

St Mary & St John CE Primary School

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Headteacher: Rebekah Stott



Friday 31st January 2025

Dear St Mary & St John Parents and Carers,

ARTS EDITION

As you may be aware, we were awarded the **Gold Artsmark** by the Arts Council in December. This is not a small achievement by any means; we are the only primary school in our local partnership who hold this award.

We are incredibly passionate about the arts, believing them to provide children with a creative outlet to explore and express their emotions. They can help to build resilience and develop social skills, while promoting cultural awareness and understanding. For many children the arts boost academic achievement by helping children to access learning in a creative way. We know that the arts help to improve mental health and wellbeing, something we are very passionate about at St Mary & St John.



To celebrate all we have achieved, I wanted to take this opportunity to share some of the great things we are doing in school to promote engagement in the arts, and to develop well rounded learners in school. Next step? To keep the arts going strong, and maybe...just maybe...to start building towards the platinum award in 3 years' time!



ART & DESIGN

Our art specialists, Sarah Blackwell and Ali Moreton, introduced a new art curriculum based on Access Art's resources. This has helped us to provide lively, authentic and interesting art lessons and introduced our children to a wide range of artists from across the world. Our aim is to give our children the skills and confidence to create experimental, thoughtful and individual outcomes. The photos above show the broad range of art media we introduce the children to, from paint to tie-dye, mosaics and sewing.



DANCE

We LOVE to dance at Mary & John and will take any opportunity to spin and strike a pose! Recently, fifty-two children have diligently given up their lunch times to learn a dance to represent our school in the Oxfordshire Schools Dance Festival. They gave a fabulous performance on Monday at the New Theatre! Mrs Rani's Bollywood Club is also very popular. In the summer, we will once again attempt a whole school dance on the field, involving every child in a unique way.



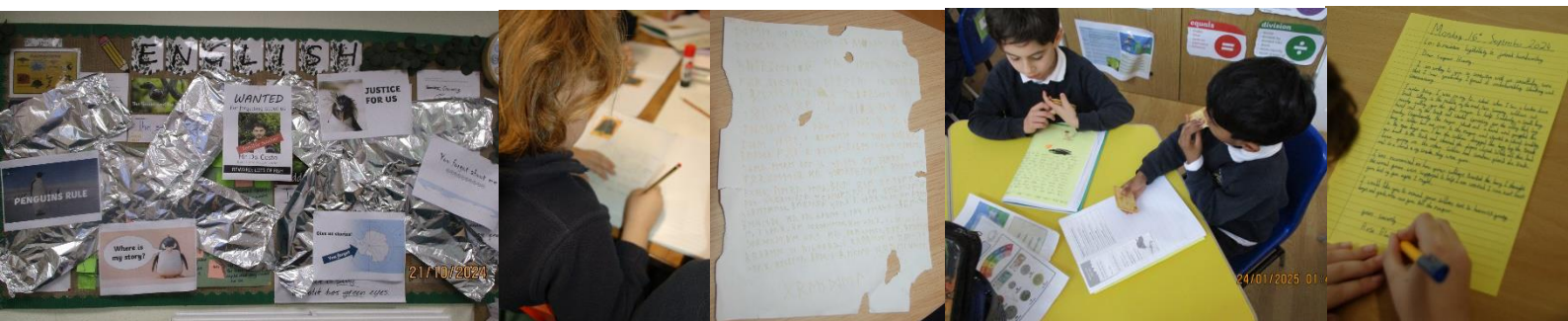
MUSIC

Each class spends at least an hour per week learning musical skills. In Year 2, every child is given a recorder to keep as they learn to play (I'm never sure if parents see this as a gift or not!). Years 3 and 6 are learning to play the ukulele as part of our Whole Class Ensemble Teaching curriculum offer. Mrs Godby's recorder club is ever popular and the choir is in constant demand with 'gigs' already booked for The Big Summer Sing and Festival of Voices. Additionally, more than 75 co-curricular peripatetic music lessons take place across the week with all orchestral families represented, as well as piano, voice and guitar. Once a term, we rock out at the iRock concert where bands made up of children from different year groups perform to the whole school. Perhaps unsurprisingly, we have been awarded the Music Mark in recognition of our commitment to providing a high-quality musical education for all children.



