Newsletter – Friday 20th November 2026
St Mary's Primary School

Our Vision: We believe, we achieve, we suceed in God's family.

With God, all things are possible. Matthew 19:26

School Value - Community

Welcome

Dear Parents, Carers, and Members of our School Community,

As the colder weather settles in, please remember to send children into school with plenty of warm clothing and extra layers for their weekly Forest School sessions. Wellies, warm coats, hats, gloves and cosy layers will help everyone stay warm, comfortable and ready to enjoy their outdoor adventures whatever the weather!

Our annual pantomime trip is booked, and payments are now available on ParentPay. We will be heading to Billericay Theatre to enjoy a performance of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. If parents and carers could please arrange payment via ParentPay, we would be very grateful. We are looking forward to a fantastic festive outing! The deadline is today but please do pay ASAP is you haven't already as we are unable to subsidise this trip.

FOREST SCHOOL sessions this coming week. Acorn Class, Friday AM session, Chestnut Class, Thursday PM session, Oak Class, Thursday AM session.

We would also encourage you to take a little time to look through our diary dates, as we have an action-packed December ahead, full of exciting activities, special events and festive fun with lots of opportunities for parents to come into school! 🎄✨

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Mindful Moments





Dojo Messages

- Phone problems
- Panto Paymens
- Top of the Rocks TTRS
- Community Wardrobe
- ACL Online Courses



A Note from Mrs Walker

It has been another busy week at St Mary's!

The children have now settled beautifully into their new daily routine around our Read Write Inc. sessions. They are really enjoying their phonics learning, and we are already beginning to see some fantastic progress. It is wonderful to see their enthusiasm and growing confidence. We would love to encourage all parents to continue reading regularly at home with their children, as this makes such a valuable difference to their learning and development.

We have also been delighted to welcome more prospective families into school this week for tours. It is always lovely to share our school, showcase the wonderful learning taking place and give families a glimpse of our school community.

Behind the scenes, Christmas preparations are well underway! Our Key Stage 2 children have begun rehearsing for their much-anticipated Carol Concert, while our Key Stage 1 Nativity is almost ready to share. There is a real sense of excitement building around school as we get ready for this special time of year.

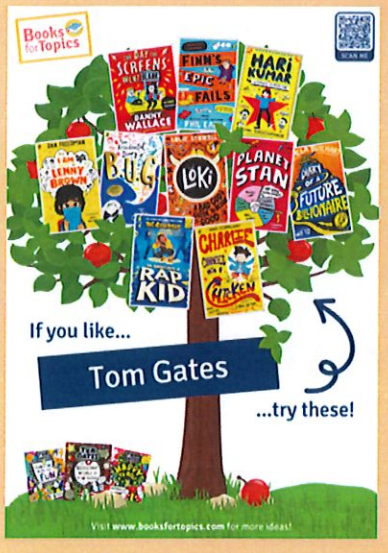
We were also pleased to welcome back Paul Hargreaves this week, following his visit in October when he spent time looking at our maths provision. During this visit, Paul worked alongside our teachers, providing a valuable opportunity to share ideas, explore different strategies and further develop our approaches to teaching mathematics. We are always keen to reflect, learn and continue improving the opportunities we provide for our children.

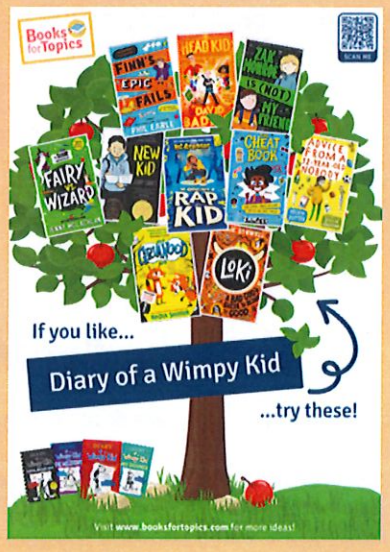
As always, thank you for your continued support. We hope you all have a wonderful weekend and look forward to another exciting week ahead!

