

St Mary's

Church of England Junior School

No: 13

13th March 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been a very busy half term so far, please do grab a cup of tea or coffee and take time to read all of the news we have to share!

Book Week last week was a great success with some lovely work being produced across the school. Each year group chose a picture book to lead their learning through the week; I hope that your children have talked about the books they studied.

Year 6 looked at 'The Barnabus Project' by Terry Fan, Eric Fan and Devin Fan - *In a world built for Perfect Pets, Barnabus is a Failed Project, half mouse, half elephant, kept out of sight until his dreams of freedom lead him and his misfit friends on a perilous adventure. A stunning picture book from New York Times bestselling creators The Fan Brothers, joined by their brother Devin Fan.*

In Year 5, pupils enjoyed sharing the book 'Nour's Secret Library' by Wafa' Tarnowska and Vali Mintzi - *Forced to take shelter when their Syrian city is plagued with bombings, young Nour and her cousin begin to bravely build a secret underground library. Based on the author's own life experience and inspired by a true story, Nour's Secret Library is about the power of books to heal, transport and create safe spaces during difficult times. Illustrations by Romanian artist Vali Mintzi superimpose the colourful world the children construct over black-and-white charcoal depictions of the battered city.*

Year 4 looked at 'Granny Came Here on the Empire Windrush' by Patrice Lawrence and Camilla Sucre - *This heart-warming and heartfelt debut picture book from multi-award-winning author, Patrice Lawrence, will help ensure that the struggles and achievements of the Windrush generation are never forgotten.*

Finally, the Year 3 classes all looked at 'Valentine's Guest House' by Sam Sharland- *When a tiger comes to stay at Valentine's guest house, the human visitors all check out in a rush. Luckily, the hotel soon starts to fill again - but with a very different collection of residents, all with new and differing needs. Elsie and Valentine make lots of changes to accommodate the new guests, and a very popular, accessible and unusual guest house results!*

As you can see all of the books chosen this year were selected to show diversity and inclusion, something we believe passionately about here at St Mary's and all of the children responded really well to the themes raised in the books.

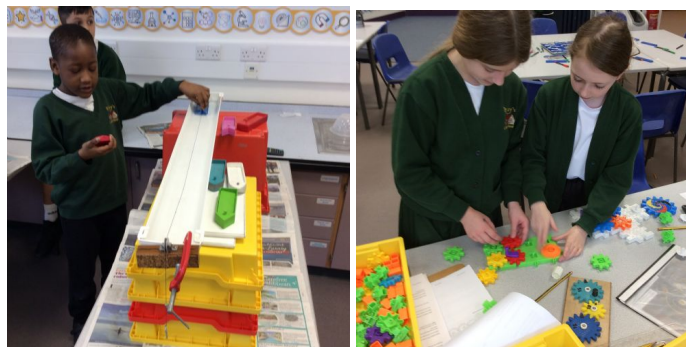
We thoroughly enjoyed seeing all of the fantastic wooden spoon book characters! There were some really creative ideas and the children enjoyed sharing them. We hope you had a look during parents evening at the wide range of characters! Could you guess who they were?

We all enjoyed our Book Week guess the teacher game - some of them were so hard! We hope you have enjoyed playing along at home, how many did your children correctly identify?

Last week year 4 enjoyed visiting the French Café! Thank you Madame Quick for organising this and thank you to the staff and pupils who came from the Costello School to help run the café. Thank you also to The Street Bakehouse and Tesco Chineham who provided the food and drinks for our café.



This week Year 5 have visited the QMC Science Centre to explore the topic of forces through investigations using gears, levers, air resistance, friction and water resistance. These visits help develop pupils' understanding of their science topics and they are able to use resources that we don't have in school.



It was lovely to see you all at Parents evening this week, please do contact your class teacher if you have any concerns over the final term of the year.

Basingstoke Music and Arts Festival

The School orchestra performed on Saturday 7th March at this annual event and also formed a string orchestra and wind band. The wind band and string orchestra achieved high grades and were "commended" and both were awarded trophies for these sections. Congratulations to all the children for playing their best, looking incredibly smart and making us all very proud.