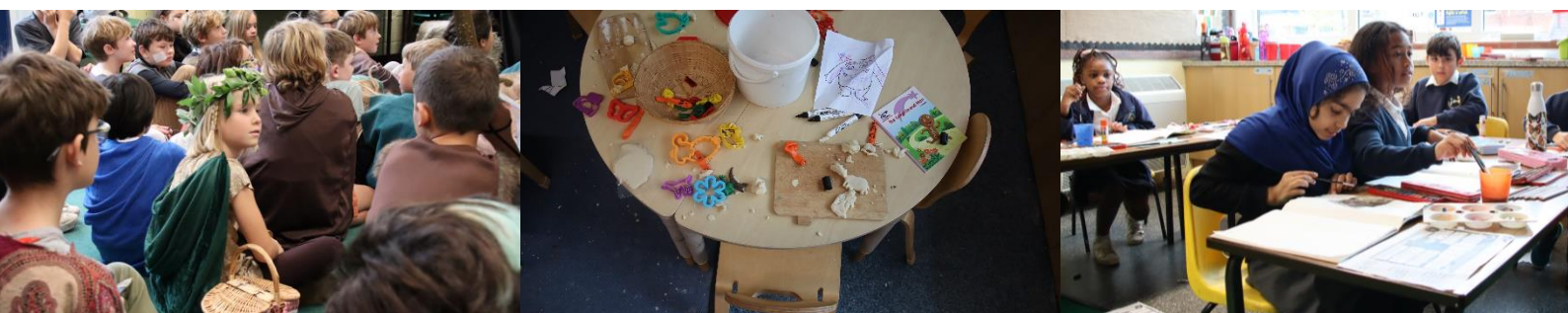
DRAMA

Drama is integral in many English lessons, hooking the children into their learning and enabling them to explore key themes and aspects of text in class. It helps to make learning memorable and bring it to life. From the nativities in Reception and Key Stage 1, to the Key Stage 2 performances of a Midsummer Night's Dream and Robin Hood, all our children have multiple performance opportunities throughout their learning journey with us. Years 3 and 4 will be treading the boards next term in a performance of Hoodwinked. St Mary & St John children leave us having built confidence and key speaking and listening skills.



CREATIVE WRITING

We are incredibly lucky that our children are a captive audience with brilliant imaginations and a real desire to explore and express themselves creatively. Children in Year 4 recently wrote letters in character, and some went as far as to translate these letters into runes! In the older years, we have some excellent authors who can transport their reader to another world. It is a privilege to watch our children take the skills they have been taught and craft another world to escape to.





WORKING WITH LOCAL ARTISTS

With Ali Moreton as Artist in Residence at school, our children really have learned from the best. Although Jo Acty is no longer on our site, we continue to tap into her expertise too. There are some beautiful installation mosaics in the courtyard which Year 5 children collaborated on with Jo. Tom Hunter visited from Magdalen College School to do clay work with our children, and Lisa Curtis and Mani visited as part of the Year 6 street art project. The Year 6 children went on a tour of the local area, exploring Art in Action last year and produced some inspiring artwork as a result. As a 'Spellbound' school, we also work closely with The Story Museum, who have delivered training to staff and workshops for the children. They have really sparked creativity in the children they have worked with. We are continuing to work with local artists, and welcome all opportunities!

PHOTOGRAPHY

World Art Day Photography Exhibition

World Art Day is celebrated on April 15th to remember Leonardo da Vinci's birthday and symbolise the global significance of art. Art comes in different forms, from masterpieces in galleries, and buildings on the streets, to paintings, traditional crafts, sculpture and photography being just a few examples.

This Year we would like to celebrate this special day by encouraging you to take photos based on the theme of 'Our Community'. Please email your photos to the office or even better, bring in a paper copy and give to Ms Blackwell with your name and class on the back. There will be an exhibition of all the work in the parent area.

