



## PARENTS AND CARERS NEWSLETTER

### Spring 2026

#### Happy Birthday Farney Close School

We are celebrating, throughout 2026, Farney Close having been in existence for 80 years.

Farney Close was founded in 1946 years ago by Rev. Percy and Vera Wallbridge. Originally it was based on the Isle of Wight, then Dorset before moving to its current 32-acre site in Bolney, West Sussex, in the early 1960s. The school has always specialised in supporting children with special educational needs.

Our 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday is a huge milestone for which we are very proud. We are planning to host a variety of events at various points of the year with our present pupils, parents and carers being invited to celebrate with us at our end of the academic year celebrations in the summer, as well as in December when we bring the celebrations to a close with an even better Disco, BBQ and Firework display. More information to follow about both events.

#### Ofsted

It has been a very busy year with one thing and another. Ofsted Social Care arrived for their annual inspection in January. We are once again hugely proud of their findings. Please follow this link to read our report

[https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/10/SC014513?utm\\_source&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=report](https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/10/SC014513?utm_source&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=report)

Many thanks to those of you that spoke with the inspectors and for all of the wonderful comments so many of you made.

#### Staffing

We have seen some staff members come and go this term. Most notably; Chris, one of our senior residential workers, retired in January after 35 years working with us. Whilst we are all really sad to see our resident DJ and master of ceremonies leave us, we also wish him a happy, long retirement.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of April we will also be sadly saying goodbye to Steve, our Head of Care. Steve has dedicated 21 years to Farney but now leaves us for pastures new. Both Chris and Steve are being replaced with two new positions. Firstly a Head of Residential that Jason Maynard will be taking up. Jason is at present a member of our residential team and steps into this position with a vast amount of experience in various establishments. The other position is that

of Head of Behaviour and Attitude. Becky Clements has successfully secured this position. Becky is at present our School Social Worker and as part of her new role she will be supporting our newly appointed Social Worker as they settle into post. The Head of Residential and the Head of Behaviour and Attitude will both sit on the Senior Leadership team.

We have also appointed a Business Manager. We welcomed Alexia Yang in February. She joins us with lots of experience working with charities and finance and we are already seeing the benefits of having her in our Senior Leadership team.

Prior to Christmas Carole Johns, Chair of both Governors and Trustees and our Governor responsible for Safeguarding resigned. She has been replaced by Nicki Batholomew as Chair of Trustees, Philip Hunt as Chair of Governors and Zillah Webb who has taken on the responsibility for Safeguarding along with being the Prevent and wellbeing lead for Governors.

### **Christmas**

Whilst it may seem ages ago, I feel it important to mention what a wonderful Christmas we had at Farney. Initiated with the Disco, BBQ and Firework evening and followed by all that traditionally happens at our school with a carol service, Christmas lunch, House decorating competition, cake making and decorating competitions, Christmas jumper day and culminating in our wonderful Christmas show with elements of fundraising being included.

### **Unique Experiences**

Educational school day trips have taken place with a year 7 group going to a STEM workshop at Gatwick, a trip to Wisley and also one to Hampton Court. We also sent 3 year 10 and 11 children on a 10-week Hair and Beauty Course over the Autumn term, with 2 more pupils due to start this course after the Spring break. Further trips are planned for the summer term going to Goodwood, a local career fare, and hopefully groups to go and view the Bayeux tapestry, visit the Observatory and possibly the Shakespeare Globe in London.

Swimming lessons have continued with our year 7s being the focus for the Spring term. The summer term will see years 5 and 6 getting this opportunity. These occur at a local swimming pool and are led by one of our care team who is also trained as a swim teacher.



Our Forest school continues to go from strength to strength this year with it now running for all Key Stages during various parts of the school day. The new shelter has made a significant difference to our being able to offer this subject throughout the winter but even with that it has been rather muddy down there this winter; apologies for all the muddy shoes and trousers you may have found coming home to you.

Since January 2025 and the introduction of Lesson 6 children have had the opportunity to join in a huge variety of more vocational / wellbeing / life skills activities. The subjects covered include Forest Schools, Photography, Lego club, Debate club, Driving Theory Lessons, Motor Mechanics, Construction, STEM, Darts, Chess club, a variety of Sports, Cooking and Fishing. Year 10 all continue to work to gain their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award in this lesson whilst for year 11 lesson 6 is used as an opportunity for revision as we move through the year. Now it has been in place for a year we are undertaking a review of subjects offered and will input changes felt to be appropriate.



Of an evening our residential pupils have been participating in a range of rewarding and challenging activities the most recent addition being Scuba Diving which we are hoping to cascade out into the school day

Our year 11s are gearing up for their exams which fall quite early into the year. Their last day with us is Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June but prior to leaving they are looking forward to a visit to Thorpe Park (behaviour dependant).

### **Children's voice**

We value the feedback we gain from children about their experiences at Farney Close. Each Autumn we undertake a questionnaire to formally capture the voice of each child. An Action plan is formed as a result of their feedback. Parents and carers get the same opportunity via a questionnaire sent out over the summer term. We do however value feedback, including ideas and observations from children, parents, carers and associated networks at any point.

