



Avonside School

School Newsletter. Issue 1. December 2025

Welcome!

This month, we welcomed our first cohort of young learners to the site, and staff were absolutely thrilled to see them arrive! We had heard and read so much about them, and we were so excited to finally meet them in person.

It has been wonderful getting to know each of the young people here, and we can't wait to see them flourish as they continue to settle in. Our young learners have already shown us how thoughtful, funny, and adaptable they can be, and we're sure they will go on to do great things!

In this newsletter, we've shared a few of their favourite activities so far.

We hope our young learners, their carers, and their families all have a fantastic break, and return refreshed for a fabulous New Year! 🎉

WELCOME TO THE AVONSIDE FAMILY



Our Handprint Wall

Here, students create a handprint using colours they like and mix themselves, celebrating individuality and creativity. But most importantly, visually leaving an imprint of themselves on our building that symbolises the community we are building.

Archie and Cohen were some of our very first students to take part, and they did a fantastic job.



Acrostic Poetry

At the start of the second week, a group of students worked as a team to describe how they feel first thing on a Monday morning and turned it into an acrostic poem during a Creativity lesson with Trutchy.

The emphasis was on their mood improving throughout the day, and the resulting poem was fantastic!

Agitated students, always tired,
V
Very long journey, I'm hardly wired,
O
Only here for the morning, but wish I was still snoring,
N
Now perking up, now I'm buzzing,
S
Soon be lunchtime, but more learning first,
I
Into my lesson I charge with a burst,
D
Driving home, feeling I've done my best,
E
Excited to see tomorrow, what's next?!

Spotlight on Staff

For this Newsletter, Nick Trutch was interviewed by students, RW and LR:

Q. So Trutchy, what made you want to work here?

“So I’ve always had a passion for helping young people to achieve and reach their maximum potential and feel that I have the right skillset and personality to work with young people from traumatic backgrounds”.

Q. What do you care about most in life?

“My children are the most important people in my life so them and other family members, my friends also. I also care about setting a good example to the youth of today through positive pro-social modelling and doing good deeds”.

Q. What is the strangest thing you’ve ever eaten?

“Hmm, I can’t really remember. I know I’ve eaten crocodile and reindeer (separately, not together, that would be a weird surf n turf!). Both were quite tasty!”

Q. How many bones have you broken?

after several minutes of counting and pointing at body parts... “I think its 19, not including teeth or toes”

Q. So have you done a lot of combat sports?

Like what?

“Some bits over the years, yes. As a youngster I did Tae Kwon Do and then later in adulthood I studied Kung Fu and boxing”.

Q. What words of wisdom would you give the students at the school?

“Always give everything you have got, believe in yourself, and never let the past determine your future!”



A Sensory Garden at Avonside School

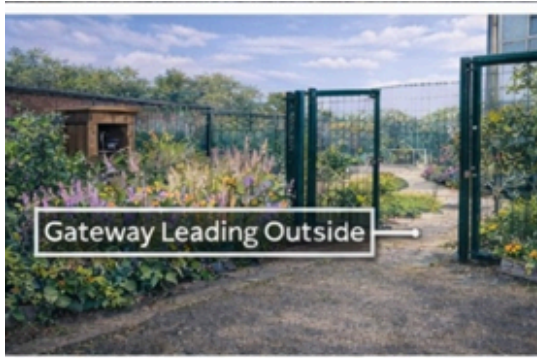
Archie has been taking photographs of our outdoor area and using the computer to develop ideas for creating a sensory garden. We have been awarded a £4,000 grant and plan to use this funding to transform the space into an area that feels calm, restful, and welcoming.

The garden will include areas for growing fruit and vegetables, planting pollinator-friendly flowers, and adding sensory elements that support well-being. A polytunnel will allow students to grow food throughout the year and learn about plant life cycles, soil, watering, and seasonal changes. Students will explore how different plants grow, how some plants support each other when planted together, and how planting choices can create sensory effects such as scent, texture, colour, and natural shade from the sun.

