Percy Hedley School's

Family Information and FOPHS News Friday 20th November 2026

We are well into the swing of this half term now and the next month will be a hive of activity in the lead up to Christmas. This can be really challenging for families and we try, as best we can at school to support students who are struggling. I have included a link in the information section from the National Autistic Society which may be of some help.

FoPHS needs your help. Please have a look at the FoPHS section and contact me if you can offer help.

School closes at 15.30 on Friday 18th December for the Christmas holidays.

What's Coming Up:

Monday 23 - Friday 27th November: Non-fiction week in school
Friday 27th November: Themed menu for St Andrew's Day
Wednesday 2nd December 9.45-10.45: FoPHS Meeting
Monday 7th December: Christingle
Wednesday 9th December: Two events: Both 14-15.00

- Classes KB & LT/HL: Stay and Play
- Classes BE, CH, HF & AH: Winter Assembly

Tuesday 15th December:

- Moving in a Winter Wonderland & visit to Santa's grotto
- Christmas dinner for students

Wednesday 16th December:

- Social coffee morning 9.30-11.00
- Moving in a Winter Wonderland

Thursday 17th December 14-15.00: Enterprise Christmas Fayre

On the events calendar you will find dates highlighted as follows:

Student Events in school
Parents welcome
Special menu for school lunch

FoPHS
Friends of
Percy Hedley School

School Calendars

Term dates 2026-27

Events calendar 2026-2027

Term dates 2027-2028



Online Safety

Online Safety Information:

The link to the Online safety information can be found on the school website under the heading “Parent and carers area”, then “online safety” from the dropdown menu.

View the online safety blogs here

And view all information about online safety at PHS here

This week’s online safety blog is especially relevant:
The focus is on the release of GTA6, content for parents to be mindful of, platforms for parents to be aware of that may post GTA content (even if the students don't have access to the game themselves) and an additional section on impact on wellbeing from the Wellbeing Team.

Information

Learning Disability

What is a Learning Disability? It is a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning), which started before adulthood. (Department of Health and Social Care). It is lifelong.

There are different levels, mild, moderate and severe and as with anyone else, experiences vary from one person to another.

It is important to differentiate between a diagnosis of Learning Difficulty which is: a specific challenge that affects how a person learns, reads, writes, spells or works with numbers, without impacting their overall general intellect or IQ (MENCAP).

What is the difference?

A learning disability affects someone's intellect generally across all areas of their life.

A learning difficulty does not affect someone's intellect. Instead, it means that someone finds it more difficult to learn a specific thing, such as reading, writing or maths. (Sense.org)

Why is it important to identify people with a Learning Disability?

It is a lifelong condition and one which recognises that those with a diagnosis will need additional support throughout their lives.

All students at Percy Hedley School have an Education, Health & Social Care Plan; EHCP but what happens when the person leaves education? An EHCP is an Education led plan which can but does not always last until the person is 25 years old. A confirmed diagnosis of Learning Disability unlocks access to the right care,

education rights, legal rights and support plans. (NHS UK). If your young person has this diagnosis, it alerts professional agencies in health and/or social care that they are likely to need support when they leave education.

It is very likely that it means your child meets the criteria for support outside school.

I am often asked how to get a Personal Assistant (PA) for students. This is provided by Social Care as a personal budget or direct payment. This funding can be used to employ a PA to support the child access the community to take part in activities or hobbies. As young people with SEND get older it is more important to involve them in the community, and it sets the foundation for a more rounded life after education. Many of our students have siblings, some are from one parent families and parents can struggle to get them involved in their community. A PA could be someone who shares their interests and can encourage them to participate in activities. To access this funding, you will need to ask for an assessment of your child's social care needs. It would be good to ask for an assessment of your needs too as a carer. As I mentioned in the last paragraph there are criteria set by Local Authorities and a written diagnosis of Learning Disability often meets them.

If you believe your child/young person has a Learning Disability and they are being seen by professionals, it may be worth a conversation with them to see if an assessment can be done. When your child becomes an adult or when their EHCP ceases this may be important in terms of getting them support to access day services etc.

You can find out more on MENCAP's website here:

Christmas for people with Autism.

Here is a link from the National Autistic Society which may help families where Christmas is a real struggle

Find out more here



Activities

Newcastle Parents and Carers:

We are excited to invite children and young people aged 0–25 with SEND, additional needs and/or disabilities to our inclusive swimming sessions! 💦

📍Venue: Sir Charles Parsons School, Walker Gate

🕙Time: 10am–2pm (45-minute swimming slots)

💜Hydrotherapy pool available

📆Session Dates:

* Saturday 21st November 2026
* Saturday 5th December 2026
* Saturday 19th December 2026

🌟Eligibility: **Families must live in Newcastle upon Tyne,** and children or young people must receive DLA/PIP Daily Living, have an EHCP, or be awaiting a diagnosis or assessment. Evidence of eligibility will be required.

