

2024-25

Nativity Performances

The Infants wowed us this week with their two nativity performances (plus a dress rehearsal for the Juniors) in their special show "A little bird told me".

Along with the traditional angels, shepherds, sheep and wise men we had an array of different birds, camels and a donkey.

The songs were catchy, the dancing was very impressive and we were treated to a series of gags which wouldn't have been out of place in an open mic show!

The narrators read the script beautifully and each class excelled at their roles. Everyone felt extremely Christmassy afterwards too.

Many thanks to all parents and carers for all the help with the wonderful costumes and well done to the infant staff for yet again producing a fabulous Nativity for us all to enjoy.

Mrs Fredrickson (Deputy HT)



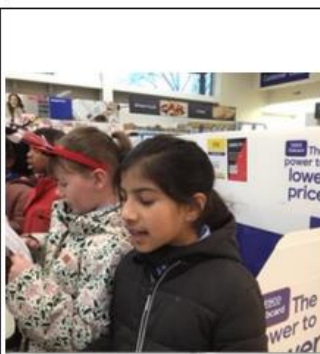
Dental nurse workshop

Year 4 were so lucky to bring their Science topic (the digestive system) alive! We explored foods that are not good for our teeth; how to brush our teeth; the purpose and names of our different teeth and we even investigated how acidic different drinks were. We were surprised that sugar free drinks can still damage our teeth because of the bubbles! We were especially thrilled with the most incredible goodie bag filled with wonderful things to take home. A huge thank you to Cheltenham & Cotswold Dental Surgery for their support- we learnt so much. Mrs Crowley



Chaplaincy carol performances

Our Chaplaincy team brought festive cheer to the shoppers and staff at Tesco, Churchdown on Tuesday afternoon. The children (led by Miss Payne and Mr Wadley) performed a range of carols in store and received a really warm reception. It was lovely to see the shoppers' faces brighten as they entered the store and heard the children singing.



Ukulele concert

Year 4 have been learning the ukulele for the past few months (under the expert guidance of Mr Kempner of Gloucestershire Music). On Tuesday, the class showed off their newly acquired skills via a concert for an audience of parents and fellow pupils. The children performed a number of pieces (of various styles) and really impressed us with their musical skills!



The **school choir** visited the sheltered accommodation of Bromford Housing to share some Christmas carols (and festive cheer). The staff and residents were delighted and the children really put a smile on everyone's face.



Netball

St Mary's played their third league game of the season yesterday. Our opponents were Longlevens, who we knew would be a tough team to defeat. We started off very well thanks to a goal from Dylan and sterling defence work from Paisley. In the second quarter Solomon ran his socks off but Longlevens inched ahead with two goals (and would have scored more had it not been for Betty's close marking and Lyla fighting for every ball).

It remained extremely close and even though Longlevens scored a further brace of goals, we were very dangerous in attack, with Annabelle getting forward and Zoe intercepting lots of Longlevens passes. We were 4-1 down with one quarter to go and we came out raring to go!

Paisley and Dylan dominated the game, with Dylan scoring two goals plus nearly levelling the match in the dying minutes. Final score 3-4 to Longlevens, but a cracking game nonetheless!

Team: Solomon, Annabelle, Dylan, Paisley, Lyla, Betty, Zoe

Players' player: Dylan Managers' Player: Betty



TechniQuest Trip

Last Friday, Years 5 & 6 travelled to the TechniQuest science discovery centre <https://www.techniquest.org/>. Both classes had an amazing time and really broadened their scientific horizons through the range of interactive exhibits available. It was lovely to see the children so engaged, enthused and making the most of this great opportunity. Thank you to all the parent helpers who accompanied the classes for the trip.



TechniQuest Trip

Last Friday, Years 3 & 4 travelled to TechniQuest <https://www.techniquest.org/>. Techniquest is a science Discovery Centre in Cardiff Bay with two floors of hands-on interactive exhibits, a science theatre, planetarium, and a lab. The children were wowed and had a truly enlightening and engaging experience. Thank you to all our parent helpers and to Sheridan Hendzel (parent of Sephora & Sully) who successfully applied for the funding that paid for the large majority of the trip costs (including today's Year 5 & 6 trip).



Music Mark Award

We are delighted to have been awarded Music Mark status for 2024-25!

This is in recognition of the importance we place on Music throughout the school and the opportunities we provide for children to engage in Music, giving us validation that we are giving our children the richest experience possible.

The music offer at St Mary's extends well beyond the excellent music lessons. Our provision encompasses whole class and individual instrument sessions, choir performances, singing for Masses and liturgies, competitions and community events. We are fully committed to ensuring that your child enjoys a comprehensive and inspiring musical experience across their primary school years.