Ideas: Artwork in our community, buildings, events, people and places.

Closing date- Friday 24th March

Note- if you are taking photos of people make sure they are happy to be photographed and used in a display in school.



IN OTHER NEWS...

27 January 2025

Oxford's St Mary and St John CE Primary School invests in energy efficient classrooms



Solar Power is Go!

We are thrilled to announce that our 130 solar panels are up, ready and producing solar energy! This investment is a huge move towards reducing our carbon footprint. In the first few days alone, the panels have produced more energy than we have consumed, which is great news! We have also invested in battery storage, so we are able to store unused renewable energy, and sell any excess back to the grid. This helps reduce the reliance of non-renewable energy sources, such as fossil fuels. We plan to share our energy production figures with the children on a regular basis, educating them about sustainable energy.

Astronaut Furniss

We had a special space-themed assembly this week. Jake Motion from House of Fun UK was joined by local company Space Store to showcase what they offer to the children. They were really enthused to meet Steve, a real-life space engineer! And even more excited to see Mr Furniss dress up in an astronaut suit! House of Fun are running space themed holiday camps during February half term. Get in touch via their website if you'd like to sign up!





Activity Clubs

We offer a huge variety of Activity Clubs after school. In Debating Club, the children are learning great communication skills, confidence in speaking, and critical thinking skills. In Bollywood Club, they exercise and improve coordination, whilst having lots of fun! In Outdoor Learning Club, the children helped to check our newly planted trees, adjusting the stakes and checking they're healthy. What a fun way to gain some great life skills! We prioritise places for Pupil Premium children, and children who are Young Carers. Get in touch with the office if you'd like more information.

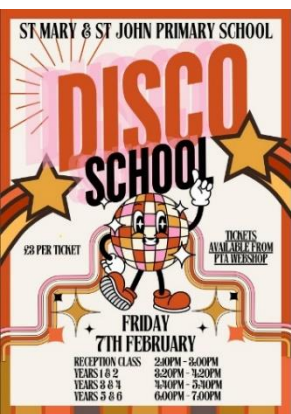
Outdoor Learning

Year 5 started Outdoor Learning this week. The main task was to build a shelter using tarpaulin, rope and natural resources. The children worked together in their groups creating wonderful, waterproof shelters. While the children were inside their shelter, Mr Courtney (our Forest School Lead) poured water all over their shelter to test if they were fit for purpose. Mr Courtney said: 'I'm afraid to say all the children stayed dry and did an amazing job following advice and staying watertight. We'll get them next time!'



Disco time!

We are thrilled to invite you to this year's School Disco, taking place on Friday, 7th February! Building on the success of last year, we'll be hosting all year group discos on one exciting evening.



Reception: 2:10pm – 3:00pm
 Years 1 & 2: 3:20pm – 4:20pm
 Years 3 & 4: 4:40pm – 5:40pm
 Years 5 & 6: 6:00pm – 7:00pm

Tickets cost £3 and are available from the PTA Web shop: <https://maryjohnpta.squarespace.com/> Please don't let finances be a reason not to attend...speak to the office and we will arrange a ticket for your child.

Parents modelling a love of the arts!

You will have received a Parent Pay earlier in the week, from a group of parents who are modelling a love of the arts! On March 22nd a group of professional actors and musicians (many of whom will seem strangely familiar to you) will be taking over the school hall to perform a cabaret all about the wild ride that it is being a parent. All ticket proceeds will be split between SSMJ and Helen and Douglas. More information on the right.

Please do come along and support this venture. Be there, or be square...

Wishing you and your families a lovely weekend!
 With best wishes,

Rex Spitt

Headteacher

and the St Mary & St John Team

SAT 22 MARCH, 7.30PM PARENTHOOD A CABARET OF CHAOS ST MARY & ST JOHN'S SCHOOL

An evening of rude and rowdy entertainment celebrating and commiserating the utterly baffling experience of parenting.

Featuring scenes, songs and poems from a motley assortment of professional actors and singers. Grab your ticket now before all the babysitters get booked.