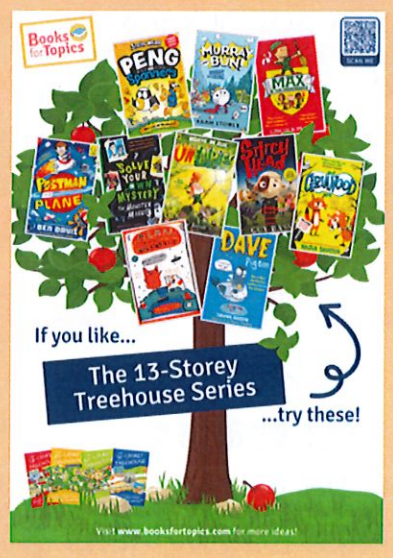
Reading for Pleasure

We would love to encourage all of our families to make time for reading for pleasure at home. Reading together, sharing a story, listening to an audiobook, talking about a favourite book or simply allowing your child to choose something they enjoy can make such a difference. When children see reading as something fun, relaxing and enjoyable, rather than something they only do for school, they are more likely to develop a lifelong love of books and reading. Even just 10 minutes a day can open up new worlds, spark imagination, build vocabulary and strengthen children's reading skills. So, snuggle up, share a story, talk about what you're reading and most importantly, make reading a happy part of family life! ❤️📖

Branching Out!

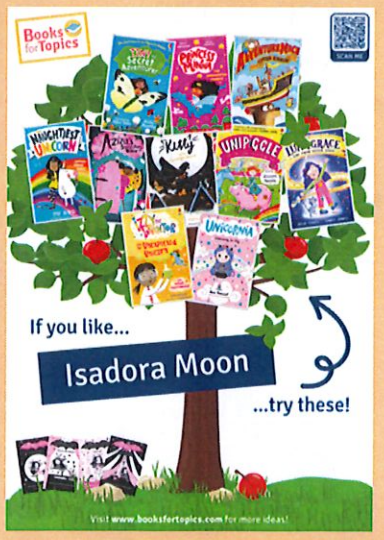




















Acorn Class

This Week In Class

This week in Acorn Class, Year 1 and 2 finished their maths work on understanding numbers 0-20 in great depth, and adding and subtraction within these values. Now, we are working on counting beyond 20, understanding the numbers up to 100. Please do support your child to count up towards 100, even if they can't get there yet, and to understand how there are the twenties, and the thirties, and the forties, etc, and how adding one more one each time creates that pattern that is so familiar to us, but not necessarily to them. In EYFS, the children have been working on really getting to know the numbers up to 5 and 10. So many children are already confident with this and beyond this, but we also must make sure they really understand these values. Can they put them in order? Can they say them backwards? Can they tell us one more than, or one less than? Can they see numbers up to 3 and begin to know how many there are without having to count them? It can be really fun helping your child to fully get to understand these maths ideas.

This week we also had an RE lesson reminding us of some of the ways Christmas is celebrated, and then focusing on the Islamic celebration of Eid. We learned how Ramadan is a period of time where the older children and adults do not eat during the daytime because they are thinking of those less fortunate than themselves. After Ramadan is the celebration of Eid, and they can eat and celebrate and have fun as a community.

In science, we sang the plants part song and learned the actions so that we understand the roots, stem, leaves and flowers of plants. Children either labelled a picture of a plant or drew their own and labelled it. The pictures of these diagrams and our Eid cards are on Dojo so please do check them out!