Miss Reed (Music Leader)



Phonics workshop

Last week Mrs Marsh and Mrs Fredrickson delivered a parent workshop focussing upon phonics and early reading. Thank you very much to all the parents who participated in the session and put their phonics teaching hats on! A copy of the presentation can be viewed and downloaded via <https://www.st-marys-churchdown.gloucs.sch.uk/perch/resources/phonics-reading-workshop-nov-24.pdf>



Water Safety assembly

The swimming team from Tewkesbury Leisure Centre delivered an assembly (on Thursday) focussing upon the dangers of floodwater and how to respond to different situations involving flooding. The children were really interested, had some great ideas and lot of questions for our visitors!



Class mass

Year 4 read, sang and participated beautifully in this week's class mass. Thank you to Fr. Paul for bringing mass to school once again and to all the parents and friends who were able to join us.



Year 3 seasonal tarts

The class made their very own INDIVIDUAL (!) puff pastry tarts, this week. The toppings had to be selected from a range of British seasonal fruits and vegetables. The children showed great culinary skills and were very proud of their delicious products (albeit that there were an eclectic mix of different flavours to be savoured! Blackberry, lettuce and sweetcorn anyone?)



Girls' football

St Mary's fell 4-1 to Abbeymead in a tough game, but there were plenty of valuable lessons to take away. Throughout the game, we learnt about being more physical, using space effectively, and closing down the opposition quicker.

The first half was a little flat, but the team picked up their intensity in the second half, highlighted by an incredible goal from Paisley!

Danielle stood out for the opposition, breaking down several of Abbeymead's attacks. Coach's Player of the Match went to Betty, who worked tirelessly in defence, never giving up on a tackle. Despite the loss, the team showed great spirit and determination!



Medical student workshops

The second of our series of class workshops, led by medical students from the University of Bristol, took place last week. Year 6 learned all about the functions of the heart and participated in a practical session to model how the circulatory system operates. Reception class held their own teddy bear hospital - a delightful session that the children absolutely loved.



Mini-Police initiative

Year 5 had the best afternoon learning about the role of the police with PCSO Tracey on Tuesday. They learnt about the many things the police do including: the different roles within the police force, how they communicate and how they solve crimes. The children loved working out their names using the phonetic alphabet and trying on some of the protective uniform.

The children took a pledge to become mini police and will be taking their new roles very seriously by helping out around school and the community alongside Tracey over the school year.



Medical student talks

Year 3 and Year 4 classes were visited by medical students from the University of Bristol. The students are studying under Dr Ciaran Conway (parent of Seb & Harry and guest speaker) and the visit provided an opportunity to share some of their learning with the pupils at St Mary's. The brief for each class was different - linked to the curriculum studies. In Year 3 the focus was the human skeleton whilst in Year 4 the digestive system was the subject of study.

The students prepared talks, practical demonstrations and activities for the children to complete (which the pupils really enjoyed and stimulated a wide spectrum of challenging questions for our visitors).

In October, Reception and Year 6 classes have their own visitors who will tackle the subject matter of the human circulatory system and host a teddy bear hospital (I'm sure you can work out which class is which!).

Many thanks to the students for their time, preparation and excellent delivery (and to Dr Conway for organising the visits).



Offsite visit

Year 4 had a wonderful day exploring life as a Roman. Not only did we look at and hold artefacts that were 2000 years old, but we investigated a series of clues to work out the life of deceased Romans! We dressed up, played Roman games, explored their houses and food and created mosaics. Such a fantastic way to find out more about our new topic. Great work Year 4!



Ukulele sessions

In Year 4, we have just started ten weeks of ukulele lessons (through the outreach service from Gloucestershire Music). The children will receive direct tuition from a specialist music teacher (and learn / play on their own instrument)!

Already they have learnt to play two different songs!

We look forward to presenting our show to parents at the end of the lessons... date TBC.

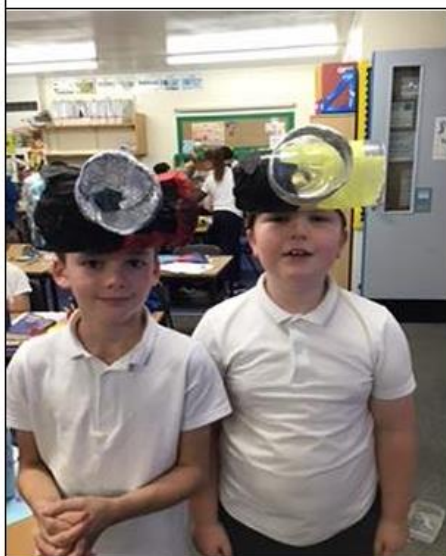


Torch design & make

Year 4 combined their Science and DT skills this week by researching, designing and making electrical torches. Some made handheld torches with handles and straps and others made head torches. It was VERY tricky to connect the circuit, but we got there!

