

City of Rochester School Newsletter



Spring 1 2026 – Academic Year 2025-2026

Introduction from the Head

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we come to the end of another busy and rewarding term, I want to take a moment to reflect on what has been an impressive period of learning, enrichment and personal growth for our pupils. I am incredibly proud of everything our school community has achieved together.

This term, our pupils have embraced learning in creative and immersive ways. During our World War Two focus/Science Week, Mercury Class stepped back in time through an unforgettable immersive experience, transforming their classroom into an air raid shelter and exploring life on the Home Front. From packing evacuee suitcases to managing ration books, pupils showed deep engagement, curiosity and empathy as they brought history to life. Pupils from Jupiter, Mercury and the upper school visited the Royal Engineers Museum. These visits offered rich, hands-on learning experiences, particularly through rocket-building workshops that linked science, engineering, history and maths. It was wonderful to see pupils collaborating, problem-solving and proudly testing their own designs – a real example of experiential learning at its best. We welcomed our parents into school to see some of the

We have also continued to see success in our off-site and vocational provision. Students taking part in the Animal Care BTEC at Creepy Claws have demonstrated exceptional commitment and maturity. Through caring for a range of animals, completing health checks and managing daily responsibilities, pupils have developed both practical skills and confidence, thriving in a real-world learning environment.

Beyond the classroom, our Peer Mentor Programme continues to go from strength to strength. We are delighted to see more pupils stepping forward to take on this important role, with mentors receiving training in wellbeing, listening skills, empathy and safeguarding. Their positive influence across the school is a testament to their kindness, responsibility and leadership.

Key Dates

Half Term:
16/02/26 –
20/02/26

Term 4:
23/02/26 –
02/04/26

Easter Holidays:
07/04/26 –
20/04/26

Term 5:
21/04/26 –
22/05/26

Half Term:
25/05/26-
29/05/26

Term 6:
01/06/26-
15/07/26

Bank Holidays:

03/04/26
06/04/26
04/05/26
25/05/26
31/08/26

Our School Council has also shown fantastic initiative this term by selecting Wisteria Cat Rescue as our chosen charity. Their thoughtful discussions around animal welfare and fundraising reflect the strong values we encourage in our pupils. We look forward to welcoming a representative from the charity later this term and continuing our support for this important cause.

Keeping our pupils safe remains at the heart of everything we do. This term, we have continued to strengthen our safeguarding work, including raising awareness of emerging online risks linked to artificial intelligence. By educating pupils, staff and families, we aim to ensure everyone feels informed, confident and supported in navigating the digital world safely.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our staff, the enthusiasm of our pupils, and the continued support of you, our families. Thank you for your ongoing partnership and encouragement, it truly makes a difference.

I hope you enjoy reading about the many successes of this term, and I wish you all a restful and well-deserved break and time with loved ones. We look forward to welcoming everyone back for another exciting term ahead.

Staff Spotlight

Hello, I'm Charlotte, the Preparation for Adulthood Coordinator at City of Rochester School. My role focuses on helping our pupils develop the skills, experiences, and confidence they need for life beyond education. I organise and source meaningful work-experience opportunities, arrange careers meetings with our external career's provider, and plan community projects that help pupils engage with the world around them. I also hold a qualification in Information, Advice and Guidance, which enables me to provide informed, personalised support to pupils and their families as they plan their next steps

I also plan and deliver **NOCN lessons**, which focus on developing essential life skills, independence, and preparation for adulthood.

I began my journey at the school as a **Learning Support Assistant** and have loved progressing into my current role. Over the past **6 years**, I have enjoyed working closely with staff, families, and pupils, and I am proud to be part of a team that is committed to helping every young person succeed.

I am a positive and approachable person who enjoys working collaboratively with colleagues, and the most rewarding part of my job is seeing our pupils grow in confidence, achieve their potential, and move forward with greater independence.

If any of our parents need to contact me, my details are:
charlotte.morris@cityofrochesterschool.org

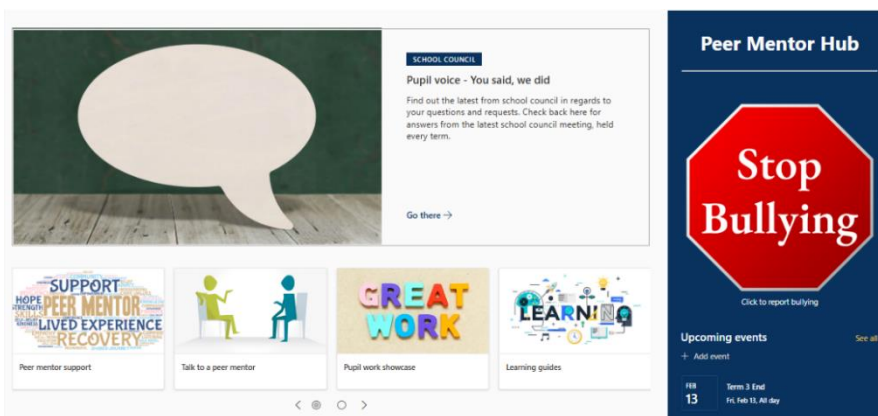


Our Peer Mentor Programme

We remain incredibly proud of the positive impact our peer mentors have across the school. The programme continues to grow, and we are pleased to announce that several more pupils have volunteered for the role, with two currently nearing the completion of their training. The mentor curriculum is comprehensive, covering essential areas such as wellbeing, active listening, boundaries, and empathy. Most importantly, it places a heavy emphasis on safeguarding, ensuring our mentors are equipped to support their peers safely and effectively. It is excellent to see our experienced mentors taking initiative; for instance, William has taken a lead role and is currently training a new pupil.