In aid of Helen and Douglas House and SSMJ School

Tickets: £15
www.chippingnortontheatre.com/events/parenthood
 Box Office: parenthoodthecabaret@gmail.com

BOOK TICKETS HERE



STRICTLY NO CHILDREN ALLOWED!



St Mary and St John
 Church of England Primary School
'Let all that you do be done in love...'
 1 Corinthians 16:14

Helen & Douglas House
 your local children's hospice



**Artsmark
 Gold Award**
 Awarded by Arts
 Council England

Let all that you do be done in love...

1 Corinthians 16:14



At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO DEVELOP EMOTIONAL LITERACY

Emotional literacy refers to the ability to recognise, understand and express our feelings effectively. It plays a crucial role in strengthening a child's wellbeing by enhancing their relationships and resilience. However, emotional literacy is not necessarily an innate talent, and its development may present challenges. This guide gives parents and educators practical tips on supporting children to cultivate this essential skill.

1 NAME THE EMOTION

Encourage children to identify and name their emotions. This helps them understand what they're feeling and why. Use simple language and relatable examples to make it easier for them to share their emotions. This builds a foundation for emotional understanding and open communication.

2 MODEL EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

Demonstrate healthy emotional expression by sharing your feelings visibly. When children see adults properly displaying how they're doing and what they're thinking, they learn to do the same. Discuss how you handle emotions in different circumstances, providing a real-life framework for young ones to follow.

3 MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES

Teach children mindfulness practices to help them stay present and manage their emotions during more challenging moments. Activities like deep breathing, meditation or yoga can reduce stress and enhance emotional regulation. Regular practice can improve focus and emotional stability, which can significantly help children both as they're growing up and throughout their adult life.

4 USE STORYTELLING

Incorporate storytelling to help children understand emotions. Stories can offer relevant scenarios illustrating how the characters experience and manage their feelings. Discuss the emotions depicted in stories and ask children how they might feel in similar situations.

5 PRACTISE EMPATHY

Teach children to consider others' views and emotions – and to explore why they might think or feel this way. Role-playing and discussing various scenarios can enhance their ability to empathise. Understanding others' emotions helps children to develop compassion and improves their social interactions.

6 ENCOURAGE JOURNALING

Suggest keeping a journal to make note of thoughts and emotions, as writing can provide an outlet for self-reflection and emotional processing. Encourage children to write about their daily experiences and feelings, helping them gain insight into their emotional world. Do this alongside them, so they can see and experience how to do it effectively.

7 TEACH PROBLEM-SOLVING

Do what you can to help children develop problem-solving skills to assist in managing emotional challenges. Discuss potential solutions to emotional conflicts and encourage them to think critically about what they (and others) can do to process their feelings in a healthy way. This empowers children to handle emotions positively and build resilience.

8 CREATE A SAFE SPACE

Establish an environment where children feel safe to display their emotions without judgement. Encourage open exchanges and reassure them that all feelings are valid. This supportive atmosphere promotes trust and encourages children to express themselves with confidence.

9 USE VISUAL AIDS

Take advantage of visual aids like emotion charts or mood meters to help children identify and express their feelings. Use these tools regularly in your interactions. They provide a visual representation of emotions, making it easier for children to communicate their emotional state.

10 CELEBRATE EMOTIONAL GROWTH

Acknowledge and celebrate progress in emotional literacy, and praise children for expressing their emotions and handling them effectively. Positive reinforcement is a useful tool that will encourage continued growth and reinforces the importance of emotional literacy – encouraging young people to maintain the good habits and healthy behaviours that you've taught them.

Meet Our Expert

Adam Gillett is Associate Vice-Principal for Personal Development at Penistone Grammar School and works on secondment one day a week for Minds Ahead, an organisation that supports schools in improving their mental health provision.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

Friendlier February: Wellbeing Segment

We are a day early with the wellbeing calendar this month, but we wanted to share it so that you can access it over the weekend, once February has begun. For more information, please visit <https://actionforhappiness.org/friendly-february> where you can click on each day for more activities and ideas!