Mrs Malone, Music Lead

Singing Festival

On Wednesday 11th March, we hosted a Singing festival for local schools. Alongside other school choirs including the Old Basing Infant School singing club, our junior and senior choirs took part. The event was lead by Charles Macdougall from ABRSM who is a professional singer and musical director who gave the children some excellent choral coaching as well as being incredibly captivating and inspiring. This event was run as part of our role as lead school for music within the county and it was great to showcase the music at our school and share our school choirs with other schools, as well as listen to them and learn from them.

Mrs Malone, Music Lead

Science Day

Science Day 2026: A Celebration of Curiosity and Discovery

Science Day was a fantastic opportunity for all pupils to immerse themselves in hands-on activities that showcased how science shapes the world around us. Our aim was to celebrate scientific thinking, spark curiosity, and help children recognise that science is not just something we learn in school, it's part of everyday life.

Throughout the day, children explored the achievements of influential scientists. They learned about well-known figures such as **Stephen Hawking** and **Leonardo da Vinci**, as well as equally important but less widely recognised pioneers like **Stephanie Kwolek**, inventor of Kevlar, and **Margaret Hamilton**, whose work was vital to the Apollo missions. These stories helped pupils see the diverse range of people who have contributed to science.

Each year group also took on a special investigation linked to real-world science:

- **Year 6** used chromatography to solve a *murder mystery*, analysing inks to identify the culprit.
- **Year 5** designed and launched *straw rockets*, exploring forces and aerodynamics.
- **Year 4** buried and later examined "*planting pants*" to investigate soil quality and decomposition.
- **Year 3** tested their *reaction times* with a lively "sheep herding" challenge.

We were delighted to welcome a number of volunteers who shared insights into their own careers and explained how science plays a role in their work. Their enthusiasm and generosity made a real impact, and we extend our warmest thanks to everyone who gave their time.

During the day, pupils took part in a tricky whole-school science quiz, which sparked plenty of debate and friendly competition.

Science Day was a wonderful reminder of how much our pupils enjoy exploring, questioning, and discovering!

Mr Rundle, Science Lead

Talk Point

Would you rather have the ability to speak every language in the world or be able to play every musical instrument perfectly? Why?

What ideas will you come up with? This week's discussion point encourages children to give reasons for their choices and encourages respectful disagreement!

Attendance

As of today the school's overall attendance stands at 97.5%.

Comic Relief 2026

Comic Relief is approaching!

On **Friday 20th March** we will be joining many others around the country to mark this day of fundraising. We will be raising money for Comic Relief by having a 'red dress-down day'. Please can everyone come to school wearing as much red as possible, but please no permanent hair dye – wash out spray is ok, in return for a donation to this great charity. A link to the Comic Relief/Red Nose Day just giving donation page will be sent out nearer the time.

Easter Raffle

Children can enter our annual Easter Egg Raffle from next Monday until Thursday 26th March to be in with a chance of winning an Easter treat which have all be kindly donated by the staff here at St Mary's! Tickets will cost 50p and will be available from the office at break time.

This has been enjoyed for the last two years and they have enjoyed using the playground equipment purchased with the money raised last Spring. All money raised will go towards replenishing small playground play equipment for us all to enjoy during the summer months!

The raffle will be drawn during our final assembly of the term on Friday 27th March.

Global Friends Day

To celebrate our partnership with our link school in Katakala, Uganda, we will be holding a fundraising non-uniform day on Wednesday 25th March. Children are invited to come to school wearing the colours of the Ugandan flag: red, yellow and black.

If you would like make a donation to support our link school, please use the following link:

https://www.justgiving.com/page/st-marys-ce-junior-school-old-basing-16?utm_medium=FR&utm_source=CL&utm_campaign=020

All money raised will go directly towards providing much-needed resources for the school in Katakala, and your generosity is greatly appreciated.

During the afternoon, each class will take part in a special activity linked to Uganda. Revd Canon Dodie Marsden Assistant Priest from St Peters, St Mary Bourne will lead our Act of Worship and will be visiting classes to see the children's learning and talk about her most recent trip to Uganda.