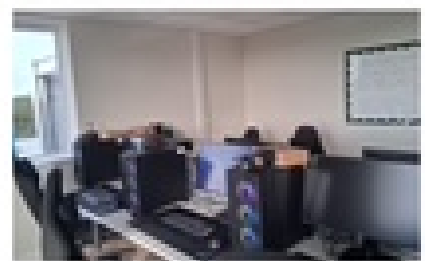
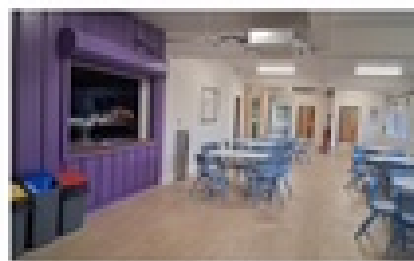
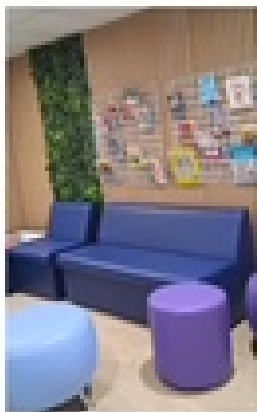
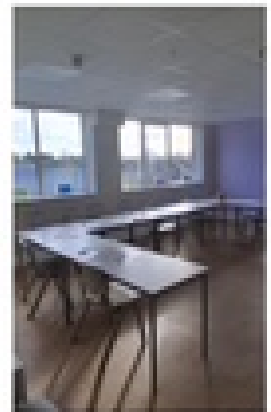
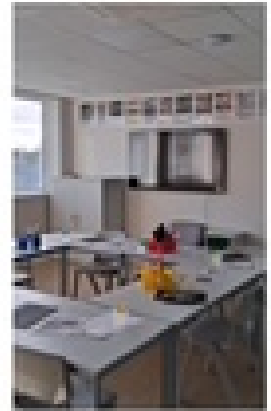
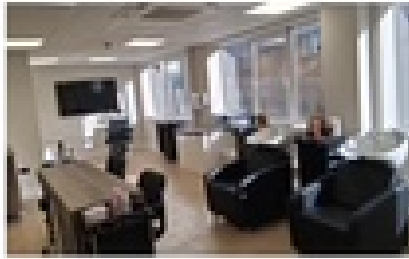
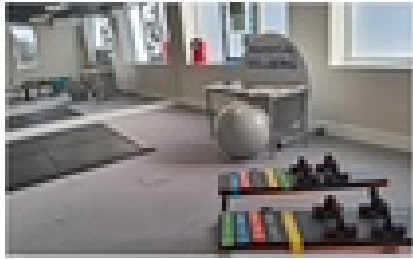
The fruit and vegetables grown in the garden will be used in the school kitchen, giving students a clear connection between growing, preparing, and eating food. This will support healthy eating, independence, and pride in producing something meaningful.

We would also like to incorporate an outside learning area with shade from the sun. We will also make sure the garden incorporates places to rest and recuperate.





Some photos of the school



Supporting your child at Christmas



Christmas can be a magical time, but it can also feel overwhelming for children, especially those who have experienced trauma. Changes in routine, sensory overload, memories, and the pressure to “have fun” can all contribute to stress. Below are simple, trauma-informed strategies to help create a calm, connected and enjoyable Christmas for your child and family

CONNECT - STRENGTHEN YOUR BOND.

Children thrive when they feel safe, seen and valued.

Create a warm environment: Display their artwork, photos or small achievements so they can clearly see they belong. Subtle acts of kindness (e.g., leaving a note, making their favourite drink) show you are thinking of them.

Make memories together: Let your child choose an activity; baking, watching a film, going for a walk; and record positive moments with photos or keepsakes.

Talk openly: Some young people love Christmas; others find it difficult. Gently check in about how they feel and what they would prefer.

Encourage healthy connections: Support them to connect with trusted friends, pets, or family members, but avoid forcing interactions. Their voice matters.

CO-REGULATE HELP THEM STAY CALM AND SETTLED

Children often borrow our calm when they feel overwhelmed.

Keep routines predictable: Maintain regular mealtimes, bedtimes and daily rhythms.

Let them know in advance about changes such as visitors, day trips or events.

Predictability reduces anxiety.

Offer choices: Let them choose between two activities, snacks, or Christmas plans; choice supports control and safety.

Use regulating strategies: Breathing exercises, drawing, music, sensory play, nature walks, or movement breaks can all help young people reset.

Low-pressure celebrations: Keep things simple. Instead of big, noisy events, try gentle activities: crafts, board games, reading, baking, or a cosy film night. Children do best when there is freedom, not pressure.

