr Shepherd SMY = Mr Manley MTR = Mr Turner JMN = Mrs Martin GMD = Mr McLeod AWS = Mr Williams

All Clubs/Practices will take place after school, unless stated otherwise, from 3:00-4:00pm

Thought for the Month *November*

Every day is a chance to begin again. Don't focus on the failures of yesterday, start today with positive thoughts and expectations.



Extra Curricular Activities

Homework Club



Years 7-11

**Monday-Thursday
in Inclusion with
Mrs Cottenden**

Run your own club

Is there a boardgame you would like to play with friends, a hobby you would like to share or a group interest you would like to research?

The library is a space available for you after school, speak to Mrs Thurlby for more details.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about



AGE RESTRICTION
13+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

In October 2022, the enormously popular social media network Twitter was purchased by tech tycoon Elon Musk. That sparked a host of changes to the platform – not all which have been received positively by its fans. The alterations have continued with each passing month, many of them raising online safety concerns among the 530 million users of Twitter (now rebranded as simply X). With further adjustments reportedly in the pipeline, X has attracted more than its usual share of controversy and caution in recent times.

CENSORSHIP

A BLOCK ON BLOCKING

X has announced plans to remove its blocking feature. Previously, this stopped other users from viewing your profile or sending you direct messages, while also hiding their posts from your feed. Only this latter function will now remain. The decision has been criticised by some members, who feel that blocking (in its current form) protects them from X users who promote denial and hatred.

LIMITED REPORTING FEATURES

X offers a premium membership, with some functionality (such as controlling who can view and reply to your posts) increasingly being made exclusive to those who pay the subscription fee. Several commentators have speculated that X could one day become an exclusively paid-for service, with access to accounts being revoked for anyone unwilling or unable to take out a subscription.

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Many of X's less age-appropriate posts can feature anything from extreme political views to pornography. While accounts marked as 18+ are restricted from non-members, it's still fairly easy to stumble across this material accidentally. X's new 'For You' page also shows content from accounts that a user doesn't already follow – meaning that almost anything could end up on a child's feed.

VERIFICATION FOR SALE

Historically, Twitter's moderators granted account verification: certifying someone as authentic by placing a blue tick next to their username. One of X's earliest changes was to place verification behind a paywall; this caused the number of celebrity impersonators to rise and left no way to distinguish, say, a legitimate influencer from a copycat fake account seeking to exploit other users.

BLUE TICK SALE

Advice for Parents & Carers

PROTECT PRIVACY

Unsavory characters may try to gain access to a young person's X account – either to view their posts and gather information on them, or to completely take control of it. To minimise risk, ensure the account has a strong password and enable the 'Protect Your Posts' feature (via the account settings), so that strangers can't view your child's posts without first being approved as a follower.

DON'T RISE TO THE BAIT

To gain more views and followers, some X users post deliberately inflammatory comments on sensitive topics such as race, sexual orientation and gender issues. Many young people could find this upsetting. Emphasise that, if your child encounters someone spreading hate on X, it's best not to give that person what they want: an argument. Ignore them, mute their account and move on.

STAY ALERT FOR IMPOSTERS

Make sure your child understands that X's blue ticks no longer guarantee the identity of anyone on the platform. While it might be exciting if a celebrity liked your child's post, it could just as easily be an imposter with malicious intentions. If your child's not 100% sure that an X user actually is who they claim to be, advise them to err on the side of caution and avoid interacting with that account.

ONLY FOLLOW TRUSTED ACCOUNTS

Using the 'Following' tab on X helps to ensure that the only content your child sees has come from accounts they've chosen to follow: this should reduce the chance of them inadvertently being exposed to harmful, violent or explicit content. Show your child how to report another user's account if, say, they're behaving inappropriately by spreading misinformation or offensive opinions.

BE READY TO TAKE ACTION

If your child suffers harassment on the platform or becomes the target of a hack, you could consider deactivating their account entirely. Recently, X's safety features have been criticised for allegedly failing to protect users' wellbeing – so if your child is being subjected to abusive messages or similar mistreatment on the platform, it might be prudent to remove them from X altogether.

Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is Editor in Chief of gaming and esports site GGRecon and has worked in the gaming media for around four years. Always eager to test out the latest apps, games and online trends, he's also a parent who understands the importance of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his articles have been published on influential sites including IGN and TechRadar.



National Online Safety

#WakeUpWednesday

@natonlinesafety

/NationalOnlineSafety

@nationalonlinesafety

@national_online_safety

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 01.11.2023

Student Support

The Sandbox is an NHS-funded service to support children and young people in Hertfordshire with their mental health and well-being.