Friendly February 2025

MONDAY



TUESDAY



WEDNESDAY



THURSDAY



FRIDAY



SATURDAY

SUNDAY

3 Do an act of kindness to make life easier for someone

4 Invite a friend over for a 'tea break' (in person or virtual)

5 Make time to have a friendly chat with a neighbour

6 Get back in touch with an old friend you've not seen for a while

7 Show an active interest by asking questions when talking to others

8 Share what you're feeling with someone you really trust

9 Thank someone and tell them how they made a difference for you

10 Look for good in others, particularly when you feel frustrated with them

11 Send an encouraging note to someone who needs a boost

12 Focus on being kind rather than being right

13 Smile at the people you see and brighten their day

14 Tell a loved one or friend why they are special to you

15 Support a local business with a positive online review or friendly message

16 Check in on someone who may be struggling and offer to help

17 Appreciate the good qualities of someone in your life

18 Respond kindly to everyone you talk to today, including yourself

19 Share something you find inspiring, helpful or amusing

20 Make a plan to connect with others and do something fun

21 Really listen to what people say, without judging them

22 Give sincere compliments to people you talk to today

23 Be gentle with someone who you feel inclined to criticise

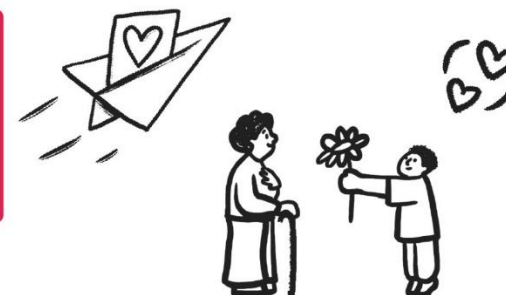
24 Tell a loved one about the strengths that you see in them