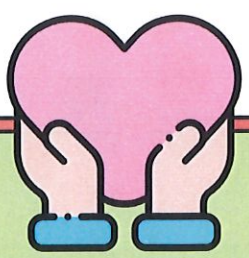
Love Your Learning

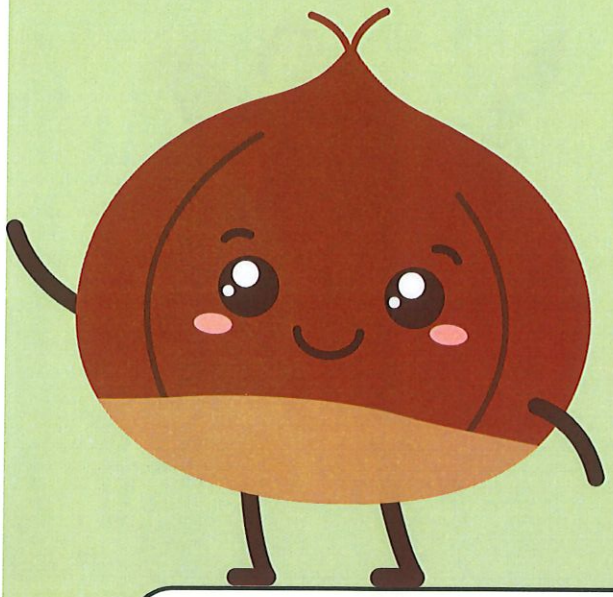
This week Elena is our learning achiever. Elena was able to use magnetic sounds to blend a wide range of words together independently. She is also saying the sounds clearly, opening and moving her mouth carefully. Well done Elena!



Caught You Caring

This week George Smith was Caught Caring. George checked on one of his friends because she had slipped on the bridge in the Reception garden. He kindly added, "Yes, I nearly slipped too." What a lovely friend Geroge!











Chestnut Class

This Week In Class

In our Vipers Reading lessons this week we have been looking at a text about the nursery rhyme Jack and Jill which was turned into a narrative. We really developed our understanding and had some great discussions. In English we have been looking at poetry and writing a poem in the style of Enid Blyton's Firework poem. In maths we have started to look at subtraction and how the column method helps us when subtracting.
In science we have started to look at light and what light sources are. In RE we have continued to look at sacrifice. In music we have been continuing to learn the songs that we are going to sing at the Carol Concert. One of our PSHE lessons this week was about being kind and speaking nicely to each other. We learned that although we can't see words they can still leave their mark.

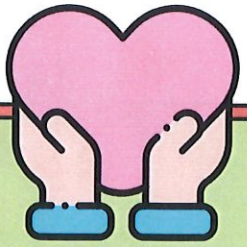
Love Your Learning

This weeks achiver is Wilfred. I've been delighted with how hard Wilfred has worked on poetry this week. He was a great poetry detective and had some lovely ideas that he used in his poem. Well done Wilfred!



Caught You Caring

This week Wilfred was caught caring. Wilfred always offers to help tidy away the games and tables after breakfast club and lego club. You are a superstar and a wonderful role model!











Oak Class

This Week In Class

This week in Oak class, we have focused on summarising information from texts in our reading lessons. We have also learnt how pronouns replace nouns and can be personal or possessive. In maths, we been adding mixed numbers and finding common denominators where necessary. In history, we have looked at what life in the trenches would have been like for soldiers in World War 1, where they were and how they were laid out. In RE, we have looked at the features of mosques and in science, we have used Newton Meters to investigate the amount of mass objects in our classroom have.

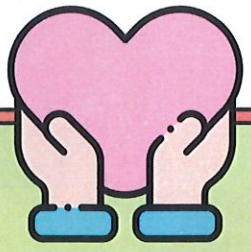
Love Your Learning

The achiever in Oak class this Stanley. Stanley has really applied himself this week and has started to show what he is really capable of. It has been lovely to see him focussed and motivated and actively participating in lessons. Well done, Stanley, keep it up!



Caught You Caring

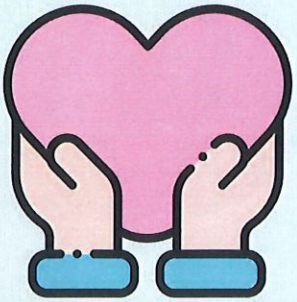
This week Ralph was caught caring. Ralph has been very helpful volunteering to tidy up the hall after lunch each day. His kindness and willingness to help others makes such a difference. Your caring nature hasn't gone unnoticed. Well done Ralph!





Caught you Caring

Teachers and staff are invited to submit the names of pupils they "catch caring" along with a brief description of the act of kindness they observed. These moments will then be shared and celebrated, helping to reinforce our school values and inspire others to follow their example.



