



Multi Academy Trust

Opportunity • Achievement • Kindness

MARCH 2026

OUR TRUST NEWS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
OAK MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

Opportunity

Achievement

Kindness

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we approach the end of term, I wanted to take a moment to share some highlights from across the Trust.

Our schools continue to be among the highest-performing schools both locally and nationally, and we are incredibly proud of the achievements of our pupils and staff. It was a particular privilege this term for two of our schools to receive letters from the Secretary of State, recognising the outstanding achievement of disadvantaged pupils. This is a significant acknowledgement of the commitment to inclusion and high expectations that runs through all of our schools.

In addition, the work of colleagues across the Trust has been recognised more widely, with OAK being nominated and shortlisted for the Small MAT of the Year award. This reflects the strength of our collective work and the shared ambition we have for every child. We have also recently celebrated a highly successful cross-trust art exhibition, showcasing the creativity and talent of pupils from across our schools. My thanks go to everyone involved in organising and contributing to this event – it was a wonderful example of our commitment to a broad and balanced education.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support. The partnership between home and school is vital to the success of our young people and our community.

As we head into the Easter break, we do so with a clear focus on supporting our pupils through the important examination term ahead. Together, we will continue to ensure every young person is supported to achieve their very best.

With best wishes,

Andy Wilson, CEO, OAK Multi Academy Trust



OAK shortlisted for MAT Excellence Awards

We are delighted to share that OAK Multi Academy Trust has been shortlisted for **Small MAT of the Year** at the MAT Excellence Awards 2026.

We are also proud that Chief Financial Officer, Sarah Davis, has been shortlisted for **CFO of the Year**, recognising her outstanding leadership in strengthening the Trust's financial strategy and long-term sustainability.

The MAT Excellence Awards celebrate excellence across the academy trust sector, recognising organisations and individuals who demonstrate outstanding leadership, innovation and impact in education.

Across its five schools, the Trust has focused on strengthening teaching, inclusion, digital innovation and operational excellence while building a strong culture of collaboration and shared responsibility.

Under Sarah's leadership, OAK has built robust financial systems, delivered two consecutive external audits with no management points and successfully delivered major capital projects supporting pupils and communities. Her collaborative approach ensures that financial decisions remain aligned with the Trust's core purpose: improving outcomes and opportunities for learners.

Congratulations to Sarah and to colleagues across all five schools whose work contributes to this recognition.

Winners will be announced at the awards ceremony in June.



Thank you, Paul

Happy Retirement



As Paul prepares for retirement, we want to take a moment to thank him for his many years of dedicated service to OAK Multi Academy Trust.

From his early days as Site Manager at Manor High School to his role as Estates Manager across the trust, Paul has played an important part in developing and improving our school environments. His work has supported everything from day-to-day site improvements to major projects that will benefit pupils and staff for years to come.

Paul has always spoken warmly about the people he has worked alongside and the sense of teamwork across our schools. His knowledge, commitment and good humour will be greatly missed. We thank Paul sincerely for everything he has contributed and wish him a long, happy and well-earned retirement.



Welcome to OAK, Kris

We are pleased to welcome Kris Gowans to OAK Multi Academy Trust as our new Estates Manager.

Kris joins the Trust with extensive experience across military and civilian roles and has already spoken positively about the professionalism, kindness and support he has seen across our schools. He is looking forward to building on existing estates projects and supporting schools with facilities that meet both current and future needs.

We look forward to working with Kris and wish him every success in his new role.

Governance



We have been lucky enough to welcome three new Education Trustees to the OAK Multi Academy Trust Board — