Newsletter – Friday 25th September 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 - Compassion

Welcome

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

Welcome to this week's newsletter! I hope you enjoy taking a few moments to catch up on all the wonderful things that have been happening across our school.

Just a few small reminders that would really help us in school:

School lunches: Please remember to book your child's lunches on ParentPay by **12pm on Friday for the following week**. Booking in advance really helps us to plan effectively and keep food waste to a minimum

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Forest School: As the weather becomes colder and wetter, please remember to send your child fully prepared for their Forest School sessions. **Layers, waterproof clothing and wellies** are essential! The children access Forest School throughout the year, whatever the weather, so we really appreciate your support in ensuring they are warm, dry and comfortable while they enjoy learning outdoors.

Reporting absences: Our preferred method for reporting your child's absence is via **Studybugs**. This is an app that you can download and use to quickly let us know when your child is absent. It helps us to know sooner if a child is unaccounted for and makes the process quick and easy for families. The app can also send you automatic reminders to keep us updated. Thank you, as always, for your continued support with these little things – they make a big difference to the smooth running of our school.

Mindful Moments





Dojo Messages

- Mrs Walker's Golden Tickets
- School lunch booking reminder
- Asthma Newsletter



A Note from Mrs Walker

What a lovely week it has been in school! Our EYFS children have now been in for full days throughout the week, and we have been so pleased to see how beautifully they have settled into their new routines. They have shown such enthusiasm, confidence and curiosity as they have explored their learning and got to know their new surroundings.

This week, we have begun working on our new phonics programme, Read Write Inc. The children have thoroughly enjoyed their phonics sessions each morning and are already showing great excitement for their learning. It has been wonderful to see them developing their sounds, listening skills and confidence as they begin their reading journey.

We would encourage all families to take a look at the "Reading at Home" page of this newsletter, where you will find some helpful ideas and guidance on how you can support your child's early reading development at home. Even a few minutes of reading and sharing stories together each day can make a wonderful difference.
Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Please do take a moment to read over our October challenge to see if we can work together to build healthier habits with Snack-tober!

We have also begun furnishing our new cabin, and it has been lovely to see the space beginning to take shape. We were especially excited to hold our very first mindfulness session in the cabin this week! Over the coming weeks, we look forward to sharing more photographs with you, showing how this special space is being developed and the many different ways it will be used across the school to support our children.

Please do note the change to FOREST SCHOOL sessions this coming week.
Acorn Class, Friday AM session, Chestnut Class, Thursday PM session, Oak Class, Thursday AM session.

As always thank you so much for your help and support.

🍎 Welcome to Snack-tober! 🍓

Helping our children make happy, healthy snack choices

We're excited to launch Snack-tober! 🎉 — a fun opportunity for our children to explore new foods, discover healthier snacks and build confidence in making good choices.

Throughout October, we'll be encouraging children to explore healthier snacking.

Our aim is simple: to help our children develop the knowledge, skills, confidence and motivation to choose and enjoy healthier snacks — both at school and at home.

We're encouraging snacks that include:

🍎 MORE fruit and vegetables
🌾 MORE wholegrains, beans and pulses
💚 LESS saturated fat, salt and sugar

Small changes can make a big difference, and we'd love families to join us in making healthy snacking fun!
🥕 How can you help at home?

One of the best ways children learn is by seeing the adults around them making healthy choices too. Why not have a little Snack-tober challenge at home and encourage your child to try a new fruit, vegetable or healthy snack?

If you're sending a snack into school, please choose from our list of healthy options:

- 🥕 Vegetable sticks – carrot, cucumber, celery or peppers. Why not make a colourful rainbow of vegetables? Different colours provide different vitamins and minerals.
- 🧀 Cheese – a small piece of cheddar or a Babybel.
- 🍌 Fresh or dried fruit – such as pineapple, mango, kiwi, plain raisins, apricots, blueberries or banana slices. Fruit provides important vitamins and fibre.
- 🥨 Grain-based snacks – breadsticks, plain pretzels, banana bread, malt loaf, oat or rice cakes, and small pitta breads. These can provide carbohydrates to help keep children going between meals.

💧 Don't forget the water!

As part of our Healthy School vision, please send your child to school with water rather than juice in their water bottle where at all possible!

🥜 A very important reminder: We are a NUT-FREE school because we have children with nut allergies. Please do not send nuts or snacks containing nuts into school.

There's no need for anything fancy — we just want to celebrate our children having a go at trying more healthy snacks! We're taking a common-sense approach to healthy snacking. We know that life gets busy, and we're not expecting perfection! Our main message is simply:

Think healthy. Try something new. Have fun! 🌈
As part of our Healthy School vision, we ask that snacks brought into school do not include chocolate, sweets or crisps.

Thank you, as always, for your fantastic support. By working together, we can help our children develop healthy habits, discover new foods and feel confident about making positive choices.



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! ❤️📖

📚 Ideas for Reading for Pleasure at Home

- Let them choose! Give children plenty of opportunities to choose what they want to read — comics, magazines, joke books, fact books, graphic novels, recipe books or novels all count.
- Read together. Take turns reading a page or paragraph, or read a book aloud to your child. Even older children enjoy being read to!
- Make it cosy. Create a special reading corner with cushions, blankets and a favourite teddy. Make reading feel like a treat.
- 10-minute family reading time. Pick a time each day when everyone switches off screens and spends 10 minutes reading. Parents can read their own book too — children love seeing adults enjoying reading.
- Read anywhere! Read in bed, in the garden, on the sofa, in the car, at the park or even while waiting for an appointment.
- Share the funny bits! If something makes you laugh, share it with your child. Talk about funny characters, surprising events or favourite parts.
- Listen to audiobooks. Audiobooks are a wonderful way to enjoy stories, build vocabulary and develop a love of books — especially for children who find reading independently challenging.
- Read beyond books. Menus, recipes, instructions, maps, football programmes, comics, newspapers, signs and websites all provide opportunities for children to read as part of everyday life.
- Start a family book club. Choose a book to read together and have a chat about it. Ask questions such as, "What do you think will happen next?" or "Which character would you most like to meet?"
- Bring books to life. After reading a story, bake something from it, draw a favourite character, act out a scene or make a den inspired by the book.
- Read and recommend. Encourage children to tell family members about books they have enjoyed. They could make their own "book recommendation" for someone else.
- Visit the library. Make choosing new books an exciting family outing. Let your child browse and pick something simply because the cover, title or subject catches their eye.
- Don't worry about finishing every book. If your child isn't enjoying a book, encourage them to choose another. Finding the right book is part of becoming a reader.
- Read the same book. Older children might enjoy reading a book that a parent or carer has read too, giving you something to talk about together.
- Make bedtime stories special. Keep reading aloud as part of the bedtime routine for as long as your child enjoys it — there is no age limit on being read to!

❤️ And perhaps the most important one...

Let your child see you reading for pleasure. Pick up your own book, magazine or newspaper and enjoy it. When children see reading as something adults do because they want to, not because they have to, it sends a powerful message: reading is something we enjoy.











Acorn Class

This Week In Class

This week, Reception stayed here all day! They have been so very good, working hard and also learning through play and exploration. Often in the afternoons, we have started with a high-quality BBC Julia Donaldson adaptation because our topic is Beautiful Books, especially focusing on Julia Donaldson's books, and because we have been keen to allow the Reception children a restful pause before cracking on with more acting learning. Then, most of the time they have joined in with Year 1 and 2, and taken on an activity at their level of learning and recording their understanding.

In history this week, Acorn Class learned about the past here in Woodham Ferrers - and we made sure that we found everywhere that our children live when we looked at Woodham Ferrers and the surrounding area on Google Earth. We learned how this town is very old indeed, with homes and farms here 1000 years ago, how St Mary's Church has been around for 700 years and how the arrival of the train station led to the development of South Woodham Ferrers. Year 1 and 2 sorted five milestone images across those 1000 years and Reception ordered three homes: one ancient, one modern and one somewhere in the middle. We are sure you all heard about our feely box and taste testing in science, our spirals in art and our jumping across the stepping stones and the river in PE together.

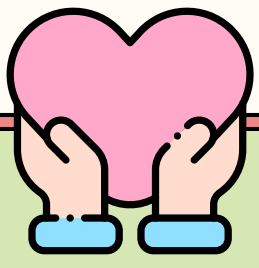
Love Your Learning

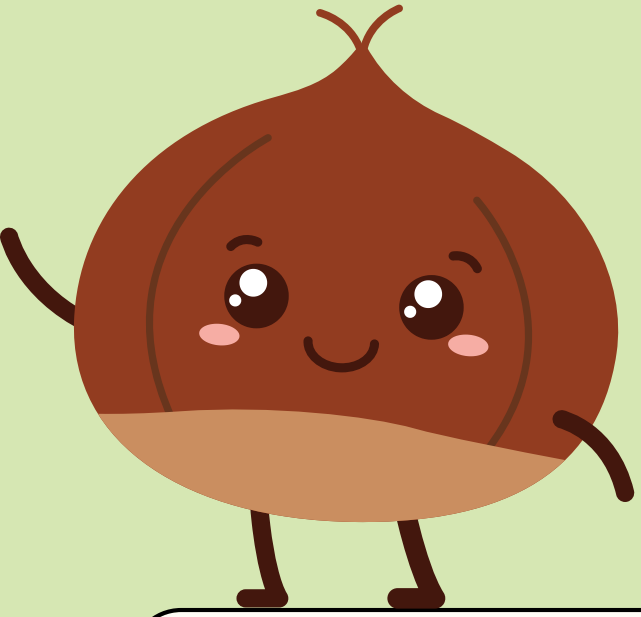
Loved your learning this week goes to all of Reception for making a tremendous start to St Mary's School, including staying for the whole entire day for the first time this week! They have all been excellent listeners, happy to join in and very good at exploring. Very well done Reception!



Caught You Caring

This week Lexie was Caught Caring. Lexie was being very kind, patient and supportive when one of our youngest children really thought it was time to go home but realised she had an after school club first. Lexie helped her to realise that the club would be fun and then it would be home time afterwards.











Chestnut Class

This Week In Class

All of the children have worked wonderfully in maths this week. I have been so proud of their attitude to learning and perseverance. In English we have been working on writing our Buddy Stories and again the effort has been amazing! For our reading we have continued to read about the Stone Age. In science, we have enjoyed learning about the formation of fossils and the different types. In RE we have been learning about Baptisms and how people from different churches are baptized. We had some great discussions in PSHE where we were talking about respecting and valuing ourselves and why it's important. I was really pleased that every child could talk about what they were good at or proud of.

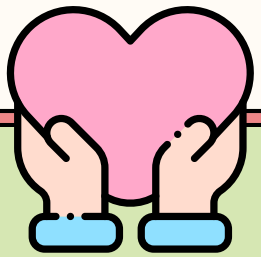
Love Your Learning

Loved your learning this week goes to Louisa. Louisa has amazed me with the amount of work she completes during lessons. She tries her best in absolutely everything and produces some great work. I'm particularly impressed with her excellent presentation and how hard she tries with her handwriting. Well done Louisa!



Caught You Caring

This week Maddie was caught caring. Maddie was helping one of our reception children at lunch time by helping him clear away his l7unch tray and show him where things go. Well done Maddie!











Oak Class

This Week In Class

This week in Oak class, we have focused on summarising information in the text in our reading lessons and have learnt how prose and poetry's sentence structures differ in our writing lessons leading to our own creation of extended image poems. In maths, we have completed our unit learning about place value, comparing, ordering and calculating with negative numbers. In Spanish, we have learnt how to say, read and write the numbers 20 to 31 and in history we have created our own versions of some of the toys children in the Victorian era would have had. Our RE lesson was furthering our understanding of the humanist worldview and how people can lead good lives without a religious motivation. In science, we have investigated complete and incomplete circuits and our PSHE has focussed on conflict resolution.

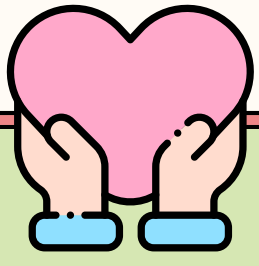
Love Your Learning

Oak's love your learning achiever this week is Amelia. Amelia is a real asset to our class. She is a kind, caring and thoughtful girl who does her best in everything, every day and can always be relied upon to have a big smile on her face. She's made a fantastic start to Year 5 and I look forward to seeing her continued progress. Well done, Amelia.



Caught You Caring

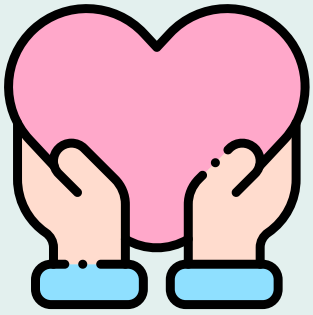
This week Olive and Sophie were caught caring. Olive and Sophie volunteered to play football with a child who they could see was struggling. Well done girls!





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.



George Woods
George was caught caring helping to tidy up a box of balls without being asked.
Well done George!