Ralph Catton

Ralph was caught caring This week Ralph was caught caring. Ralph has been very helpful volunteering to tidy up the hall after lunch each day. His kindness and willingness to help others makes such a difference. Your caring nature hasn't gone unnoticed. Well done Ralph!

George Smith

George was caught caring checking in on his friend who had slipped over. Well done George!

George Claydon

George was caught caring checking in on his friend who had slipped over. Well done George!

Wilfred Addison

Wilfred was caught caring this week. Wilfred always offers to help tidy away the games and tables after breakfast club and lego club. You are a superstar and a wonderful role model!

Amelia Richardson

Amelia was caught caring spending breakfast club doing arts and crafts for a display. Not only was she really helpful but she tidied away after herself too! Well done Amelia.



Attendance

ATTENDANCE MATTERS

On Time: First Time, Every Time



Which CIRCLE are you in?

TARGETS

Whole School Attendance Target is: 95%

National Attendance Target is: 93.5%

Whole School Attendance this week is: 95.4%

Pupils with 100% attendance this week: 46

THIS WEEK

Reception	79%
Year 1	92%
Year 2	89%
Year 3	86%
Year 4	89%
Year 5	98%
Year 6	95%

LATENESS

Collective Worship will be held at 9.05am each morning and attended by all staff, including the office staff. It is important that your child arrives on time for school. If they arrive after 9.05am then you will need to wait with your child until Collective Worship has finished at 9.20am as there will not be any staff to let them in. Collective Worship is a legal entitlement in a Church of England school and a time of reflection and respect.

STUDYBUGS

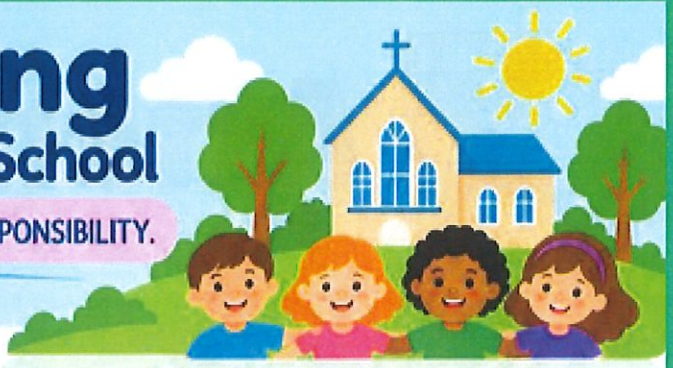
If your child is absent from school please:

- Contact the school via Studybugs on the first day of absence before 9.00am . (This is our preferred method of communication for sickness absence)
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.00am;
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible.

If you haven't already, please download the free studybugs app, or register on the studybugs website and use it to tell us whenever your child is ill and unable to attend school.
The tool helps us to know sooner if your child is unaccounted for. It is quick and easy to register and automatically reminds you to keep us posted. Please use the following link to register:
https://studybugs.com/about/parentsIf you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the school office

Safeguarding
at St Mary's Primary School

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY.



Our commitment

At St Mary's Primary School we are committed to ensuring that every child feels safe, valued, listened to and supported.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding means protecting children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of harm, both in school and outside school, including online. It also means promoting children's welfare and helping them to achieve the best possible outcomes.

What does our Safeguarding Policy cover?

Our policy explains how we:

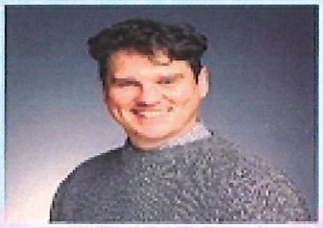
- Protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Identify concerns early and provide appropriate help and support
- Respond to bullying, child-on-child abuse and harmful behaviour
- Promote online safety and help children understand how to keep themselves safe
- Support children's mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Work in partnership with parents, carers and external agencies
- Ensure staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know how to report concerns

Our Safeguarding Team

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSLs lead safeguarding and child protection arrangements in school.



Ms Walker
Executive Headteacher
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)



Mr Austin
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

Working together

We work in partnership with families, staff and relevant agencies to keep children safe. We listen to children and make sure their voice is at the heart of what we do. We take concerns seriously and act on them.



