

Newsletter

Dear Parents and Carers,

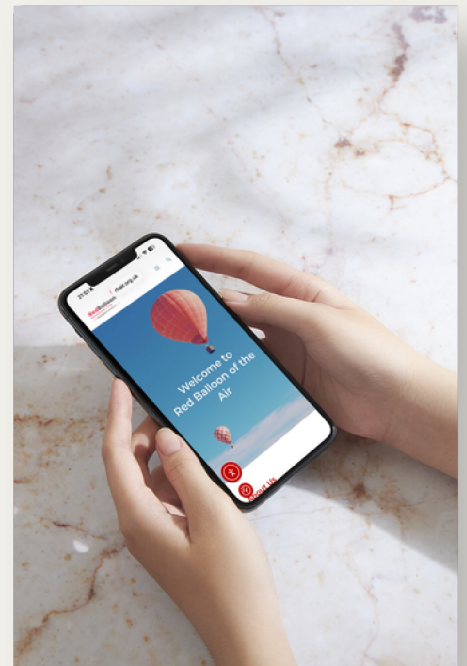
A warm welcome back to the new academic year at RBAir. I hope that everyone has settled back into their new timetables and that any settling-in issues have been ironed out after the long summer break. As at the start of every new year, there are a few resets and this September we will be implementing the Mobile Phone Policy that we sent out to all parents and carers as a draft version in May. We are also implementing the actions and requirements expected in all education settings following the introduction of Benedict's Law. Please see the information outlined below.

Hannah Curry
Head of Centre

Mobile phones

Following our consultation earlier this year, we have now introduced our updated approach to mobile phone use at RBAir. The aim is to create a calm, safe and purposeful learning environment, while recognising that mobile phones can play an important role in supporting some of our learners.

Our approach is therefore based on individual need rather than a blanket ban. Phones are not routinely used during sessions and social media, gaming, photography, recording and messaging others are not permitted. However, where a phone is needed to support a learner's SEND, wellbeing, medical needs, communication, travel or emotional regulation, this can be agreed as an individual adjustment and recorded within their support arrangements.



This means that mobile phone use at RBAir is carefully managed, with clear boundaries around when and how phones can be used. We will continue to review arrangements with learners and families to ensure that they support engagement, independence and wellbeing while maintaining appropriate safeguarding measures.

Allergy Awareness

As part of our commitment to keeping all our learners safe, we have reviewed our arrangements for managing allergies and anaphylaxis in line with the new **Benedict's Law** allergy safety requirements, which come into effect from **September 2026**.

Our Allergy Policy is available on the Red Balloon of the Air website (www.rbair.org.uk/policies) and sets out our full procedures. We keep an up-to-date register of learners with known allergies, ensure relevant staff are aware of individual allergies and know how to respond to an allergic reaction, and provide allergy awareness and anaphylaxis training for staff. Individual healthcare or allergy plans are put in place where required, and we take reasonable steps to minimise the risk of exposure to known allergens.

As learners may bring food or drinks into the Centre, we ask parents and carers to **let us know about any allergies or changes to their young person's allergy information**. Please check food packaging and ingredients carefully and avoid sending foods containing a known allergen for your young person. Learners should also be reminded not to share food or drinks with other learners.

Red Balloon of the Air is a **nut-free setting**, so please do not send nuts or foods containing nuts into the Centre.

Where a learner has been prescribed an **adrenaline auto-injector (AAI)**, parents and carers must provide this to the Centre and ensure that it is in date. AAIs must be carried at all times by the young person (when in Centre and out on any trips or visits) and be readily accessible so that they can be used promptly in an emergency.

Please contact us promptly if your young person is prescribed an AAI, their prescription changes, or an existing AAI expires or is replaced. We also need an up-to-date allergy action plan or healthcare information where applicable.

As part of the required compliance around Benedict's Law, we do have adrenaline auto-injectors on site that can be used in an emergency.

Keeping this information up to date helps us ensure that the right arrangements are in place to support your young person safely.

Thank you for working with us to help keep all our learners safe.



Understanding your young person's EHCP Annual Review at Red Balloon of the Air

If your young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), you might already be familiar with the annual review process – but what exactly happens, and how can you make the most of it? Here's a short guide to how we approach annual reviews at RBAir.

What's an annual review all about?

An annual review must happen at least once every 12 months, and it's so much more than a tick-box exercise! Think of it as a chance to celebrate your young person's achievements, reflect honestly on what's working (and what isn't!), and plan together for the future.

We look at the whole picture: academic progress, social development, emotional wellbeing, independence skills, and preparation for adulthood. Every young person is different, and the review recognises that.