Thank you very much for your continued support and generosity.

Suki Gill and Molly Hill, Global Friends Coordinators

Sporting Success

There have been several sporting successes yet again over the past few weeks. The indoor athletics team represented the school against 24 other teams, competing for a space in the county finals. All twelve of them performed fantastically and won their category meaning they will represent Basingstoke at the finals. Our netball team picked up two wins to ensure they scrapped into the finals day which was held today at Russell Howard Park. In addition, the rugby team have started their fixtures and in the first round they won both their games. They performed extremely well and put into practice all their training. A big thank you to Mr Wheeler, a parent helper that comes in to support the rugby team. Lastly, the boys football team have managed to get through to a quarter final tie. They won all their games in the league, narrowly beating Rucstall in an up and down game before beating Chalk Ridge.

Thank you to all of you who support us in making sporting fixtures happen.

Mr Gibbs

Safeguarding

Please find attached to this newsletter our March parents safeguarding newsletter.

The conflict in Iran and the Middle East is currently making headlines, which our children may encounter and be upset or worried by. As adults, we can find ways to reassure these concerns and hold productive and reflective conversations about what's happening in the world. When explaining war to a child, you may find they feel worried or anxious about what they've seen or heard. UNICEF have put together some tips

to help you talk to children about what's happening in places like Gaza, and numerous countries throughout the Middle East affected by escalating conflict, Ukraine, as well as other regions where children are affected by war and violence. These may help you support the children you are talking to through these difficult times.

[Talking to Kids About War and Conflict | UNICEF UK](#)

End of term Church visits

You are welcome to join us at our end of term church visits on Friday 27th March. Classes will visit church at the following times. Please contact the school office if you are able to help walk down to church with your child's class.

09:15am – Russell, White, Paulet, Dickens

10:00am – Nightingale, Brunel, Nelson, Austen

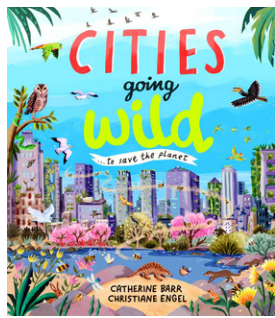
11:00am – Davies, Mitchell, Wellington, Conan Doyle

New book recommendations

Scare B'n'B

by Catherine Doyle, illustrated by Rachael Dean

Can step-siblings Ted and Frankie stop a house full of ghosts from scaring everyone away? Packed with action, ghostly antics and humour, this is a super-fun story centring a blended family. (9 to 14 years)



Cities Going Wild

by Catherine Barr, illustrated by Christiane Engel

Discover the world's greenest cities in this inspiring non-fiction book, which is stunningly illustrated. (7 to 11 years)

Governors' Corner

You may have seen the recent OFSTED report that commended the school for the wide range of trips and visits that bring learning to life. The report also recognised how well the school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain.

I recently had the opportunity to support Year 5 spending time at Old Basing Nursery, a trip that had been postponed due to the wet and miserable weather in December. The pupils were excited for their "adventure". After pulling on wellies or outdoor shoes for their muddy woodland walk, they set off together. Arriving at the nursery a short time later, staff greeted them and gave advice of how to approach the younger pre-school age children, many of whom had little experience of playing with older pupils. In the main room, they quickly divided into small groups and joined the younger children for activities such as pretend tea parties, racing cars, looking at picture books, colouring, doing puzzles, and building with bricks. All the children seemed to enjoy each other's company, playing happily together as they moved between the different activities.

The mixed play allowed all the St Mary's School pupils to problem-solve and use their creativity and skills. Meanwhile, the younger nursery children observed and copied the older ones. As they played together, they were building relationships between children who had not met before. The visit gave them all a chance to practice communication, empathy and co-operation in a real-life setting, life-skills essential for navigating all relationships and quite a different experience from participation in on-line games and challenges!

The visit was a great example of how the school teaches Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) in practical and imaginative ways, preparing children for opportunities in adult life and support their moral, social, mental, and physical development. It was clearly a wonderful experience for all concerned!