Hudson Meakings
Hudson was caught caring helping a reception child take off his jumper.
Well done Hudson!

Mia Bennet
Mia was caught caring looking after a reception child who was a little overwhelmed.
Well done Mia!

Lune Hearn
Luna was caught caring being very helpful at Forest School and collecting scissors sensible.
Well done Luna!

Lexie Mead
Lexie was caught caring helping another child change his shoes after their PE lesson.
Well done Lexie!

Hudson Meakings
Hudson was caught caring using super manners when sharing colouring pencils with his friends.
Well done Hudson.

Adeline Taylor
Adeline was caught caring showing care and kindness to another child supporting them with their lunch club and being so enthusiastic and making it a wonderful club.
Well done Adeline!

Maddie Reynolds
Maddie was caught caring helping to tidy up a box of balls without being asked.
Well done Maddie!

Eve Denny
Eve was caught caring kindly collecting conkers to protect some adults in school from spiders!
Well done Eve!

Esther-Ruby Smith
Esther-Ruby was caught caring being a kind and supportive friend and helping a younger child feel safe and comfortable in an unfamiliar situation.
Well done Esther-Ruby!

Amelia Richardson
Amelia was caught caring looking after a younger child who had fallen over and hurt herself.
Well done Amelia!

Attendance



TARGETS

Whole School Attendance Target is: 92%

National Attendance Target is: 93.5%

Whole School Attendance this week is: 91.90%

Pupils with 100% attendance this week: 50

THIS WEEK

Reception	88%
Year 1	88%
Year 2	93%
Year 3	96%
Year 4	92%
Year 5	98%
Year 6	88%

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

FOREST SCHOOL

THIS WEEK

This week at Forest School we set sail on an exciting Pirate Week adventure! In each class, the children were split into two pirate crews and challenged to take part in a treasure hunt around the Forest School area. Working together as a team, they searched high and low for the little treasure chests that had been hidden around the site. The children showed great excitement and enthusiasm as they followed clues, explored the area and worked together to discover their hidden treasure.

Once the treasure had been found, each pirate crew was given the challenge of building their very own pirate ship using loose parts and natural resources. The children used their imaginations and creativity to design and construct their ships, working together to decide what materials to use and how to put their ideas into practice. There was lots of teamwork, problem-solving and imaginative play as the children transformed natural materials and loose parts into their very own pirate vessels.

The children then had plenty of time for free play, making the most of the Forest School environment. They enjoyed exploring the mud kitchen, climbing trees, building dens and creating their own imaginative games and adventures. It was wonderful to see the children using the space independently, developing their creativity and confidence while enjoying time outdoors with their friends.

To finish our Pirate Week sessions, Chestnut and Oak class faced one final challenge – "Shark Infested Waters!" Each team had to make their way from one end of the field to the other without stepping into the shark-infested water (the grass!). They were only allowed to use two large pieces of cardboard per team, meaning they had to carefully plan their movements, communicate with one another and work together to move the cardboard along. There was plenty of laughter, excitement and some very creative teamwork as the children attempted to reach safety without being caught by the sharks!

Freddie Forest School Bear had a lovely time with Oliver last week and is now looking forward to going home with Tommy-George from Oak class. Tommy-George joins Mrs Valentine and myself for every forest school session and yet his enthusiasm and commitment never falters. Despite either doing the same, or very similar activities with each class, Tommy-George never takes over and always listens to the ideas of the other children in the class. This week in particular, during the treasure hunts, it was obvious that Tommy-George knew where some of the treasure was hidden, yet he stood back and let the other children find them. Tommy-George is proving to be a very kind and compassionate young man and it is a pleasure to have him at forest school. Well done Tommy-George, enjoy your weekend with Freddie!

Miss Wilson
Forest School Lead

Collective Worship

This week...

This week in collective worship, Mr Gatenby spoke with the children about **compassion** and what it meant to show compassion towards people who may be different from us.

He explored a simple way to remember what compassion means:
SEE 👀 – We notice someone and recognise that they may be experiencing things differently from us.
CARE ❤️ – We try to understand how they might be feeling and think about what life might be like from their point of view.
HELP 🤝 – We choose to respond with kindness, care and understanding.

Our Bible story this week reminded us of this beautifully. In **Luke 10:33**, Jesus tells us:
"But when a Samaritan on a journey came upon him, he looked at him and had compassion."
The Samaritan **saw** the man who had been hurt. He didn't simply walk past. He noticed him, cared about what had happened to him and chose to help.