📝 STEP 1 – REGISTER FOR MEMBERSHIP

📝 **Sign up here**

🏊STEP 2 – BOOK YOUR SWIMMING SESSION

💦**21st November:**

💦**5th December:**

💦**19th December:**

⚠️Limited spaces – first come, first served! A waiting list will be available.

💙We look forward to welcoming our SEND families!

NAPI All In SEND Team



Tweddle Farm Hartlepool:
A bit of a trek for those in this part of the North East, but as it is SEN friendly, I felt it worth sharing. I've had a look at the website for disabled facilities, but there doesn't appear to be anything although it states that it is wheelchair accessible. There are a few changing place facilities within 5 miles though.

CHRISTMAS GROTTO SEN SESSIONS AT TWEDDLE FARM! 🎄👑

✨All the magic of Christmas, at a gentler pace! ❤️

We're delighted to be offering our SEN-friendly grotto sessions again this year, with a few adjustments to create a calmer, more relaxed Christmas experience! 👑

🎄What to expect:

❄️A magical guided tour with Santa's friendly elves through our Winter Wonderland!

✨Time to explore and enjoy our beautiful Christmas lights and decorations.
👑Reduced group numbers for a calmer experience
🎶Music turned down low and mics switched off.
⛄A fun show with Santa and a very special surprise guest! 😲
❤️No pressure to sit still or join in! Children are welcome to wander, explore or simply watch from wherever they feel comfortable.
🎄Friendly elves on hand to offer help and support throughout.

🎁Every child receives magical reindeer dust and a golden ticket to choose a gift from our Elves' Toy Shop!

📅Saturday 28th November
⏰9:30am | 9:50am | 3:50pm | 4:10pm

📅Sunday 29th November
⏰9:30am | 9:50am | 3:50pm | 4:10pm

📍Tweddle Farm, Hartlepool 🐷🐮🦆

❤️We want every child to have the chance to experience the joy and magic of Christmas in a setting where they feel happy and comfortable. ✨🎁

📞If you require any further information please don't hesitate to get in touch. We're always happy to help! 01915863311.

🎄Please share this post to help us reach families who may benefit from these sessions! 👏

🎟️ Link here



Santa visits with availability.

This is copied, with permission from North East family Fun, a personal blog Facebook group. Here is the link to her page:

I have looked up those that have a Changing Place which you will find marked in bold font below. You can visit the websites for other access information, including free carer access.

1- Woodhorn Museum **(Changing Place available)**

£10 per child (adults go free but require an annual pass)

Includes a festive story, a chance to meet Father Christmas with a photo op, a gift for every child and seasonal activities and crafts. Good availability across all dates including Christmas Eve.

2- Science at Life **(Changing Place available)**

£25 per person. A full day's experience including Science Centre entry, a meeting (with a gift) from Santa, a special Christmas Eve Bag including hot chocolate & reindeer food, an Elf Science Show & What Santa Sees Dome Show. Availability on all dates (some dates are limited)

3 - Beamish **(Changing Place available)**

£10 per child (+ museum pass for all). Includes a personal meeting with Father Christmas in his grotto & a traditional gift. Lots to enjoy at Beamish including Elf Woods if you'd like to make a day of it. Available on weekdays in term time (fab for pre-schoolers or home-ed).

4 - Evening Santa at Lilidorei and Winter Lights at Alnwick Garden **(Changing Place available)**

From £26.50 per child (includes winter lights admission to both Lilidorei & Alnwick Garden). Adult admission is also required. Includes a private meeting with Father Christmas in his magical Lilidorei grotto + gift. Best availability on Mon & Tues evenings.

5 - Gosforth Civic Theatre

£16 per child (two adults per child go free). Includes entry to a magical winter wonderland, storytime with Santa and a small gift. Sessions for families with complex needs are available. Good availability across all dates including Saturdays in December.

6 - Northern Stage **(Changing Place available)**

Book to enjoy Northern Stage's Christmas Show for under 5s (The Christmas Sorting Office) and you can add a visit to meet Santa after the show on selected dates (show tickets are from £12.50pp and a Santa add-on is £6/£8 per child). Each child will receive an adorable finger puppet as their gift from Santa. Available on selected dates after 10:30am performances (check their website).