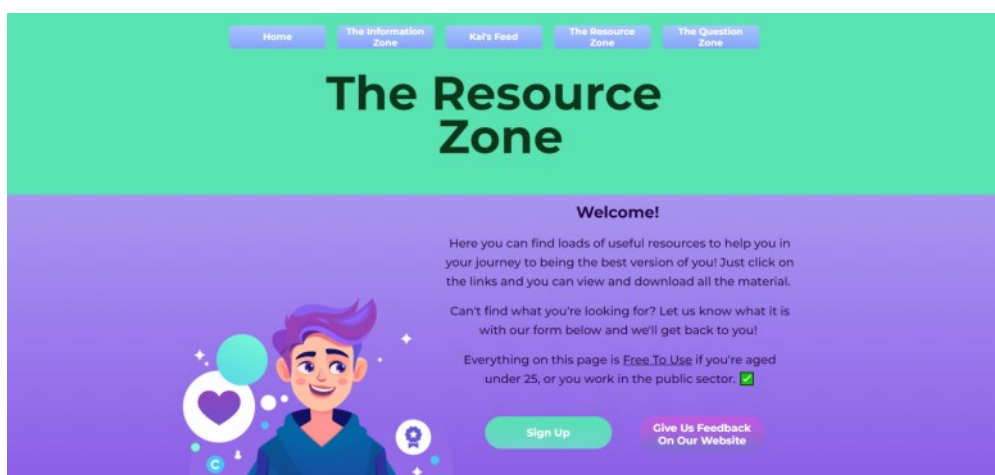
In addition to providing NHS-funded support, The Sandbox is a central place for information about common mental health issues, with information on how to access additional support or emergency services.

The website has a special area for parents/carers to access information on how to support young adults going through mental health difficulties as well as anger management, anxiety, self harm and gender identity.

<https://sandbox.mindler.co.uk/>

Please encourage students to visit the website and have a look at the different pages.

There are lots of ideas and resources on the website, with online modules to support young people up to 25. Some students at Fearnhill are already using it and have found it helpful.



External Events



PERFORM
TRANSFORM

DANCE AND PHOTOGRAPHY TASTER WORKSHOPS

TAKE PART

Join our 4 FREE dance and photography workshops in collaboration with Wilbury Community Cafe (Suitable for families and adults / children must be accompanied by an adult)

WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING?

You will try some dance and photography skills with two professional artists:

- Choreographer and dancer - Kasia Truefitt
- Photographer - Sam Ivin

Learn about the PERFORM TRANSFORM project in 2024 at Letchworth Museum and how to join.



WHERE?

St Thomas Wilbury
Bedford Road
Letchworth, SG6 4DU



WHEN?

Saturdays from 11:00am - 1:00pm:

- 10 June, 14 October
- 11 November, 9 December

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Contact BEEE Creative.

Email: carrie@beee-creative.co.uk

Telephone: 07971 171061

Student Support



We are proud to offer the National School Breakfast Programme - offering all students a free, healthy breakfast.

Breakfast Club is in the Canteen every morning from 8am where you can pick up a free bagel.

Children's Wellbeing Practitioner Workshops (October-December 2023)


Workshops are open to all young people & parents/carers of children and young people who attend a school or are registered to a GP in Hertfordshire. A referral is not needed to access a workshop.

All workshops are currently being delivered online via Microsoft Teams. For more information about what each workshop covers and to book a place onto a workshop, visit the Children's Wellbeing Practitioner Eventbrite page: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/childrens-wellbeing-practitioners-school-nursingservice-hertfordshire-33494371787>

Workshop	Date & Time
Emotional Wellbeing (For Young People 11-16) A workshop focused on adolescents managing their own emotional wellbeing and things parents/carers can do to help.	Wednesday 22 nd November 6pm
Supporting Adolescents with Self-Esteem A workshop focused on adolescents improving their self-esteem and what parents can do to support.	Wednesday 15 th November 6pm
Supporting your Child's Self-Esteem A workshop focused on parents/carers supporting their child to improve their self-esteem.	Monday 9 th October 10am Tuesday 5 th December 10am
Supporting with Sleep Difficulties A workshop supporting children and adolescents with managing their sleep difficulties and how parents/carers can help.	Tuesday 3 rd October 6pm Thursday 7 th December 6pm
Supporting your Child's Resilience A workshop focused on parents/carers supporting their child to improve their resilience.	Friday 27 th October 10am Monday 18 th December 6pm
Developing your Child's Emotional Literacy A workshop focused on parents supporting their child with developing emotional literacy.	Tuesday 7 th November at 10am
General Emotional Wellbeing and Regulation Tips for Parents A workshop focused on parents supporting their child's general emotional wellbeing and emotional regulation.	Monday 13 th November 6pm
School Transitions A workshop supporting children and adolescents with managing school transitions.	

To access the recorded **Emotionally Based School Avoidance Webinar** please visit: <https://www.hct.nhs.uk/our-services-and-referral-information/our-services-a-z/childrens-wellbeing-practitioners-service/>


External Opportunities



Hertfordshire
Family Centre
Service

School Nursing

Public Health Nursing 5-19 Team Newsletter



Hertfordshire Community
NHS Trust

Autumn 2023

Welcome back!