Before the meeting: getting ready together

Preparation makes all the difference. We gather insights from everyone who knows your young person well – teachers, Link Mentors, therapists, and, of course, you and your young person themselves.

We aim to give you at least four weeks' notice of the review meeting to give everyone time to prepare properly – often more. We circulate all the feedback before the meeting so you can read through everything in advance. This year, annual reviews for those in Year 11 and Year 13 (Transfer Reviews) will usually take place in Autumn 2 Term 2026, whilst those in other year groups will take place from January 2027.

Your young person's voice matters enormously. We encourage every learner to contribute in whatever way feels comfortable – whether that's through writing, chatting with a trusted adult, creative work, or something else entirely.

During the review: what we'll discuss

The meeting brings everyone together to consider:

- Progress towards outcomes – What's been achieved? What strategies have worked well? What barriers remain?
- Strengths and successes – Academic gains, improved confidence, better attendance, or personal achievements.
- Current and emerging needs – We'll discuss whether support should increase, decrease, or shift focus.
- Future aspirations – Particularly for older learners, we'll talk about qualifications, further education, employment, and independent living.

After the meeting: What happens next?

Within two weeks of the meeting, we'll write a review report and send it to everyone involved, including the local authority. The local authority then has four weeks to decide whether to maintain the EHCP without changes, amend it, or cease it. You'll be notified of their decision and have the right to challenge it if needed.

How you can help

You know your young person best. Before the review, it's helpful to:

- reflect on progress since last year;
- note any ongoing concerns;
- celebrate successes from home;
- think about future goals;
- encourage your young person to share their views.

Many families find it useful to jot down notes beforehand to make sure nothing important gets missed.

Working as a team

Annual reviews work best when we truly collaborate. By bringing together your expertise as parents, our professional knowledge, and most importantly your young person's own voice, we can make sure support remains personalised and focused on helping them thrive.



If you have any questions about an upcoming review, please don't hesitate to speak to your young person's Link Mentor – or contact me directly at:

alison.bigglestone@rbair.org.uk

Ali Bigglestone, SENDCo



Enrichment

Learning is about more than developing knowledge and academic skills. Our enrichment activities give learners the opportunity to explore new experiences, try something different, and develop skills in a variety of ways.

In previous years, we've seen learners take part in a fantastic range of activities and experiences, from exploring new interests to getting creative, taking on new challenges, and working alongside their peers. These opportunities are an important part of life at RBAir, helping learners to build confidence, discover new strengths, and enjoy learning in different ways, which is why we put a lot of time and energy into offering these opportunities.

Why enrichment matters

Enrichment activities aren't just 'extras'. They play a key role in nurturing the whole person, helping learners to:

- strengthen critical thinking and problem-solving abilities;
- boost self-confidence through trying new things;
- develop communication and teamwork skills;
- find joy in learning beyond the traditional classroom.

We have got some exciting events, trips and visits planned for the year ahead, so please keep an eye out in the coming weeks for the information. To start off the year...



Willow Lounge

Wednesday 23rd September
2 - 3:30pm

- Games theme
- Video games, board games, outdoor games
- Milkshakes and snacks

Wednesday 21st October
2 - 3:30pm

- Halloween theme
- Pumpkin carving, fire pit, toasting marshmallows
- Halloween outfits optional!

Parents evenings

Parents' evenings will take place from:

Monday 30th November - Wednesday 2nd December
between **4:00 and 6:00 pm**.



Invitations to book an appointment with a teacher will open to parents and carers on **Monday 16th November** via Arbor.

To book an appointment, please log in to Arbor. By default, all appointments will be conducted via telephone, so please include the best number to reach you in the notes section. If you would prefer a video call via Teams, please indicate 'video call' in the notes section and provide the best contact number.

Academic reports

You will receive a written academic report at the end of each half term (October, February and May). Reports will be accessible via the Parent Portal app on Arbor, following an email notifying you of their availability.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns about your young person's learning sessions outside of parents' evenings or reporting intervals, please reach out to your young person's teacher via email or you can put in a request via Admin and they will arrange for the relevant teacher to give you a call.

Term dates reminder

Autumn Term 2026

Monday 7th September – Friday 11th December

Half Term: Monday 26th October – Friday 30th October

Staff Training: Wednesday 2nd September, Thursday 3rd September, Friday 4th September

Spring Term 2027

Tuesday 5th January – Thursday 25th March

Good Friday Bank Holiday: Friday 26th March

Half Term: Monday 15th February – Friday 19th February

Staff Training: Monday 4th January

Summer Term 2027

Tuesday 13th April – Friday 16th July

Early May Bank Holiday: Monday 3rd May

Half Term: Monday 31st May – Friday 4th June

Staff Training: Monday 12th April