7 - Breakfast with Santa at Caledonian Hotel, Jesmond

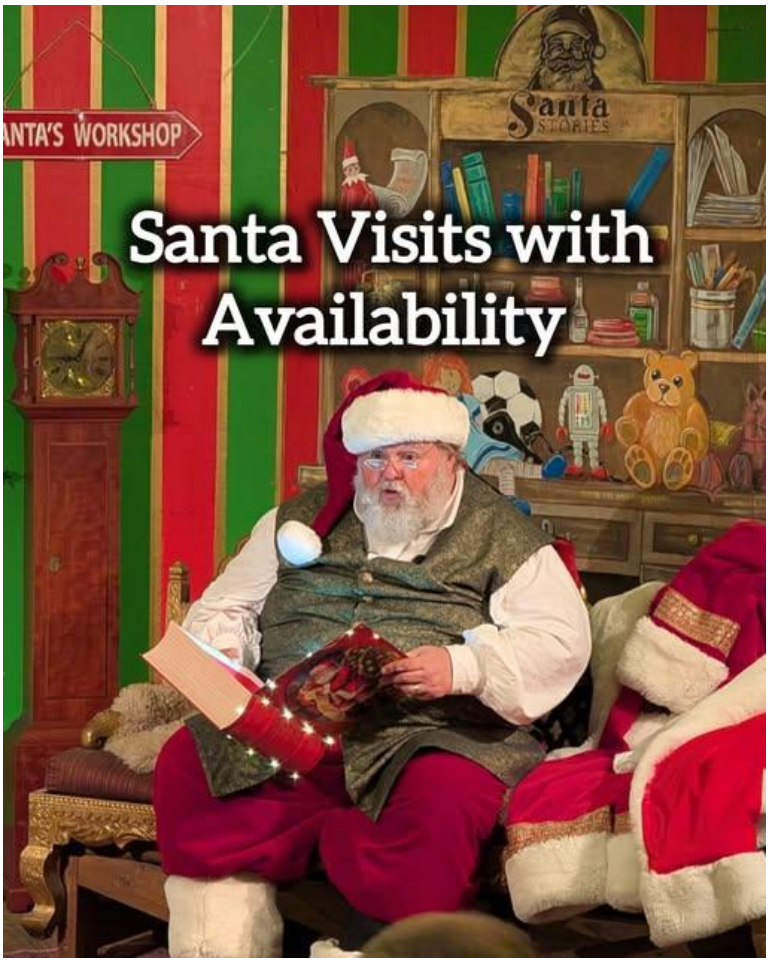
£11.95 per child / £14.95 per adult / £49 for 2a+2c. Includes a full English with unlimited tea and coffee for grown ups and pancakes, cereal, fruit, toast and juice

for kids alongside a visit from Santa's elves & a visit to see Santa in his grotto with gift. Available across weekends (Sat & Sun) in December. Call 0191 2817881 to book.

8 - 🎅Newcastle Christmas Village **(Changing Place available)**

Santa Stories in Santa's Tipi (Old Eldon Square) is £10.50 per child and £6.50 per child (+bf). Enjoy a festive tale with Santa and his elves, a photo op for each child / family, plenty of interaction and a 'nice list' certificate. Available on most dates including weekend in December (if you can be flexible with timing).

Dates and times checked 15 Nov.



FoPHS News

We are well on the way to getting ready for FoPHS activity in the lead up to Christmas. Our next meeting is on **Wednesday 2nd December from 9.45-10.45.** Please join us if you can. As we prepare for Christmas, we will need some help from parents to:

- Wrap gifts
- Decorate the grotto on Monday 14th December
- Help with FoPHS stall at the Christmas fayre on Thursday 17th December.
- Donate items we can use for hampers for our raffle at the Christmas fayre.

School Photos

A letter will be sent home today with details. We offered these in 2024, and our wonderful staff member Beth has offered to do them again this year. This will be on a pay as you feel basis with a suggested minimum donation of £10. Photos will only be taken for those who request them and payment is being requested before photos are taken. Digital photos will be sent to you by email once they have been processed. You will receive 3 digital images.

See a letter about school photos here

Facebook page

This is a closed group for family and friends of Percy Hedley School, where you can share news and updates about school life. It is not for external professionals who may be working with families. To join, you need to answer the question stating your link with school.

Please note: this group is for sharing news and updates about school life and is not intended to discuss any issues around individual students, and as such all comments are moderated. If you have a particular issue or concern, please contact school directly on 0191 216 1811.

Join the Facebook Group here



Quote of the Week

My quote for this week is below:

“As the leaves fall in November, let go of what no longer serves you and make room for the growth that awaits in the season of change.”

Anonymous



Contact details

Eileen Robinson: Family Liaison Officer
Email: e.robinson@percyhedley.org.uk
Telephone: 0191 2161811 ext. 3260.