More generally our school council members, who meet twice each half term, have been fantastic this year, offering lots of positive suggestions and supporting us in helping to move the school forward with the "voice of the child" being at the top of our agenda. Thank you – you know who you are 😊

### **Communication**

I hope that people have enjoyed the opportunity to meet our education team at our various parent and carer consultations. Still to take place this academic year is our year 8 parent consultations which take place on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March and our year 9 consultation and option evening on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May at 4.30pm. We are looking to gather dates for next year's consultations so that you can get them in your diary. Please do remember that you can get in touch, at any point, if you wish to discuss anything about the education and care that your child receives at Farney Close.

Your child's end of term report is either with you or about to be. Please get in touch with James, our Head of Education, [jmills@farneyclose.co.uk](mailto:jmills@farneyclose.co.uk) if you have any questions regarding their school day report and Steve, our Head of Care, [stevedesouza@farneyclose.co.uk](mailto:stevedesouza@farneyclose.co.uk) with any questions about their social care report.

Attendance postcards are going out to those that have 95% attendance or over for this summer term. Principal postcards will also go out to those that have been identified as doing really well over the term.

You will note that we have several inset days over the year and I must apologise, as previously mentioned, for having to swap one around. We will now have an inset day on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May instead of Monday the 1<sup>st</sup> June. The inset days this year have enabled us to accommodate the fact that our Teaching Assistants and Higher-Level Teaching Assistants, have gained their ELSA awards. The ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) intervention is designed to build the capacity of schools to support the emotional needs of their pupils. We are already reaping the benefits as they have been shown techniques to further enhance their ability to support children in learning how to regulate themselves.

The staff at Farney Close extend their best wishes to all our year 11s, our year 12 and our year 13 that are busy preparing for exams and attending interviews in readiness for the next stage of their education. Please support your child in their revision as well as their interview techniques which we are obviously also supporting them with.

### End of Summer term:

As previously mentioned we are yet to define a date for our end of year celebrations as we are considering holding it earlier than usual. Please bear with us and we will let you know as soon as we have decided.

### Fundraising

Should anyone be interested in supporting the school's fundraising team, with fundraising events or applications moving forward, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Fundraising enables us to obtain those extra special bits! Beyond this any donations for raffles, tombola's etc are always welcomed.

### General Information and moving forward

We are striving forward with refurbishing our school. Having completed the Cinema room, we have focussed on the Library and the Conference room where children have assemblies and sit exams. Our newly located school Library has provided us with a place for children to relax, learn and have access to a huge variety of books. The Conference room has been decorated and modernised with new, mounted, posters celebrating a variety of musicals which is recognition that this is also our room where school performances take place.

Our Primary area had a new outdoor play equipment, installed over the February half term break. The climbing frame, balance bars etc provides the opportunity for outdoor play to take place local to class rather than them always having to trail down to the secondary school play equipment.



Now we are focussing on the Bungalow formally known as Bomberg House. This building is to become our Therapy unit and is due to be opened as we start the summer term. It will house our Speech and Language Therapist and our Occupational Therapist, as well as our newly appointed Drama Therapist. Our two therapy assistants will work from this unit with one room being dedicated to Lego therapy which they are both trained in. Members of the SEN department will also frequent this area as well as having a room in the main building. Our School Counsellor and our Art Therapist will remain in the Archway cottage. The Therapy team will be looked after by our Head of Behaviour and Attitude who I mentioned earlier.

As you can see, we never sit on our laurels and are always looking at ways to continue to improve our offer. If you have any ideas that you would like us to consider then please get in touch.

### Dates for your diary:

- **Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March** – Year 8 Parents and carers consultation
- **Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March** – Children return home at their usual time for the start of their Spring break.
- **Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April** – Children return to school from the Spring break. Staff have two inset days on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> so will be in touch on one of those days to see how your break has been.
- **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May is a Bank holiday which we are following with an inset day on Tuesday the 5<sup>th</sup>** so children will not return to school, following their weekend, until **Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May**.
- **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May** - year 9 consultation and option evening



- **Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May** – Children return home at their usual time for the start of their half term break.
- **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June is no longer an inset day so children will return to school on this day,**
- **Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September** – Children return to school from the Summer break. Staff have three inset days on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th so will be in touch on one of those days to see how your Summer has been.

**A gentle reminder to please ensure that you do not book any holidays during term time so that your child does not suffer any lost learning. Thank you.**

**Thank you:**

I hope that you will join me in thanking all the staff that work at Farney Close for their commitment and hard work. Without every member of our team we could not provide the service that we do.

Thank you for the support you have offered the school and for the dedication that you show your child that makes our job that much easier.

Have a wonderful break and we look forward to seeing your child back with us after Easter.

**Kindest of Regards**

*Sara*



Should you require support or advice over the spring break, please follow the links below.

**If you wish to contact us about a Safeguarding issue, please email [dsl@farneyclose.co.uk](mailto:dsl@farneyclose.co.uk)**

The Senior Leadership Team (Sara, Ray, Steve and James) will also be accessing their emails periodically over the break. The education and care staff emails will not be checked over the break to enable these workers to have a well-deserved rest.



If you require further support, please consider using the following links:

**Childline** - 0800 1111 - <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

**NSPCC** - 0808 800 5000 - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline/>

**NHS mental health support** - <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/>

Self-harm - [Treatment and support for self-harm](#)

Mental Health - [YoungMinds | Mental Health Charity For Children And Young People | YoungMinds](#)

Online safety - [Keeping children safe online | NSPCC](#)

Safeguarding advice - [Advice to parents and carers on keeping children safe from abuse and harm - GOV.UK](#)