Fabulous work Year 4

Mrs Crowley (Y4 Teacher)



Rocks and erosion investigation

Year 3 are designing a new plaque for our school!

To decide which rock to make the plaque out of, they investigated the chemical weathering of different rocks. Using a pipette, they put a few droplets of vinegar onto a range of rocks. Acid rain contains acidic chemicals, similar to vinegar. They then observed what happened to each rock, noticing any colour change, fizzing or erosion.

Miss Reed (Year 3 class teacher)



Reception lunchtimes

The class are really loving their lunchtimes and having great fun whilst dining and playing. The children have been really well supported by the dinner hall team and lunchtime supervisors but the junior leaders have done an amazing job helping the Reception pupils feel at home and guided their play activities.



Lions at Large

Lions at Large, Gloucestershire's first ever Wild in Art sculpture trail, will be 'roaring' onto the streets of Cheltenham and Gloucester next Summer. Over 30 majestic lion sculptures will be individually painted by local artists; with streets, parks and open spaces dazzling with their vibrant colours and surprising designs.

We are very excited to share that St Mary's has signed up to design and decorate one of the 'little lions' that will also feature on the trail! As part of this project we will be raising funds for Cheltenham and Gloucester Hospitals Charity, who are organising the trail to support new cancer facilities.

There are also a number of sponsorship opportunities for any local businesses who would like to support. You can find out more about The Pride of Gloucestershire Trail at lionsatlarge.co.uk and for sponsorship opportunities please email ghn-tr.lionsatlarge@nhs.net



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2023-24

Harvest

Thank you very much for your kind and generous donations of goods for last Friday's Harvest collection. The items were donated to the GL3 Foodbank. The organiser was very grateful as the volume of donations that the charity has received over recent months has fallen significantly. Your goods will help to feed and support families in need in the local area.

A sample of the donations displayed on the altar at the Harvest Festival service



Pumpkin carving

Year 1 dedicated some of their Forest School session this week to creating some amazing pumpkin carvings



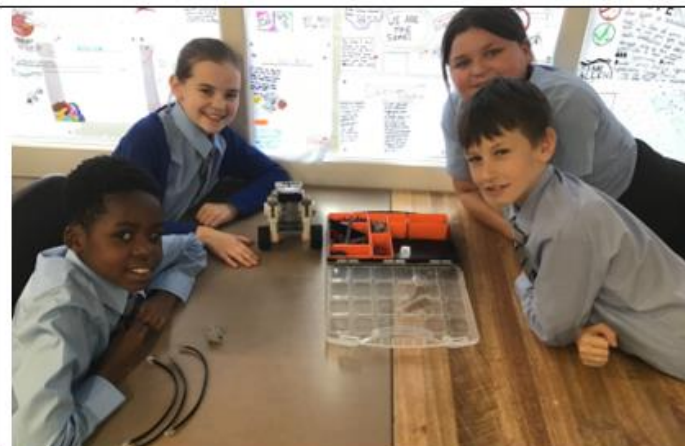
Cookery

Year 3 made some very yummy fruit pastries. The children chopped their own choice of fruit, added jam to the pastry and then arranged their fruit toppings. The pastries were popped into the oven and then it was time to eat (yummy!!).



Robotics workshops

Years 5 & 6 had great fun getting to grips with designing, building and programming their own vehicles. It was very much a team effort as the children worked collaboratively in order to achieve the targeted outcomes. It was complicated stuff but really interesting and the pupils showed a good understanding of the concepts shared.



Curriculum enrichment parent class visit

Last week Dr Conway (parent of Sebastian in Y2) came to visit Year 6. We have been studying all about the circulatory system and wanted to be able to hear from a doctor about the kind of issues that they might see relating particularly to our hearts. Dr Conway was able to give us lots of information about the health issues which can affect us, what causes these issues and how we can avoid them ourselves in the future. The class had lots of interesting questions to ask and we are really grateful to Dr Conway for giving up some of his time to come and talk to us.



Amazing replica fossils

Year 3 have been learning about fossils this week and have even made their own! They used clay, plaster of Paris and a whole lot of pressure to create both a mould fossil and a cast fossil.



Chaplaincy commissioning

The Junior members of the team, accompanied by Miss Payne and Mr Wadley, visited Clifton Cathedral for the annual commissioning ceremony. St Mary's were selected to lead worship, which was a great honour, and the children acquitted themselves brilliantly. Each school participated in a banner procession, following the service.

The last photo shows the Little Way Partnership schools together - spot Bishop Declan at the back!



Dogs Trust education sessions

Charlotte Paddock, education outreach worker for the Dogs Trust, visited school this week. Charlotte led an assembly and class sessions for Years 1 & 2. The focus was upon helping the children to understand how to interact safely with dogs and how dogs may interpret (and respond to) human actions.