Karen Ashton, Foundation Governor

F.O.O.B.S. News

We're getting excited for the Easter Fair which is next Saturday and hope the children are looking forward to all the activities we have planned. Many thanks to everyone who brought in donations for the Chocolate Tombola, please feel free to bring any in on Monday, if you weren't able to bring them in today.

If anyone is able to supply baked goods (homemade or shop bought) for the refreshments stall, please bring in to the infant school on Friday 20th or simply bring with you when you attend the fair! (Ingredients lists please for the homemade items and strictly no nuts of any kind please)

The FOOBS Trail and Fun Run returns again this October, inviting runners of all ages and abilities to enjoy a scenic and friendly trail running experience on the outskirts of Old Basing. Entries are currently open, please head to the F.O.O.B.S. website <https://foobs.weebly.com/> to secure your place.

Old Basing Schools Coffee Mornings

Parent and Carer Coffee Mornings

Our half-termly coffee mornings are an opportunity for parents to get together, share ideas and challenges over a cup of coffee (and biscuits!)

Mrs Medlin (our SENCo) and Mrs Thompson (OBI SENCo) will be attending alongside the Primary Behaviour Service.

Meet us 9am to 10.30am on:

25th March

20th May

8th July



Gemma Lillywhite
Headteacher

Dates for your Diary

17th March - Year 5 Church visit (parents welcome) 1:30pm

18th March – Year 3 Roman Drama Day

20th March – Red Nose Day – Dress down day (wear something red)

21st March – F.O.O.B.S Easter Fair

25th March – Parent & Carer coffee morning 09:00-10:30am

25th March – Global Friends Day (non-uniform, wear something red, yellow & black)

26th March – Austen class sharing assembly 2:45pm

27th March – End of term church visits:

- 09:15 am – Russell, White, Paulet, Dickens
- 10:00 am – Nightingale, Brunel, Nelson, Austen
- 11:00 am – Davies, Mitchell, Wellington, Conan Doyle

30th March – 10th April – Easter Holidays

13th April – First Day Back – start of Summer term

w/c 13th April – Summer term after school clubs start this week

16th April – Mitchell class sharing assembly 2:45pm

20th April – Austen Class to Gilbert White House & Gardens

22nd April – Conan Doyle and Dickens Class to Gilbert White House & Gardens

23rd April - Nelson class sharing assembly 2:45pm

24th April – F.O.O.B.S Year 4 Disco 5:00-6:30pm

30th April - Conan Doyle class sharing assembly 2:45pm

4th May – Bank Holiday Monday

11th-14th May 2026 Year 6 SATs tests

12th May - Year 4 Church visit (parents welcome) 1:30pm

20th May – Parent & Carer coffee morning 09:00-10:30

22nd May – INSET Day (School closed to pupils)

25th – 29th May – Half Term

1st-12th June 2026 Year 4 Multiplication Tests

4th June – Sports Day

5th June – White Class to Gordon Brown Centre

8th June – Mitchell Class to Gordon Brown Centre

8th June – Year 3 to QMC (Class TBC)

9th June - Year 3 to QMC (Class TBC)

10th June – Brunel class to Gordon Brown Centre

12th June – Reserve Sports Day

16th June – Class Photos (whole Y6 photo on 18th June)

16th June - Year 3 Church visit (parents welcome) 1:30pm

18th June – Whole Year 6 Photo

18th June – Year 4 trip to Ufton Court

24th June – Year 5 trip to Costello

24th June – Year 6 Diocese Leavers Service – Winchester Cathedral

30th June - Year 5 Church visit (parents welcome) 1:30pm

8th July – Parent & Carer coffee morning 09:00-10:30

5th July – F.O.O.B.S Summer Fair

13th -16th July – Year 6 Show Week

17th July – Family Picnic, joint with Old Basing Infants

20th July – Year 6 Leavers Service - St Mary's Church

21st July – Year 6 Leavers Party

22nd July – End of term Church Visits – times TBC

22nd July – Last Day of term