How to report a concern

If you are worried about the safety or wellbeing of your child or another child, please contact the school office and ask to speak to the DSL or one of the deputy DSLs.

Please share any concerns as soon as possible so that we can consider what support or action may be needed.

All concerns are taken seriously

Information is handled sensitively and shared with relevant professionals where necessary to protect a child.

If a child is in immediate danger, contact the emergency services.

The full policy

Our full Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is available on the school website.

If you have any questions about safeguarding at our school, please contact the school office.

FOREST SCHOOL

THIS WEEK

This week at Forest School, we learnt all about hedgehogs, hibernation and the different habitats that hedgehogs need to help them survive through the winter. During circle time, we talked about how hedgehogs prepare for hibernation and the amazing changes that happen to their bodies. The children were particularly interested to discover how a hedgehog's body temperature and heart rate drop significantly while they are hibernating, allowing them to conserve energy during the colder months.

We then looked at the different types of nests and shelters that hedgehogs build to keep themselves warm and safe throughout the winter. After learning about what makes a good hibernation habitat, some of the children set about building their very own hedgehog homes. The aim was to create inviting, sheltered spaces in the hope that we might encourage some hedgehogs to visit our Forest School area. The children did a fantastic job, using a variety of natural and loose parts, including bricks, logs, pieces of wood and plenty of leaves. They worked brilliantly together and came up with some fabulous habitats! The children also enjoyed spending time finishing off their Christmas decorations from last week's session, adding those final touches to their festive creations.

As always, there was plenty of time for free play and exploring the natural environment. The children enjoyed the mud kitchen, climbing trees, playing on the log swing, painting and going on bug hunts. It was lovely to see everyone making the most of their time outdoors, using their imaginations, working together and discovering more about the wildlife that shares our Forest School space.
Another fantastic week of Forest School, well done St Mary's!

This week Freddie the Forest School Bear is looking forward to going home with Adeline from Acorn class. Adeline always enjoys forest school and she tries hard in every activity we do. She is a very kind and helpful little girl and she is very supportive of the younger children in the class. Well done Adeline, enjoy your weekend with Freddie!

Miss Wilson
Forest School Lead

Collective Worship

This week...

This week Mr Gatenby took a wonderful Collective Worship and spoke about what does it meant to be part of a community? He explained that a community is a group of people who belong together. It might be our family, our class, our school, our church or the place where we live. But does our community stop at the school gates? Of course not! Our community stretches much further than we might first imagine. During our Collective Worship, Mr Gatenby encouraged the children to think about just how big our community could be. Could it be our local area? All of Essex? Our whole country? All of Europe? Or could it be even bigger than that? Perhaps our community includes the whole world!

To help us explore this idea, Mr Gatenby shared a video and reminded us of the wonderful Bible story of Jesus feeding the 5,000. The children thought about who first stepped forward to help in this story and how one small act of generosity became something extraordinary. It reminded us that even the smallest contribution can make a huge difference when we share what we have and think about the needs of others.

We also reflected on the words of Psalm 24:1: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." These words remind us that we are all part of something much bigger than ourselves and that we have a responsibility to care for one another and for the world around us.

But the question we were left thinking about was this: Who could be even more helpful? And how big was the community that they helped? The message was clear – kindness, generosity and helping others should not be limited to the people we know or see every day. Our actions can reach far beyond our immediate surroundings.

Mr Gatenby ended the assembly with a prayer for our school community, reminding us of the importance of looking after one another.

As we continue to explore our school value of Community, we are encouraged to think about how we can make a difference, however big or small. Whether it is helping a friend, welcoming someone new, supporting a neighbour or caring for people across the world, every act of kindness matters.
After all, we are not just part of a classroom, a school or a town – we are part of one big community!



UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Activity	Who
04.12.26	FOSMS Christmas Sale - Parents welcome into school from 2:30pm	Whole School
08.12.26	Christmas Panto - Billericay Theatre Christmas Jumpers to be worn with uniform	Whole School
14-18.12.26	No Afterschool Clubs this week with the exception of Multi Skills Club	Whole School
11.12.26	Christingle service at St Mary's Church	All welcome 2PM
16.12.26	DT Day	Parents welcome in from 2:45pm
16th, 17th and 18th Dec	Christmas Jumpers to be worn with uniform for these days!	Whole School
16.12.26	EYFS Christmas Craft afternoon	EYFS Parents from 2:15pm
17.12.26	FOSMS Movie Night – 2:30 – 4pm	Tickets on sale soon
18.12.26	KS1 Nativity - 9:30am-10:30am. Reception, Yr 1 and Yr 2 only.	Parents in from 9:30am
18.12.26	Christmas Carol Concert in School Hall. Yr 3, Yr 4, Yr 5 and Yr 6.	Parents in from 2:30pm

NEW TERMLY MENU



This is our new Autumn Term menu which begins on 3rd September and runs through to taking us right up to Christmas. This is now published on ParentPay for bookings. We work a week in advance for bookings. The deadline for bookings is 12pm Friday for the following week.





	Meat-free Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Tomato and basil pasta V with garlic bread and side salad or Cheese / tuna baguette	Pitta bread pizza with cheese V or ham with potato wedges and side salad or Cheese / ham baguette	Roast chicken or Quorn fillet V with roast potatoes, veg and gravy or Cheese / ham baguette	Cheesy ham and broccoli pasta or Cheesy broccoli pasta V Cheese / ham baguette or Jacket potato with cheese / beans / tuna	Sausage Chips and Beans, or Quorn Sausages Chips and Beans V Cheese / ham / tuna baguett
	Fruit & yoghurt	Fruit & yoghurt	Fruit & yoghurt	Fruit & yoghurt	Baked treat
Week 2	Cheese and tomato pasta V with garlic bread and side salad or Cheese / tuna baguette	Fish Fingers, Chips, Peas & Sweetcorn or Veggie Fingers V or ham with potato wedges and side salad or Cheese / ham baguette	Sausage roast or Quorn sausage roast V or Cheese / ham baguette	Meatball or no meat ball V pasta bake with salad or Cheese / ham baguette or Jacket potato with cheese / beans / tuna	Chicken nuggets or Quorn nuggets V with potato wedges and beans or Cheese / ham / tuna baguette
	Fruit & yoghurt	Fruit & yoghurt	Fruit & yoghurt	Fruit & yoghurt	Baked treat

Clubs

Autumn Term After School Clubs Sept - Dec 2026

We are delighted to confirm that we will be providing the Clubs below from September 2026.

Clubs will run up to W/C Monday 7th December.

No Clubs will run on the last week of term with the exception of Multi Skills with Mr Thomas

KS1 & KS2 Multi Skills Club – Monday 3.15pm – 4.00pm
This after school club is available for all year groups and will be run by Mr Thomas. Please book direct with Mr Thomas as per the flyer.

KS1 & KS2 Film Club – Tuesday 3.15pm – 4.15pm
This after school club is available for all year groups and will be run by Mrs Carlier. Currently full, with a waiting list.

KS1 & KS2 Lego Club –Wednesday 3.15pm – 4.15pm
This after school club is available for all year groups and will be run by Mrs Richardson. Currently full, with a waiting list.

Year 6 Tutoring Club – Thursday 3.15pm – 4.15pm
This after school club is available for Year 6 and will be run by Mr Austin. (This will be managed in groups throughout the year).

KS1 & KS2 Coding Club – Thursday 3.15pm – 4.15pm
This after school club is available for all year groups and will be run by Mr Gatenby. We have spaces available on this club.

Friends of St Mary's School - FOSMS

Welcome to the Autumn Term!

Autumn inspires reflection, change, and beauty, reminding us to embrace transformation and the richness of life.

Welcome Friends!

🎄 We are looking forward to a very busy and exciting Christmas period here at FOSMS, with lots of festive fun planned to help raise valuable funds for our children!

🎁 Christmas Raffle
We would be incredibly grateful for any donations to help make our Christmas raffle a bumper one! If you are able to donate a prize or know of a local business that might be happy to support us, we would love to hear from you. Raffle tickets will go on sale from Monday 30th November, and we can't wait to see what fantastic prizes we can offer!