The Dogs Trust have a fundraising event -see the flyer attached-please support this, if you are able to.



Reading dog

Alfie, our school reading dog, is back in school for the new year. Alfie comes in fortnightly with his owner Ros and loves to make himself comfortable!

This Tuesday, he heard some of our Year 1s read their reading book in the comfort of our school library. Alfie is an excellent listener and very much enjoys the attention and we find the children really love reading to him!

If your child is in Reception, Y1, 2 or 3 and you would like your child to get the opportunity to read with Alfie, there is still time to complete the link to give permission for your child. Thank you to all the parents who have already done so.

The link to where you can give permission is here: <https://forms.office.com/e/g9admGLfik>



Offsite visit

Year 3 had a fantastic day at Bishops Wood going back to the Stone Age! For the first activity, the children made their very own Mesolithic home using wooden tools and animal skin (tarpaulin). Have a look at the pictures to see their final creations!

After lunch, they were hunter gatherers and had to hunt for animals and search through the woods to collect different plants. They learnt how to create fires, how to make the walls of a hut using stripped willow and how to tie knots to make nets. They even learnt how to make bread by grinding wheat to turn it into flour.

Thank you to our wonderful parent helpers for supporting with the trip. Miss Reed (Year 3 teacher)



Year 4 offsite visit

Last week, Year 4 went on their first trip of the year to the Corinium Museum in Cirencester.

The children had such a busy day exploring life as a Roman, from dressing up, investigating skeletons to see who was who from Roman society to playing Roman games and looking at many real-life artefacts that are now safely housed in the museum.

They had so much fun and they were beautifully behaved.

I cannot wait to take them on their next trip to Bishopswood in January to explore life as a Viking! Mrs Crowley (Y4 Teacher)



Year 5 enjoyed exploring the habitats of different animals at Bishopswood on Thursday. We went searching for invertebrates in the woods and did some tree shaking around the meadows and found many unexpected critters! We then went to pond dipping and found what was living there. Jack managed to find a newt tadpole which was exciting because our guide told us they were rare to find and also protected. We ended by inspecting the pond and assessing how healthy the habitat was for the animals living there. Along the way, we talked about the life cycles of many of the animals we found and the children all had a fun-filled day exploring. Thank you to Mr Davies and Mrs Shearman who were definitely stuck in all day, we hope you enjoyed it too.



Phonics and reading workshop for parents

On Tuesday, Mrs Marsh and Mrs Fredrickson led a Phonics and Early Reading workshop for Reception parents. The session went through how we teach phonics at St Mary's, with a special emphasis on correct pronunciation of the sounds/phonemes and how we approach early reading. There was some active participation with parents practising their blending and segmenting skills!

You can listen to a link to hear the correct pronunciation of the sounds, via this link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTe5_EmOBHQ



Football Tournament



St Mary's Blues

Ozzy, Emmanuel, Seraphine, Brooklyn, Charlie (GK), Dylan, Jude, Kuba & Chancelin

Football Tournament

18 pupils braved the elements on Thursday afternoon to represent St Mary's in a Gloucester Schools football tournament.

We entered two teams (Blues & Reds) with each team playing five matches (vs Highnam, Willow, Meadowside A & B and Upton).

There were great performances throughout and both teams secured some very positive results, scoring great goals and defending really well, to boot.

Despite the awful weather, the children really enjoyed themselves and gave the hardy band of parent supporters lots to cheer about!

Well done everyone!

St Mary's Reds

Renaud, Luka, Solomon, Khojo, Marian, Aayush, Mateo, Gabriele, & Harry (GK)

History projects

Last term Year 6 had a homework project linked to our 'Industrial Revolution' topic. The children were to research the life of a famous person from that period. They could present a powerpoint, a poster or make something to reflect the achievements of that person. We were so impressed with the results! We have had model bridges, railways, a prison and a fantastic array of posters, pictures and powerpoints and we found out lots of information about people ranging from Queen Victoria, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Robert Stephenson and Elizabeth Fry. Below is just a small selection of the projects.



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Our class teaching and the scheme we use, whole class and individual instrument sessions, choir performances, singing for Masses and liturgies, competitions and community events all contributed to this award and will continue to ensure your children receive the best possible musical experience.

