JOHN DONNE PRIMARY SCHOOL

celebrating

Black History Month

☆ October 2026

♡ Dear all,

This Black History Month, we are proud to come together as a school community to celebrate the achievements, contributions, and stories of Black people throughout history and in the present day. It is a time to recognise the individuals who have shaped our society, challenged barriers, inspired change, and enriched communities across the United Kingdom and around the world.

Throughout this month, we encourage everyone to engage with the events, discussions, and opportunities featured in this newsletter. Black History Month is not only a celebration of history, but also a chance to learn, reflect, and appreciate the diversity, talent, and resilience that continue to shape our world today.

We hope this edition inspires curiosity, meaningful conversations, and a deeper understanding of the people and experiences that have helped build the society we share. Let us celebrate, learn, and grow together.

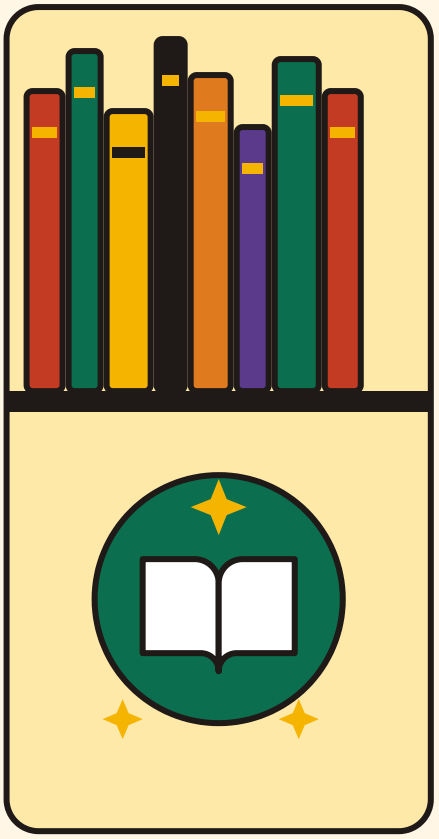
As you explore this newsletter, we hope you discover stories, achievements and ideas that stay with you long after you have finished reading. Perhaps you will learn something new, uncover a story that sparks your curiosity, or find an inspiring example to share with friends, family or classmates. At John Donne Primary School, our values of kindness, respect, aspiration, resilience and collaboration are at the heart of everything we do.

We hope the pages that follow encourage meaningful conversations, inspire further learning, and remind us all of the incredible impact that people can have when they dare to dream, persevere through challenges and work together. Most importantly, we hope every reader finds something that inspires them to aim higher, think deeper and make a positive difference in their own way.

✧ Happy Black History Month.

Southwark Libraries Celebrate Black History Month

Throughout October, Southwark Libraries will be marking Black History Month with a range of events, activities and opportunities for families, children and young people to explore Black history, culture and achievement. From inspiring stories and local history to creative workshops and community events, the programme encourages people of all ages to discover new perspectives and celebrate the contributions of Black communities both locally and globally.



Libraries have always been places of discovery, and Black History Month provides a wonderful opportunity to pick up a new book, learn about an influential figure, or uncover a story that has helped shape our world. Whether you are an enthusiastic reader, a budding historian or simply curious to learn more, there is something for everyone to enjoy throughout the month.

As a school community, we encourage our pupils and families to explore what Southwark Libraries have to offer and to share what they discover with others. A single story, book or conversation has the power to spark curiosity, inspire ambition and deepen our understanding of the world around us. In the spirit of kindness, respect, aspiration, resilience and collaboration, let us continue learning from the voices, experiences and achievements that make our communities stronger.

Find out more: **Southwark Libraries Black History Month Programme** ↗

CBBC Black History Month: Learn, Watch and Be Inspired

The CBBC Black History Month collection is a brilliant way for children and families to explore Black history through engaging videos, inspiring stories and interactive content. It helps young people learn about the achievements, experiences and contributions of Black people throughout history while exploring themes of equality, identity, respect and belonging.



Through the stories of pioneering athletes, influential leaders, creative artists and courageous campaigners, pupils can discover role models whose resilience, determination and achievements continue to inspire people today. These powerful stories bring history to life and remind us that positive change often begins with curiosity, courage and a belief in making a difference.

Family Discussion Challenge

After watching a video or learning about an inspiring person, talk together as a family:

- What surprised you most?
- What challenge did this person overcome?
- What can we learn from their story?
- How can we show courage, kindness or resilience in our own lives?

Family Creative Challenge: Inspiring People Gallery

Choose a person from the CBBC Black History Month collection and create a family gallery at home.

You could:

- Draw a picture of them.
- Create a fact card with three interesting facts.
- Write an inspiring quote or message about what you learned.
- Display everyone's work together on a wall, fridge or noticeboard.

Share your gallery with family and friends and see how many inspiring stories you can discover together.

CBBC BLACK HISTORY MONTH: LEARN, WATCH AND BE INSPIRED

Pupil Activity (EYFS & KS1): My Inspiring Hero

Choose someone from the CBBC collection and create a picture of them.