🎅 FOSMS Christmas Sale – Friday 4th November
We are looking forward to welcoming you into school from 2:30pm for our FOSMS Christmas Sale. There will be lots of lovely little Christmas gifts and festive goodies for sale, alongside some fun little games to help raise money for our children. We are also hoping to bring back our Christmas book stall, which was super popular last year! If you have any children's books or other books in good condition that you would be happy to donate, we would be delighted to take them off your hands. Please drop any donations into the school office. Thank you so much for your support!

🎬 Christmas Movie Night
We also have our Christmas Movie Night coming up, which we are really looking forward to! I'll be sharing more details with you very soon, so keep an eye out for further information.

As always, thank you for your continued support. Every donation, purchase and bit of help makes a real difference and helps us provide wonderful opportunities and experiences for our children.

Let's make it a magical Christmas at FOSMS! ❤️

Raffle Prizes

If you are able to donate an item to the school raffle we would be very grateful if you could drop anything to the office.

Can you help?

As always, we can only run our fun events and raise money for our school with help from volunteers. If you feel you could spare a few hours or share some new ideas over the course of the school year to lend a hand, we would love to hear from you!

contact@fosms.co.uk

BERLESDUNA
ACADEMY TRUST

BERLESDUNA VACANCIES

MARCH 2026

Crays Hill Primary School
Class Teacher (EYFS / Year 1). Applications close 11th December 2026. Interviews 17th December 2026.

HLTA. Applications close 24th November 2026. Interviews 26th November 2026.

Merrylands Primary School and Nursery
Class Teacher (fixed term contract). Applications close 27th November 2026. Interviews week commencing 7th December 2026.

St Mary's CofE Primary School
SEND Learning Support Assistant. Applications close 27th November 2026. Interviews 4th December 2026.

St Nicholas CofE Primary School
Midday Supervisor. Applications close 3rd December 2026. Interviews 8th December 2026.

SEND Midday Assistant. Applications close 30th November 2026. Interviews 3rd December 2026.

Whitmore Primary School and Nursery
Part-time Class Teacher (fixed term contract). Applications close 24th November 2026. Interviews to be confirmed.

Willows Primary School and Nursery
Part-time Class Teacher (fixed term contract). Applications close 3rd December 2026. Interviews to be confirmed.

Cleaner (fixed term contract). Applications close 4th December 2026. Interviews 10th December 2026.

SEND Learning Support Assistant. Applications close 27th November 2026. Interviews 4th December 2026.

https://www.berlesduna.co.uk/information/vacancies/

The Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. We expect all staff and volunteers to share our commitment. All successful applicants will be subject to an enhanced DBS check, medical clearance and satisfactory references. We are an equal opportunities employer.

Gentle Reminders

RECEPTION 2027

As you may be aware, the primary school (Reception) admission round opened on 9 November 2026, for parents of children to apply for a Reception school place for the academic year that starts in September 2027.

The statutory national closing date for applications is 15 January 2027.

Applications can be made online via www.essex.gov.uk/admissions. 99% of parents in Essex applied online last year.

All of the application information is available on the website above.

For any parents with children due to start Reception next September please be reminded that you need to apply by the deadline of 15 January 2027. Even if you have a sibling at school, you will need to apply if you have a child due to start Reception next September.

The website www.essex.gov.uk/admissions also has a copy of the Primary Education in Essex 2027-28 booklet and the Schools Admissions Policies Directories contain details of all admission policies.

PARKING

We appreciate that parking can be challenging, particularly at busy drop-off and pick-up times, and thank you for your patience and understanding.

We would kindly ask everyone to please be considerate of our neighbours when parking and ensure that no vehicles are parked across or blocking residents' driveways. Even just a small infringement over a driveway can hinder our neighbours from entering or leaving their property.

Our neighbours need to be able to access their properties at all times, and we really appreciate your cooperation in helping us maintain positive relationships with those living in our local community.

Thank you for your understanding and for continuing to be so considerate.