Mrs Lansdown (Music Leader)



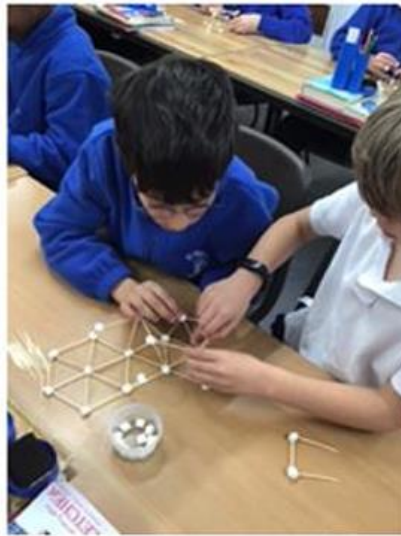
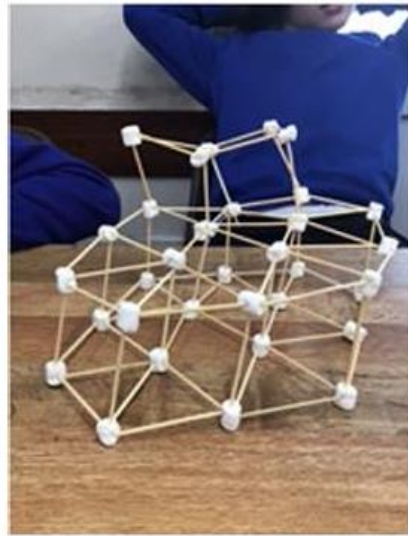
Visiting Speaker

On Thursday, we were lucky to have Gordon Rea delivering one of his regular assemblies to the whole school. He retold the story of Jesus at a party at Simon's house where he gets his feet washed by Mary Magdalene. He also told us the story of Jesus healing a leper and made links to the two by explaining how Jesus was not interested in 'celebrities' but in ordinary people with ordinary problems. It was a message of love and compassion which was very powerful. As usual, Gordon mixed drama and painting to get his message across in an engaging manner and the children were enthralled!



Design Technology

In DT, Year 4 have been busy designing prototypes for a pavilion. They have worked hard to make it stable, strong and stiff. Soon, we will be designing and making our own with the three important design criteria, as well as making it aesthetically pleasing.



Sustainable transport project

Last summer Years 5 & 6 participated in a project to explore sustainable transport options (for getting to and from school) and how they could reduce their own carbon footprints. As part of the project the children devised their own avatars, graphics and images for a 'sustainable transport' message poster.

Last week, engineers from Knights Brown construction (the company that sponsored the project) visited to school to present the completed work as a display panel (that will be displayed in the outside area).



Netball tournament

On Tuesday St Mary's sent two netball teams to a tournament at Oxstalls Sports Centre. Each team – the Yellows and the Blues – played 4 matches. It was a very successful afternoon, with 7 wins and 1 tight loss between them! The Yellows played Brockworth first, securing a 7-0 victory thanks to excellent shooting from Maxwell and Ginevra. They had a much closer match against Widden, but won 1-0 with Grace providing sterling support at centre and Max T up front. Next up they played Tredworth B and won 2-0, with Niamh and Seraphine dominating play. Their final match was a comfortable 4-0 victory over Finlay, with Bella working hard in defence. A fabulous run of scores!

The Blues had an equally impressive run of scores. Their first game was a 7-0 victory over Tredworth A with Joe and Orlaith dominating the attack. Their second match against Coney Hill - a formidable team - was a closer affair, but we still won 4-2, with Ollie controlling the game at centre and Randlynn and Amirah providing the goals. Our third match was against our nemesis team, Upton and although we had plenty of chances, they managed to beat us 3-1, despite Rose's best efforts to level the match. Their final game against Elmbridge saw a return to form with a convincing 6-1 victory, with Rainia strong in attack and Brooklynn dominating defence.

All in all, a very successful afternoon of netball!



Yellows: Max T, Ginevra, Seraphine, Niamh, Grace, Maxwell & Bella

Manager's player: Ginevra – for her superb positioning
Players' player: Maxwell - fabulous shooting skills



Blues: Ollie, Randlynn, Orlaith, Brooklynn, Rose, Amirah, Joe, Rainia

Manager's player: Randlynn, for her determination at winning the ball
Players' player: Orlaith – for scoring some great goals

Choir performance

The infant and junior choirs visited the Bromford sheltered housing centre on Wednesday to perform for the residents. The children were amazing and sang a range of festive carols with great aplomb. Pupils had been rehearsing in after-school choir clubs in the run-up and their practising certainly reaped dividends. Thanks to Mrs Lansdown, Miss Reed, Mrs Walker and Mrs Lewis, for organising and leading the children (and to our accompanying parents).



Chaplaincy Team carols

The Chaplaincy Team visited our local Tesco store on Tuesday afternoon. The group of almost thirty pupils serenaded the Christmas shoppers with a lovely range of carols, spreading festive cheer throughout. It was lovely to see the customers' faces turn from frowns to smiles as they entered the store and saw the children performing.