Can you tell someone:

- Their name?
- What they are famous for?
- One word that describes them, such as *brave*, *kind*, *creative* or *determined*?

Finish your picture with the sentence:

"I admire _____ because _____."

Pupil Activity (KS2): Be a History Detective!



Choose one inspiring person from the CBBC Black History Month collection.

Can you find:

- Three interesting facts about their life?
- A challenge they overcame?
- An achievement they are remembered for?
- A lesson we can learn from their story?

Present your findings as a poster, fact file or short presentation and share your discoveries with your class or family.

Explore the collection: CBBC Black History Month ↗

Black Composers Who Changed the World

Music has the power to tell stories, bring people together and inspire change. Throughout history, Black composers have broken barriers, challenged expectations and created extraordinary music that continues to influence audiences around the world. This Black History Month, why not discover one of these remarkable musicians and listen to their work as a family?

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912)

One of Britain's most celebrated composers, whose music was performed across Europe and America.

Listen to: *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*

Florence Price (1887-1953)

The first Black woman to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra.

Listen to: *Symphony No. 1 in E Minor*

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745-1799)

A composer, violinist and conductor often referred to as the "Black Mozart".

Listen to: *Violin Concerto in G Major, Op. 8 No. 2*

William Grant Still (1895-1978)

Known as the "Dean of African American Composers", he opened doors for future generations of musicians.

Listen to: *Afro-American Symphony*

Scott Joplin (1868-1917)

The "King of Ragtime", whose music helped shape the development of jazz.

Listen to: *The Entertainer*

Margaret Bonds (1913-1972)

A talented composer and pianist who celebrated Black culture and history through her music.

Listen to: *Troubled Water*

George Walker (1922-2018)

The first Black composer to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music.

Listen to: *Lyric for Strings*

Michael Abels (b. 1962)

A modern composer whose innovative film scores have brought orchestral music to new audiences.

Listen to: *Get Out: Main Title Theme*

Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981)

One of today's leading composers, blending classical, folk and contemporary musical styles.

Listen to: *Starburst*

Errollyn Wallen (b. 1958)

One of Britain's most influential living composers, whose work has been performed worldwide.

Listen to: *Mighty River*

BLACK COMPOSERS WHO CHANGED THE WORLD

Family Listening Challenge

Choose one composer and listen to their music together.

As you listen, discuss:

- How does the music make you feel?
- What story might the music be telling?
- Which instruments can you hear?
- Which piece was your favourite and why?

Pupil Challenge

EYFS & KS1: Draw a picture inspired by the music. What colours, places or characters do you imagine?

KS2: Create a "Composer Spotlight" fact file including:

- Three interesting facts
- Their most famous piece
- Why they are important
- Your own review of their music

You might even discover a new favourite composer!

Black History Month Family Challenge

As Black History Month comes to a close, we would love to see how our pupils and families have been inspired by the stories, people and achievements featured throughout this newsletter.

Whether it is a piece of artwork, a fact file, a poem, a piece of creative writing, a music project, a family poster, a presentation or something completely unique, we encourage you to share your learning and creativity with us.



Black History Month Competition

All are welcome to enter the Black History Month competition by handing in a piece of work that you have completed by Friday 6th November 2026 to your class teacher.

Your entry could:

- ✓ Celebrate an inspiring Black historical figure.
- ✓ Explore a Black composer, artist, scientist, author or athlete.
- ✓ Share what you have learned during Black History Month.
- ✓ Showcase a piece of artwork, writing, music or research.
- ✓ Be a family project completed together at home.

We are looking for work that demonstrates **curiosity, creativity and a love of learning**. Most importantly, we want to see what has inspired *you*.

We cannot wait to celebrate your wonderful ideas and achievements. Good luck, and happy creating!

A Final Thought

As we celebrate Black History Month, we hope this newsletter has inspired you to learn something new, start a conversation and discover stories worth sharing. Every achievement, voice and story we have explored reminds us of the power of kindness, respect, aspiration, resilience and collaboration.

Thank you for joining us on this journey of discovery. Let's continue to celebrate diversity, embrace curiosity and learn from one another, not just this month, but throughout the year.

Happy Black History Month, and happy learning!

People Need People

by Benjamin Zephaniah

Family Reading Time

Why not find a copy of *People Need People* and share it together at home? Benjamin Zephaniah (1958–2023) was a much-loved poet and author from Birmingham, whose poems celebrate friendship, fairness and the joy of belonging. His words are made to be read aloud, so this is the perfect poem to enjoy as a family.

Get cosy
Find a quiet spot and read the poem aloud together. Try taking turns, a line each.

Feel the rhythm
Clap or tap along as you read. Can you hear the beat in the words?

Talk about it
Who are the important people in your life? How do we all help each other?

Keep exploring
Borrow more of Benjamin Zephaniah's books from your local library.

A few minutes of reading together each day can spark big conversations.