25 Thank three people you feel grateful to and tell them why

26 Make uninterrupted time for your loved ones

27 Call a friend to catch up and really listen to them

28 Give positive comments to as many people as possible today



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together

2024					2025						
August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
1 Th	1 Su	1 Tu	1 Fr	1 Su	1 We New Year's Day	1 Sa	1 Sa	1 Tu	1 Th	1 Su	1 Tu
2 Fr	2 Mo INSET	2 We	2 Sa	2 Mo	2 Th	2 Su	2 Su	2 We	2 Fr Y5 Learning Exhibition	2 Mo INSET	2 We
3 Sa	3 Tu INSET	3 Th Y6 Steam Y5 I.F	3 Su	3 Tu	3 Fr	3 Mo	3 Mo	3 Th	3 Sa	3 Tu Term 6 starts	3 Th
4 Su	4 We Term 1 Starts	4 Fr INSET	4 Mo Term 2 starts Assessment week	4 We	4 Sa	4 Tu	4 Tu	4 Fr Term 4 Ends	4 Su	4 We	4 Fr
5 Mo	5 Th	5 Sa	5 Tu	5 Th	5 Su	5 We	5 We	5 Sa	5 Mo Early May	5 Th	5 Sa
6 Tu	6 Fr	6 Su	6 We	6 Fr Y2 SA Panto	6 Mo INSET	6 Th	6 Th	6 Su	6 Tu	6 Fr	6 Su
7 We	7 Sa	7 Mo	7 Th	7 Sa	7 Term 3 starts	7 Fr	7 F Y3 Learning Exhibition	7 Mo	7 We	7 Sa	7 Mo
8 Th	8 Su	8 Tu	8 Fr	8 Su	8 We	8 Sa	8 Sa	8 Tu	8 Th	8 Su	8 Tu
9 Fr	9 Mo	9 Mental Health Awareness day	9 Sa	9 Mo	9 Th	9 Su	9 Su	9 We	9 Fr	9 Mo	9 We
10 Sa	10 Tu	10 Y5 Viking Day	10 Su	10 Nat Dress rehearsal	10 Fr	10 Mo	10 Mo	10 Th	10 Sa	10 Tu	10 Th
11 Su	11 We	11 Fr	11 Mo	11 Panto YR Nativity	11 Sa	11 Tu	11 Tu	11 Fr	11 Su	11 We	11 Fr Y3 Learning exhibition
12 Mo	12 Th	12 Sa	12 Tu	12 Th Panto 1/2	12 Su	12 We	12 We	12 Sa	12 Mo Y6 SATS	12 Th	12 Sa
13 Tu	13 Fr	13 Su	13 We	13 Fr Church Nativity	13 Mo	13 Th	13 Th	13 Su	13 Tu	13 Fr Y1 Sharing Assembly	13 Su
14 We	14 Sa	14 Mo Parent consulta	14 Th	14 Sa	14 Tu	14 Fr Term 3 ends	14 Fr Y2 Sharing Assembly	14 Mo	14 We	14 Sa	14 Mo
15 Th	15 Su	15 Tu	15 Fr	15 Su	15 We	15 Sa	15 Sa	15 Tu	15 Th Y5 Hill End	15 Su	15 Tu
16 Fr	16 Mo	16 We Parent consultation	16 Sa	16 Mo	16 Th	16 Su	16 Su	16 We	16 Fr Residential Y4	16 Mo	16 We
17 Sa	17 Tu	17 Th	17 Su	17 Tu	17 Y6 Learning Exhibition	17 Mo	17 Mo Parent consults	17 Th	17 Sa	17 Tu	17 Th
18 Su	18 We	18 Fr Y4 Learning Exhibition	18 Mo	18 We	18 Sa	18 Tu	18 Tu	18 Fr Good Friday	18 Su	18 We	18 Fr
19 Mo	19 Th	19 Sa	19 Tu	19 Th	19 Su	19 We	19 We Parent Consultation	19 Sa	19 Y6 Woodlands	19 Th	19 Sa
20 Tu	20 Fr Y6 Learning Exhibition	20 Su	20 We	20 Fr Term 2 ends	20 Mo	20 Th	20 Th	20 Su	20 Tu	20 Fr	20 Su
21 We	21 Sa	21 Mo Assessment	21 Th	21 Sa	21 Tu	21 Fr	21 Fr	21 Mo Easter Monday	21 We	21 Sa	21 Mo Y6 Leavers Assembly
22 Th	22 Su	22 Tu Y5 Bikeability	22 Fr Y3 Learning Exhibition	22 Su	22 We	22 Sa	22 Sa	22 Tu Term 5 Starts	22 Th	22 Su	22 Tu Term 6 ends
23 Fr	23 Mo	23 We Individual photos	23 Sa	23 Mo	23 Th	23 Su	23 Su	23 We	23 Fr Term 5 Ends	23 Mo	23 We
24 Sa	24 Tu	24 Th	24 Su	24 Tu	24 Y1 Sharing Assembly	24 Mo Term 4 Starts	24 Mo	24 Th	24 Sa	24 Tu	24 Th
25 Su	25 We	25 Fr Term 1 ends	25 Mo	25 Christmas Day	25 Sa	25 Tu Assessment Week	25 Tu	25 Fr	25 Su	25 We	25 Fr
26 Mo August Bk Hol	26 Y3 Stone Age Day	26 Sa	26 Tu	26 Boxing Day	26 Su	26 We	26 We	26 Sa	26 Mo Spring Bk Hol	26 Th	26 Sa
27 Tu	27 Fr	27 Su	27 We	27 Fr	27 Mo	27 Th	27 Th	27 Su	27 Tu	27 Fr Y2 Sharing Assembly	27 Su
28 We	28 Sa	28 Mo	28 Th	28 Sa	28 Tu	28 Fr	28 Fr	28 Mo	28 We	28 Sa	28 Mo
29 Th	29 Su	29 Tu	29 Fr	29 Su	29 We		29 Sa	29 Tu	29 Th	29 Su	29 Tu
30 Fr	30 Mo	30 We	30 Sa	30 Mo	30 Th		30 Su	30 We	30 Fr	30 Mo	30 We
31 Sa		31 Th		31 Tu	31 Fr Y5 Learning Exhibition		31 Mo		31 Sa		31 Th



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Church of England Primary School
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Calendar 24-25