The children took donations for the Teckels animal shelter <https://teckelsanimalsanctuaries.co.uk/>



Year 4 trip

The class enjoyed a fun filled day at Bishopswood to explore life as an Anglo Saxon. It was a hands-on day and we stayed outside for the entire day, even in this cold weather! We used hammers and copper wire to make our own Anglo-Saxon jewellery, we spun real wool ready to make into clothes and made our pots ready to use. After realising how they lived and exploring an Anglo-Saxon house, we made shelters in the forest with the aim to stay dry. After watching a fire display we soon realised just how tough life was and we are probably even more thankful for the luxuries that we have each day at home! Thank you to all the parent helpers on the day. It was the perfect start to our new topic. Mrs Crowley



NSPCC Online safety advice

Understanding online safety is tricky for all ages. NSPCC have put together some easy to access advice to help you learn about staying safe online as a family.

Talking to your child about online safety

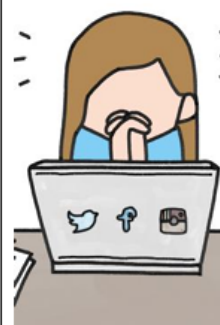
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety/>

Online wellbeing

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-wellbeing/>

Using parental controls to keep children safe online

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/>



During **Forest School** this week, Year 3 wrote stories using sticks to make Chinese Characters. They enjoyed making their own Shang Palaces and pretending to be emperors. Some children even found an 'oracle bone' which they used to predict the future.



Water safety presentations

We were fortunate to be visited by the Team at Puddleducks this week, who came to talk to the children about staying safe around water in Winter.

The children were taught to look for danger, why they shouldn't walk on frozen ponds and lakes, and what to do if they or someone else falls in.

The children learned a lot and we are really grateful to Puddleducks for their time.

If your child is interested in finding out more, then water safety is a big part of the Puddleducks swim sessions; the children should all have brought home a leaflet with further details.

Thanks to the team for visiting St Mary's!
Mrs Lansdown



Cultural celebration visit: Tłusty Czwartek ('Fat Thursday')

Mrs Manka & our other very generous Polish parents brought in doughnuts for the class to eat. Mrs Manka explained about 'Fat Thursday' being the last day you can eat all the sweet things before Ash Wednesday. We learnt about how Polish people bring Easter baskets with food for Easter Sunday breakfast to church to be blessed. She told us about the fun had on Easter Monday or Wet Monday as it's known where all the family have big water fights.

Mrs O'Loughlin & Year 1



Girls computing club

The club programme culminated in a session for the girls to showcase their project work to parents and siblings. It was amazing to hear about the planning process for the creation of their sustainable city. Each group devised and assembled a part of the city and used coding and DT skills to create features with movement and lighting. Each element was carefully planned and integrated so that the overall city had everything required for sustainable living (power, water, waste, transport etc.).

Huge thanks to Mrs Meredith (University of Gloucestershire) and Mrs Walker, for leading the club and to EDF (who provided the funding for the programme).



French

Year 3 had a great time celebrating 'Le Carnaval de Nice', one of the most famous celebrations in the world! Le Carnaval takes place every year in February and they have a huge parade with colourful floats where people wearing costumes can join in. Year 3 wanted to get in on the action, so they made beautiful carnival masks to celebrate!



Big Wheel & Walk week

The children in Years 1-4 loved the class scooter sessions that made up part of this week's BW&W events.

Many thanks to the Gloucestershire Active Travel team and our assigned Active Travel Officer, Mishael Gbejewoh for organising the activities and providing grant funding that will enable us to offer specialist balance bike training for Reception and Year 1 classes, a learning to cycle after-school club and skateboarding sessions for Year 5 & 6.



Viking visit: Ragnar The Bold

As part of our active participation in the upcoming Big Walk & Wheel events (11th – 22nd March), we were visited by sustainable travel ambassador Ragnar The Bold! Ragnar had the children in the palm of his hand as he delivered two amazing assemblies and gave Year 4 an impromptu first-hand account of Viking life (to support their current studies in history).

You can find out more about the BW&W events through Mrs Barrett's recent letter or via <https://bigwalkandwheel.org.uk/>. Over the period of the BW&W you can get involved by making your journeys to / from school by foot, bike or scooter! Even if you park and then walk, that would help. We have a range of goodies to share with the children to reward their efforts in taking sustainable travel options. On Monday, Years 1-4 will have their own whole class scooter sessions-hopefully, this will inspire the kids to dust off their scooters and bikes and burn-off some energy on their journeys.

Many thanks to the Gloucestershire Active Travel team and our assigned Active Travel Officer, Mishael Gbejewoh for organising the activities and providing grant funding that will enable us to offer specialist balance bike training for Reception and Year 1 classes plus a learning to cycle after-school club.



Radio Gloucestershire Quiz

Despite not answering the questions correctly, staff and pupils have had great fun participating in this week's morning quiz. It was nice to be able to share our work to expose the girls to a range of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) activities and, hopefully, inspire the next generation of female scientists, engineers, programmers and mathematicians.