We are looking forward to supporting lots of young people throughout the new school term.

How to Contact Us:
0300 123 7572 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)
www.hct.nhs.uk/our-services/school-nursing

Free workshops available for parents and young people to attend, regarding emotional health, returning to school & more:
<http://ow.ly/U01750KHYQk>

HEALTH TEENS

A great website, with information and advice for young people aged 11-19.
www.healthforteens.co.uk

Sleep

Sleep is especially important and helps our development.


Lack of sleep can lead to reduced concentration, increased behaviour difficulties and irritability.

Did you know that young people need around 8.5 - 9 hours sleep at night?

Top tips to support you:

- Plenty of fresh air and exercise during the day
- Avoid electronics and devices at least one hour before bed
- A relaxing activity before bed, such as reading and listening to calming music
- Have a good routine at bedtime and keep regular sleep and wake times

Have a look at our websites for more great advice:
www.healthforteens.co.uk



Mental Health Toolkit

Just like we have tools to do certain jobs, a mental health toolkit can support us when we're feeling anxious, low, or sad. It can be filled with the things that help us to feel calm. A small box that you can decorate or with a pattern/picture you like is great.

Some examples of things you might like in your tool kit:

- Headphones: lots of people find music a good way to relax
- Journal/sketchpad: to write down thoughts and feelings or draw/sketch how you feel.
- Essential oils to relax you such as lavender or orange to calm you and help lift your mood.
- A favourite stuffed toy/animal
- Fidget toys including spinners or cubes.
- A photograph of your favourite place.

You can put whatever you like in your toolkit.

Remember that we are here for you via our chat health service.


Chat Health

Chat Health is an anonymous text messaging service for young people aged 11-19 years that runs between 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday. Young people can use this to contact a School Nurse for support and advice.

Young people can ask for help and advice on a range of issues such as:

- Weight and exercise
- Healthy eating
- Stress and anxiety
- Relationships and sexual health

A friendly school nurse will be on hand to support with anything you would like to talk about.




Meet The Team

Hello, I'm Shannon, a Children's Wellbeing Practitioner in the school nursing team.

We provide guided self-help support for 11-19 year olds.

Our interventions offer support to empower young people with tools for their emotional health.

You can access our services by using the school nurse referral form.




Did you know?

School Nursing is also on Instagram, Facebook and X/Twitter!


We post up to date information, support and advice for young people and parents.

Follow us!




@hct_schoolnursing

@teenhealth.hct



@HCT_SchoolNurse



Hct SchoolNursing



Hertfordshire
Family Centre
Service



Want to know more about the Public Health School Nursing team in Hertfordshire?

Check out our platforms:



<https://www.hertsfamilycentres.org/info-and-advice/parents-and-mums-to-be/school-nurses.aspx#>
www.hct.nhs.uk/our-services/school-nursing



07480 635 050
Confidential text message service ran by the school nursing team for 11-19 year olds. Text in any health and wellbeing concerns



@hct_schoolnursing
@teenhealth.hct



@HCT_SchoolNurse



Hct SchoolNursing



www.healthforkids.co.uk/hertfordshire



www.healthforteens.co.uk/hertfordshire



School nursing duty number
0300 123 7572
9am – 5pm Monday to Friday
(excluding bank holidays)



Norton Common junior parkrun

A free weekly timed 2km timed run for 4-14 year olds

9.00am every Sunday

Norton Common, Letchworth – meet on the tarmac path in the middle of the park towards Icknield Way

w3w ///toys.sudden.dwell

Register and more info at
www.parkrun.org.uk/nortoncommon-juniors



Calendar

Autumn Term 2023

Inset Day (disaggregated)
Occasional Day

Friday 24th November 2023
Monday 27th November 2023

End of Term (early closure)

Wednesday 20th December 2023

Spring Term 2024

Inset day for staff

Thursday 4th January 2024

Spring Term begins for staff and students

Friday 5th January 2024

Half Term

Monday 19th – Friday 23rd February 2024

Return to school

Monday 26th February 2024

End of Term (early closure)

Thursday 28th March 2024

Good Friday

Friday 29th March 2024

Easter Monday

Monday 1st April 2024

Summer Term 2024

Summer term begins for students

Monday 15th April 2024

May Bank Holiday

Monday 6th May 2024

Half Term

Monday 27th – Friday 31st May 2024

Return to school

Monday 3rd June 2024

Inset Day

Monday 1st July 2024

End of Term for students

Tuesday 23rd July 2024

See our website for details of 2024/25 term dates

Contact Us

01462 621200

admin@fearnhill.herts.sch.uk

www.fearnhill.herts.sch.uk

Fearnhill School

Icknield Way, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 4BA

Please ensure that we have your current address, mobile phone number and email address.

Any updates can be sent to the Main Office.

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