Mr Gatenby explained thought about how easy it can sometimes be to notice that someone is behaving differently from us without stopping to think about **why**.

He gave the children an example and asked them to imagine coming into school every day and knowing exactly where everything is. You know the routines, recognise the faces around you and feel comfortable and confident. Then he asked the children to imagine joining a new class where everything feels unfamiliar. There are lots of voices, new faces and different routines. Perhaps the noise feels overwhelming or you don't know what is going to happen next. You might feel worried, confused or uncomfortable.
If we only look at what someone is doing, we might think:
"Why are they behaving like that?"
But compassion encourages us to ask a different question:
"I wonder what it feels like for them?"
We reminded ourselves that people experience the world in many different ways. Some children and adults might find it difficult to hear or see, find bright lights or loud noises uncomfortable, speak a different language, use a wheelchair, be new to our country or community, or find busy and unfamiliar situations difficult.
There are also many differences that we cannot see simply by looking at someone.
We don't always know what someone else is experiencing — but we can always choose to respond with kindness.
This led us to think about **God's love**.
Jesus wants us not only to **experience God's love for ourselves**, but also to help **other people experience that love through us**.
When we show patience to someone who is struggling, include someone who feels left out, listen to someone who needs to talk or offer help when someone is finding something difficult, we can become a little glimpse of God's love for that person.
Just like the Samaritan, we can choose to:
👀 **SEE** – Notice when someone needs understanding or support.
❤️ **CARE** – Think about how they might be feeling.
🤝 **HELP** – Respond with kindness, love and compassion.
We finished our collective worship with a **prayer for compassion**, asking God to help us see people as He sees them, to notice when others may be hurting or struggling, and to give us the courage to respond with kindness.
Our hope is that our children will carry this message with them throughout the week:
See someone.
Care about them.
Help where you can.
And let God's love shine through you. ❤️

UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Activity	Who
08.10.26	Trust Poetry Slam Celebration	Selected pupils
19-23.10.26	No after school clubs this week	Multiskills to run as usual
19.10.26	Parent / Child Consultations 3.30pm–6.00pm	No clubs
20.10.26	Open Day–09:30–11:00	Non SEND Prospective Parent Tour
20.10.26	Parent / Child Consultations 3.30pm–5.00pm	No clubs
21.10.26	Parent / Child Consultations 3.30pm–5.00pm	No clubs
23.10.26	Harvest Festival Yr 6 pupils to present care home with food hamper	All welcome 2pm -3pm
26-30.10.26	Half Term	Whole Shool
02.11.26	Trust Inset Day	Whole Shool
09.11.26	School Photos	Whole School

NEW TERMLY MENU



This is our new Autumn Term menu which begins on 3rd September and runs through to taking us right up to October half term. 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 12th October.

Please note - No Clubs W/C Monday 19th October due to parent / teacher conferences with the exception of Multi Skills Club!

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!

<u>Our AGM is Coming Up!</u>

Our Annual General Meeting will be taking place this Autumn, with the date to be confirmed very soon.

The AGM is a great opportunity to look back on what FOSMS has achieved over the past year, share plans and ideas for the year ahead, and elect our committee for 2026/27.

Last year was a hugely positive one for FOSMS, with **over £18,000 of investment** secured for St Mary's through fundraising, grants and wider support for the school community. We're excited to keep building on that momentum in the year ahead.

This year, the following committee roles will be available:
Chair • Vice Chair • Treasurer • Vice Treasurer • Secretary

You do not need previous PTA experience to get involved – just an interest in supporting the school and being part of a friendly team.

If you might be interested in one of the roles, would like to know more about what is involved, or would simply like an informal chat, please do get in touch. We would be very happy to hear from you.
📧 <u>contact@fosms.co.uk</u>

Coins in a Jar

Next week is the week we bring back Coins in a Jar! Will Acorn Class be the victors for a third year running??

Any spare change you have please do give it to your child to bring in and pop in their class bottle. As always the winning class have their funds matched up to £100!

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

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.

Merrylands Primary School and Nursery
Class Teacher (Fixed Term Contract) x 2. Applications close 27th September 2026. Interviews 5th October 2026.

Whitmore Primary School and Nursery
Midday Assistant. Applications close 28th September 2026. Interviews 5th October 2026.

Class Teacher (part-time). Applications close 5th October 2026. Interviews week commencing 11th October 2026.