CO-REFLECT - SUPPORT UNDERSTANDING AND COPING

Helping children reflect (in small, calm moments) builds confidence and resilience.

Respect boundaries: If your child needs quiet time, a break from busy spaces, or time alone, that is okay.

Reflect together: Talk about what is going well, what feels hard, and what could be changed. Adapt Christmas plans based on their needs.

Notice triggers: Unstructured time can be hard for children with trauma histories or additional needs and may lead to boredom or dysregulation.

Planned activities such as games, crafts, baking, outdoor play or helping with small chores provide purpose and reduce stress.

Seek extra support if needed: If you feel your child is struggling significantly, specialist or professional support may help.

SIMPLE ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Small, structured activities help children feel safe, engaged and grounded.

Here are a few from our Occupational Therapy and Trauma-Informed teams: Arts and crafts, colouring, scrapbooks, or mood board

Board games, puzzles, Lego, scavenger hunts

Baking or decorating simple Christmas treats

Outdoor play—walks, playgrounds, bike rides

Music, dancing, or listening to favourite songs

Sensory Play for younger children—playdough, water trays, rice trays

Time with pets or small animal-care tasks (if possible)

These activities help children develop confidence, interests and a sense of identity, while reducing stress and boredom.

AND FINALLY

Christmas can also be emotionally tiring for adults. Please remember your own Healthy Mind Platter; rest, downtime, connection, play, sleep and self-care are vital too. Supporting a child starts with supporting yourself.

Thank you for everything you do to make the holiday period safe, joyful and meaningful for your child.

Helplines

A useful list of helplines and support services for families in and around Bristol over the Christmas holiday – including emotional support, crisis lines, practical help and local organisations you can contact. Some services have special festive opening arrangements or operate year-round.

Immediate Support & Mental Health Helplines (24/7)

Emergency & Crisis

Emergency Services – Call 999 if someone is in immediate danger or at risk of serious harm.

Bristol Mental Health Crisis Line – 0300 555 0334 (24/7 crisis support)

Samaritans – 116 123 (free to call, 24/7 emotional support)

Shout Crisis Text Line – Text SHOUT to 85258 (24/7 confidential support)

Premier Lifeline – 0300 111 0101 (emotional support, daily)

Other UK Helplines Open Over Christmas

These national helplines continue operating over the festive period when some local services may close.

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably) – 0800 585 858 (5 pm-midnight)

SHOUT – Text SHOUT to 85258 (24/7)

Samaritans – 116 123 (24/7)

Family & Local Support in Bristol

Home-Start Bristol and South Gloucestershire – Local charity offering support and home-visiting programmes for families with young children (help with parenting, isolation, wellbeing).

Bristol Child Parent Support – Support and guidance for parents.

Bristol City Council - Family Information Service – Advice on family services, childcare, activities and early help support.

Caring in Bristol – Community-based charity that offers practical support (including holiday programmes and assistance).

City-Wide Support Services

Family Hubs / Children's Centres – Drop-in family support, activities, information, parenting help and signposting to services.

Early Help for Families – Parenting support, behaviour help, emotional wellbeing, debt/finances signposting

We Are Bristol Helpline – 0800 694 0184 (free council helpline for cost-of-living & family advice, Mon–Fri)

⚠️ **Note:** Christmas and New Year holiday opening times for local services (especially council offices & family hubs) can vary – check ahead or call to confirm, as many will close on 25-26 December and 1 January.

🧠 Emotional & Parenting Support (National)

These services operate all year and often through holiday periods – useful if local services are closed:

Family Lives – Parent Helpline – 0808 800 2222 (support with family issues, parent stress, behaviour, relationships).

Childline – 0800 1111 (for children & young people).

NSPCC Helpline – 0808 800 5000 or Text 88858 (advice on child safety).

🍴 Practical Support Over Christmas

Although not helplines, these community initiatives can help families in hardship:

Food banks & emergency food support in Bristol – Many local food banks operate or run festive support during Christmas. South & East Bristol Foodbank

Holiday clubs & free meals for kids – Winter Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programmes provide free meals and activities for eligible families (usually delivered through council hubs/partners). Bristol City Council

📌 Tips for the Holiday Period

Check opening hours for local support services – many have reduced hours or closures on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Use 24/7 crisis lines (like Samaritans or Shout) if you can't reach local support. For immediate danger or harm, always call 999.