Chaplaincy Team Easter competition

The children have raffled off a large Easter bunny, which was donated to the school, during the last week of Term before Easter.

Many thanks to the efforts of Chaplaincy members: Harriet, Ozzy and Esi who led the project and congratulations to our winner, Isabella in Y6!

We raised a total of £42.00 – every penny matters for helping those in poverty get access to clean water!

Y5 pupils stated: 'It's really important – everybody deserves clean water to live, or they will catch diseases like cholera.'

'We watched a story about a boy called Aran, who had to walk between 10 or sometimes 20 miles a day just to get water and then the water was dirty! This money will help to buy water pumps.'

The lucky winner of the enormous giant bunny was Bella (Y6)!



Forest School

This week, Year 4 have been practising their fledgling DIY skills used using a range of tools (drills, hammers and saws).

Henry did an amazing job making an 'H' for Henry using a saw and a drill to screw it together - he absolutely beamed with pride!

The children also had the opportunity to try some pond dipping in our amazing new ponds (courtesy of our FOSM Team) and found our tadpoles growing.

Brilliant afternoon Year 4!



Year 4 offsite visit

Year 4 had an amazing day at Robinswood Hill being detectives of habitats! We spent the morning in the woods discovering a whole host of minibeasts and then moved to the pond to investigate some incredible creatures. Cohen particularly was a "Pond dipping King!"

A fantastic way to end our Science topic and a super end to the term Year 4



Year 1 Bikeability sessions

Reception and Year 1 classes commenced a six-week programme of cycle training sessions, this week. The training is being funded via a grant that Mrs Barrett (School Travel Champion) applied for - the grant is also funding the 'learn to cycle' after-school club for Year 2.

The children clearly really enjoyed the sessions and relished the opportunity to gain new skills and develop their confidence on two wheels.

We will share photos from the Reception sessions, next week.



Forest School & wider works

Over the half-term, a team of volunteers from local aerospace engineering company, ONTIC completed some amazing work in Forest School and other improvement works.

The works were fully funded and the volunteers were released from their normal work responsibilities to undertake the project. As a result we have a new FS shed, campfire area (with sail & bench seating), new raised bed, concrete ramp to the drinking fountain and a repainted shed and fence!!

Huge thanks to ONTIC and to the FOSM team for arranging the funding grants and organising the project.



Cycling & Skateboarding

Reception and Year 1 classes continued their six-week programme of cycle training sessions this week, and the 'learn to cycle' after-school club pupils are also making great strides with their two-wheeled skills.

On Thursday, pupils in Years 1-6 participated in skateboarding sessions – they were well padded-up in case of falls and were really excited by the opportunity – a first for St Mary's.

Thank you to Mrs Barrett (School Travel Champion) for organising (and securing funding for) these activities.



Year 4 Cricket Tournament

18 children from Y4 went to a cricket tournament at Hatherley CC on Thursday this week. The 3 teams did us proud with their fantastic bowling, batting and fielding skills. It was so lovely to hear teachers from other schools praising our children, not just for their talent, but also their friendliness and great sportsmanship. Team A did get through to the semi-finals, but missed out of the finals due to some fantastic opponents. I can't thank the parents enough for their superb organisation with lifts and communication, and thank you to the helpers and supporters. Many clubs locally have cricket training on Friday evenings - if this is something your child wishes to do more of, they certainly have achieved so much in the last 8 weeks.



Water Safety Assembly

On Thursday, we were visited by Leo and Rex (the dog) from Tewkesbury Leisure Centre. Leo and Rex delivered a fun and informative interactive assembly focussed upon how children can keep themselves safe in and around water. The pupils (young and old) were really engaged and showed good understanding of the steps to take to avoid falling into water, recognising dangers and how to respond if they (or someone else) got into trouble.

Rex (as you can imagine) was extremely popular and a few lucky pupils got to demonstrate what they had learned and save Rex when he found himself in trouble!



Year 2 trip

On Tuesday, the children (and adults!) were very excited to visit Berkeley Castle. We had a guided tour around the inside of the castle, learning all about the Berkeley family who still live there today!

We especially enjoyed learning about the dungeon and jail. We then went into the great hall and learnt how to dance like the Tudors. It was really lovely to see the children enjoy the trip so much and represent St Mary's in such a positive way.

Thanks to all our parent helpers!



Year 6 residential visit

The children had a fantastic time on their three-day residential visit to the PGL activity centre in Liddington. The activities tackled included climbing, giant swing, canoeing and fencing to name but a few. Every pupil showed a great determination to go beyond their comfort zone and try new things - they were great ambassadors for St Mary's. The weather was hot so staying hydrated was key and there was plenty of food for refuelling at the end of each session. Thanks to Mrs Fredrickson & Mr Wadley, for planning and leading the visit, and to Mrs Walker (for braving two-full nights and taking over the captaincy of group 2!).



