The Grove Junior School

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Headteacher Miss Lorna Urquhart

20th November 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Southdown Lights Up and Harpenden Christmas Lights

This week, children from our school choirs have been busy preparing for Southdown Lights Up on Friday 27th November. Under the guidance of Mrs Jackson, and with the support of a wonderful team of volunteers, the children have been creating their own lanterns ready for the procession. It has been a fantastic opportunity for them to get creative, even if it has involved a little glue and mess along the way!

Please do put Friday 27th November in your diary. We would love to see as many families as possible supporting the lantern parade and then cheering on our combined Year 3 & 4 and Year 5 & 6 choirs as they perform at the Christmas light switch-on.

This weekend also sees the main Harpenden Christmas Carnival and Lights Switch-On. We are particularly proud of Anais in Year 3, who entered the Mayor's Christmas Card Competition and was awarded a Highly Commended certificate. Anais received her prize at a special ceremony earlier this week and has also been invited to join the Mayor on stage during the light switch-on event. Congratulations, Anais!

Changes to Timetable Rockstars

As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting children's wellbeing and encouraging healthy digital habits, we will be introducing some changes to our school's Times Tables Rock Stars (TTRS) settings from 24th November 2026.

These changes are being introduced by TTRS nationally and reflect a growing recognition of the importance of promoting healthy screen-time habits for children.

The following settings will be applied to all pupil accounts:

- Daily play limit: Outside school hours, gameplay will be limited to 20 minutes per day.
- Curfew: Pupils will not be able to log in between 8.00pm and 7.00am.
- Leaderboards: School and class leaderboards will no longer be visible.

We hope these changes will help to create sensible boundaries around TTRS use at home, ensuring that children can benefit from regular practice without feeling pressure to spend long periods online. There will be no changes to how TTRS is used during the school day.

Research shows that short, regular practice is far more effective than longer sessions. Spacing learning over time helps to strengthen memory and supports children in becoming fluent and confident with their times tables. As a guide, we recommend 3-5 minutes of practice, four or five times each week.

If you have any questions, please visit the TTRS Parent Guide or contact Mrs Whitehead, our Maths Lead, who will be happy to help.

Premier Education Holiday Club at The Grove

Last week, we shared a survey from Premier Sports asking for your views on how the holiday club could best meet the needs of our families. As only a small number of responses have been received so far, Premier Sports has asked us to keep the survey open for a little longer.

We are really pleased that Premier Sports is taking the time to listen to our school community and shape the provision around what parents and carers would find most useful and accessible. This is a fantastic opportunity to help influence the future of the holiday club and ensure it meets the needs of our families.

If you haven't already done so, please take a few minutes to complete the survey. **Holiday Club Survey:** Premier Education Holiday Club Survey

For families using childcare vouchers or Tax-Free Childcare: Please complete the voucher survey and let Premier Education know which provider you use so they can set this up on their system.
Childcare Voucher Survey: Tax Free Childcare Vouchers for Holiday Club

Children in Need – Grand Total
A huge thank you to all our parents, carers and families for your incredible generosity in supporting Children in Need this year. We are delighted to share that, together, our school community raised an amazing £567.
It was wonderful to see the children taking part in the day and learning about the importance of helping others. The money raised will support children and young people across the UK who are facing challenges in their lives, helping to provide opportunities, support and hope where it is needed most.

PTA News
Christmas Fayre Saturday 28th November 2-4pm
There is just one week to go until the Christmas Fayre! To enable us to put this on here's how you can help:

- **Thursday 26th is donation day**, please bring in donations of new or nearly new items for the secret room, think toiletries, chocolates, biscuits, mugs, candles, socks etc.
- Donate outgrown good condition **Christmas jumpers** next Thursday for us to sell in the shop at the Fayre - Christmas jumper day is Friday 11th December so it's time to dig those jumpers out to see if they still fit!
- **Sign up to bake**, we need lots of yummy treats to sell on our refreshments stall (remember no nuts and please provide a list of ingredients).
- Sign up for a **volunteer slot** to help on a stall, or with set up / clear up - we only have about 50% of the slots filled - we are especially short at 3.30 - 4.15pm.

If you are coming to the Fayre you will need to purchase **tokens** to spend on the games and activities, we recommend purchasing in advance on the playground to beat the queue on the day, we will be selling them on Tuesday by the uniform shop at pickup and Thursday at drop off next week.

Christmas Raffle
We've once again got a fabulous range of prizes to be won in our raffle, donated by lots of generous local businesses; football tickets, family ticket for the light trail with ice skating at Luton Hoo, beauty hamper and vouchers, restaurant vouchers, children's activities and more, take a look at the full list on our website. You can purchase tickets until **28th November**, get them in person (preferred) on the playground, (Tue pickup, Thur drop off) at the Fayre, or on Classlist.

Christmas Trees and wreath bases
Available to order now for collection during the Christmas Fayre, or if you can't make the fayre you can arrange to collect by emailing us. The trees are premium quality Nordmann Firs and each one sold raises money for the PTA. We even have parents of children have who have left the school still ordering from us so its testament to how good they are! Orders must be made by **9pm on Monday 23rd November** on Classlist, you can also share this link with family and friends.

Wreath Making
There are just 3 spaces remaining for the wreath making event on Monday 30th November, book tickets on Classlist. All materials to make the wreath will be provided but if you have anything specific that you want to include e.g. decorations or ribbon you can bring them along, and if you have your own secateurs you can bring these too.

School Diary Dates

November
Tuesday 24th November – Year 6 Heights and Weights
Friday 27th November – Southdown Lights Up
Saturday 28th November – PTA Christmas Fayre – 2pm-4pm
Monday 30th November – Year 5 Bikeability week
Monday 30th November – Mill on the Brue Information Evening for Year 5 Parents [6:30pm online]
December
Friday 11th December – Christmas Jumper Day

Friday 11th December – Grove's Got Talent final
Tuesday 15th December – Year 3 Performance to parents in the afternoon
Wednesday 16th December – Year 3 Performance to parents in the morning
Wednesday 16th December – Christmas Dinner
Friday 18th December – Carol Service at St John's for the children.
Friday 18th December – End of Term finish at 2pm

Have a fabulous weekend.

Kind regards



Miss Lorna Urquhart