Developing Digital Support

We are also making significant progress in developing our Digital Peer Mentor role. These specialists will provide their peers with technical IT support and vital online safety advice. Our Digital Peer Mentor Lead, Josh, has demonstrated exceptional leadership in this area. He has designed a comprehensive training workbook and developed a sophisticated SharePoint site for both pupils and mentors. Josh's work recently gained external recognition during an online meeting with Jodie Miller from Medway Public Health. He shared his training modules and workbook with her, and she was thoroughly impressed with the quality and depth of his work.



Wisteria Cat Rescue

Each year our School Council chooses a charity by voting for a favourite from those who have been nominated. This year our charity is Wisteria Cat Rescue.

Their mission at Wisteria is to rescue all feral and street cats to give them a better life where they are safe and cared for. The charity is run by Billy, and he will be visiting our school council in March.

Along with our school council fundraising, we are asking for donations of cat food/treats or any cat related items to support Billy in his work.

If you are happy to donate, we would be grateful. It helps the charity a lot and it makes a very big difference to the cats' lives as well.

We hope you all have a fun break.
James- School Council Deputy



Mercury Class: Immersive World War II Studies

Mercury class recently stepped back in time to explore the realities of the Second World War. The classroom was transformed with an air raid shelter and historical posters, allowing the **pupils** to immerse themselves fully in the period.

Life as an Evacuee

The week began with an investigation into the evacuation process. The **pupils** curated their own evacuee suitcases and learned about the logistics of the Home Front by completing personal ration books. In addition to their historical research, they engaged in several practical projects:

- Constructing gas mask boxes and building Spitfire models.
- Writing emotive diary entries from the perspective of an evacuated child.
- Designing and painting papier-mâché gas masks.

Codebreaking and Innovation

The curriculum also covered the vital work of **Alan Turing** and the team at Bletchley Park. The **pupils** explored the Enigma code and the "bombe" machine, linking their historical studies with mathematical concepts. To conclude the initial phase of the topic, the class watched moving video interviews with family members, providing a personal connection to the history of the 1940s.



AI & Safeguarding: What You Need to Know

What Is AI?

AI helps computers solve problems and make decisions.

Safeguarding Risks

- Online Scams & Hacking: AI can write realistic messages that trick pupils.
- Harmful Images: Some tools generate child abuse images used for bullying.
- Deepfakes: Faces added to inappropriate videos to humiliate or threaten.
- Catfishing & Sextortion: AI profiles used to groom or extort children.
- Fake News: AI creates realistic fake photos that mislead pupils.

Signs a Child May Be at Risk

- Spending much more or much less time online.
- Being tired from late-night phone use.
- Strong emotions after being online (anger, upset, withdrawal).
- Secretive behaviour about devices or internet use.
- General signs of distress or sexual abuse.

Misinformation

Incorrect information given to someone, which may or may not be deliberately designed to mislead.

Disinformation

Purposefully misleading information often used to sway public opinion or hide truths. Examples include rumours, propaganda, and conspiracy theories.

Fake news

"purposefully crafted, sensational, emotionally charged, misleading or totally fabricated information" posed as mainstream news © 2020, p. 21

Animal Care BTEC

The students have been working hard at Creepy Claws doing a range of jobs such as mucking out the animals, handling animals and giving feeds and waters to the animals. They have six focus animals which they have been looking at – goats, rabbits, chickens, bearded dragons, cats and dogs. They have completed health checks on the animals as well. The students enjoy going to Creepy Claws and thrive in the offsite provision, clearly demonstrating practical and theoretical knowledge about the different animals that they work with.



Jupiter and Mercury Visit the Royal Engineers Museum

For World War 2 week and as part of our experiential maths curriculum, pupils from the upper school visited the Royal Engineers museum in Brompton. During the visit, pupils took part in a hands-on workshop all about rockets. They explored how engineers and scientists during the war developed new technologies to solve problems, improve safety and advance flight. With great enthusiasm, the children then applied what they had learned by designing, building and testing their own rockets. Working individually, they discussed ideas, shared information and put their ideas to the test. There was plenty of excitement as each pupil launched their finished rocket and watched to see how far and how fast it travelled.

Staff at the museum were impressed with the pupils' curiosity, thoughtful questions and eagerness to experiment. Back at school, the children were able to describe what they had learned and link this to our wider Science Week activities.

It was a fantastic afternoon of learning, teamwork and hands-on science, and we are incredibly proud of the way Jupiter and Mercury Class represented our school. This experience has certainly sparked an even greater interest in engineering and scientific



My Mini World in a Tub – By Johnny

This term, I have been looking at a miniature ecosystem inside a plastic tub. It is a small, busy world where plants and tiny creatures live together.

Inside the Tub

I have filled the tub with different types of plants. They grow in the soil and keep the air inside the world fresh. Because it is in a plastic tub, it stays nice and damp, which the plants and creatures both like.



The Springtails

The most important part of my mini world is the Springtails. These are very small, white insects that jump around the soil. They are the “clean-up crew” because they eat old leaves and mould, keep the soil healthy and help the plants grow. I enjoy watching the springtails move around and seeing how my mini world stays balanced and green.