

# Online calendars for Archdeacon parents

## Introduction

One nice feature of our digitally-connected world is the ability to use smartphones to manage calendar information. Compared to a traditional paper diary there are both advantages and disadvantages, but one big plus is the ability to merge events from a number of different sources. For example: if you follow a football team you no longer need to copy the fixture list to your diary. Instead you subscribe to the calendar on the team's web site and from then on you automatically see fixtures in your own calendar.

Many parents already use digital calendars, so the PTA has been experimenting with making information about school events available in this way. The goal is that the calendars should be sufficiently comprehensive that at 8.15 on a school morning you never have to search through newsletters, emails and scraps of paper to find the key piece of information you need right now. We are now ready to announce this new service.

## How to use the calendars

We don't want parents to be swamped by information that is not relevant to their child, so each year group has its own calendar. You subscribe to one calendar for each child you have at the school, plus a whole-school calendar containing information for everybody.

The year group calendars have names which reflect the year your child started in Reception. So, for example, the *Archdeacon 2015 cohort* calendar is for parents of children who started Reception in 2015. No summer transitions are needed; when those children reach year 6 in 2021 the parents will still be subscribed to the same calendar.

You should be able to subscribe to the calendars from any calendar software, whether it is running on a mobile phone, a tablet or a computer. Exactly how you do this will vary from device to device, but in each case you should select the URLs you need from the following table.

<b>Calendar name</b>	<b>Year group in 2017/18</b>
<i>Archdeacon events</i> <a href="https://calendar.google.com/calendar/ical/events%40acpta.org.uk/public/basic.ics">https://calendar.google.com/calendar/ical/events%40acpta.org.uk/public/basic.ics</a>	<i>Whole school</i>
<i>Archdeacon 2018 cohort</i>	<i>Nursery</i>
<i>Archdeacon 2017 cohort</i>	<i>Reception</i>
<i>Archdeacon 2016 cohort</i>	<i>Year 1</i>
<i>Archdeacon 2015 cohort</i> <a href="https://calendar.google.com/calendar/ical/acpta.org.uk_ph2ji2cvor6c2cmrld9538k008%40group.calendar.google.com/public/basic.ics">https://calendar.google.com/calendar/ical/acpta.org.uk_ph2ji2cvor6c2cmrld9538k008%40group.calendar.google.com/public/basic.ics</a>	<i>Year 2</i>
<i>Archdeacon 2014 cohort</i>	<i>Year 3</i>
<i>Archdeacon 2013 cohort</i>	<i>Year 4</i>
<i>Archdeacon 2012 cohort</i> <a href="https://calendar.google.com/calendar/ical/acpta.org.uk_o5b8g3901bcm9athrv0aqjc7b4%40group.calendar.google.com/public/basic.ics">https://calendar.google.com/calendar/ical/acpta.org.uk_o5b8g3901bcm9athrv0aqjc7b4%40group.calendar.google.com/public/basic.ics</a>	<i>Year 5</i>
<i>Archdeacon 2011 cohort</i>	<i>Year 6</i>

## Hints for Android users

You need to subscribe to a calendar from a web browser, and this is easier if you do it from a computer rather than a phone or tablet.

1. Visit [calendar.google.com](https://calendar.google.com) and make sure you are logged in to your Google account
2. Next to "Other calendars" on the left, click the Down arrow ▾ .
3. Select **Add by URL**.
4. Paste the calendar's address into the field provided. The address needs to be an ICAL link, i.e. one ending in ".ics".
5. Click **Add Calendar**. The calendar will appear on the left side under "Other calendars."
6. Repeat for each calendar you wish to subscribe to.
7. Now wait a while (possibly up to 12 hours) and start the calendar app on your phone. Click the menu icon (three parallel lines) and ensure the calendars appear and are ticked.

## How to update the calendars

One (or possibly more) person is needed to edit the whole school calendar, and one volunteer is needed from each year group to edit the other calendars. These people don't need to be reps, but they need to be familiar with using online calendars. Ideally they should also be personally reliant on the calendars so that

they have a strong motivation to keep them accurate (e.g. if your child is the one who arrives at school in uniform on Mufti day it is a *tremendous* incentive to ensure the calendar is complete!).

Once you have volunteered to maintain a calendar you need a Google account; if you don't already have one then visit [google.co.uk](http://google.co.uk) and click *Sign In*. You then need to ask a PTA administrator to give your Google account write access to the appropriate calendar.

I'm going to describe accessing the calendar from a web browser, though you can use other software if you prefer.

1. Visit [google.co.uk](http://google.co.uk) and login.
2. Click the *Google Apps* icon (a grid of 9 squares) and select *Calendar*.
3. Click the arrow to the right of *Other calendars* and select *Add by URL*.
4. Paste in the URL of the calendar you have been granted permission to edit., then click *add calendar*. You can now add, modify or delete events from this calendar.
5. **IMPORTANT: always check the calendar name.** You do not want to accidentally put your personal events in the school calendar!

## Advice about calendar content

1. Remember that parents will typically see this calendar merged with other calendars, for example their own private calendar, or other school calendars. So it is helpful if the event title gives a hint about context; I suggest using a prefix like **ACY6**, **ACreception**, **ACnursery**.
2. The calendars are searchable by Google. So avoid giving out sensitive information about individuals, especially personal phone numbers or email addresses.
3. Include enough information so that the parent does not have to search through other sources of information. For example, a Mufti Day entry might say "Children should dress up as a polar bear and bring £1 for the Polar Bear Preservation charity".

## How the system works (background information)

### Hosting

The PTA uses Google to provide various services to the [acpta.org.uk](http://acpta.org.uk) domain, so it is natural to use Google to host our calendars. However there is no vendor lock-in: it would be a simple matter to export the calendars to ICAL files and then import them on a new provider.

The calendars are owned by the account [events@acpta.org.uk](mailto:events@acpta.org.uk), who delegates write access to maintainers.

### Annual management tasks

Towards the end of the summer term a new calendar needs to be created for the incoming cohort of children, and the table in this document updated correspondingly.

At the start of the autumn term:

1. Delete the Year 6 calendar from the preceding year.
2. Solicit volunteers to maintain the calendars.
3. Grant write access to the new maintainers and revoke unneeded access.

## **Backup**

It is useful to have regular backups of the calendars in case of accident. Currently I back them up to my home computer on a daily basis, but only if it is switched on (so not if I am on holiday). Ideally we would find some cloud-based automatic backup, though I am not sure how!

*Bob Vickers, 8 February 2018*