Forest School

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the blessing and official opening of the newly revamped Forest School provision. It was lovely to see so many parents joining their children to experience some of what FS has to offer. Huge thanks to Fr Paul (for administering the blessing) and Councillor Mary Jordan (for announcing the opening).



Donators & supporters of the Forest School works

Mears Foundation provided tools, gloves and £2,000 for the ponds and decking to be installed and several volunteers for installation in April

BRG technologies donated £350 for forest school materials and tools.

Renishaw donated £500 to spend on forest school and tools.

The Kibble family made and donated the new large mud kitchen and installed it in May.

Sydenhams provided some of the stone edging for pond edge and wood stain

Councillor Mary Jordan - signposting of funding via 'the repair café' - £200 for children's tools to use in forest school

The Aquatic Habitat donated several pond plants and oxygenating matter

Ashberry/Bellway Homes, in particular Luke Nicholls - paid for TFN Landscapes to remove and dispose of the old rotten fencing and replace with 75m of new post and rail fencing as well as the decorative rope and post fencing and two new gates. Bellway/Ashberry donated new planters and approximately 3 tons of soil as well as a bumper bag of grass-seed.

GMI carpentry provided the timber base and all composite decking for the pond surround.

Barry of Cotswold Grab Hire removed the old rotten deck area and concrete posts with his mini digger and part-filled the ponds

Ontic Limited - providing materials and workforce - in particular the new shed and some new planters.

Brockworth Garden Centre - preformed ponds at a discounted rate. **Patrick McGurk** - digger work and disposal of forest school waste **Matt Shute** - strimming the forest school area

And, of course, the FoSM team, their families and other parent volunteers (with special mention to Sher) who have accumulated many hundreds of hours working on this project ☺

Year 1 trip

-Year 1 visited All Things Wild this week. We got to hold Shania Twain the leopard gecko, stroked a VERY fluffy rabbit and were tickled by a spiny stick insect. We also learned how to gobble like a turkey and met a horse that wanted to be a cow. Everyone was very brave, especially around the dinosaurs!



Chaplaincy retreat day

Our Chaplaincy Team participated in a collective event with schools from the Little Way partnership. We were the most represented school and led the music for the event. The children were great at getting involved and meeting other children and amazing at helping with the dancing – we felt very proud of them all 😊 Miss Payne & Mr Wadley (Chaplaincy Leaders)



Reading Dog

After an enforced absence, Alfie the reading dog (and owner Ros) are back in school this term to provide a keen ear for our infant readers.

Alfie loves a good story and he's not fussy about the plot or context - he simply laps up any chance to sit down with the children and let the reading inspire him!

As you can imagine, the children find reading to a canine much more exciting than to a boring old human (particularly as Alfie is not averse to the odd stroke or pat on the head).

Thank you to both Alfie and Ros for finding time to visit us.

Year 4 Learning Festival

Year 4 had a fabulous opportunity to visit The Crypt School for their Learning Festival, organised by Year 12 students. There must have been over 25 stalls, each hosting practical activities that support every single subject from Philosophy to Science, DT to Maths, Art to PE. The children went off like the red arrows, independently exploring and interacting beautifully with the older students. Crypt students were amazing with our children and we just wished we could have stayed longer!



Summer Fayre

Despite the weather's best efforts, the summer fayre was a great success and proved a fun-filled day. We very much appreciate your support of this event - the numbers attending were really impressive and it was great to see the children enjoying the different activities. Huge thanks to our amazing FOSM committee (who painstakingly planned, arranged and led to event) and to the wider team of FOSM helpers and parent volunteers (who helped set-up, run stalls and clear-up after the event).

Thanks also to the staff members attending, particularly Paula (and her son!) who took responsibility for cooking the delicious hot food.



Special science event

The children were treated to amazing (and explosive!) science assemblies led by our very own governor (and specialist science teacher), Richard Duffy-Turner. There was plenty of educational content for the pupils to absorb and they were amazed by the demonstrations. Rest assured that health and safety measures were all in place! Hopefully, the sessions inspired the budding physicists and chemists within the audience and gave all the children a taste of the wonders of science.



Sports Days

The children showed their typical enthusiasm, ability and determination throughout the sports day events. The Infants in particular rose to the challenge of the various events and delighted in the array of stickers on offer. It was lovely to see so many parents and relatives in attendance for both the morning and afternoon sessions (and kudos to the brave mums and dads who participated in the adult races!).



Year 6 performance

The class produced an amazing leavers' show to wow the assembled parents and relatives. There were multiple costume changes, an array of characters and some fabulous singing and acting, to appreciate. Well done to all the children and to Mrs Fredrickson and Mr Wadley for preparing the class so well (and in such a short period of time!).

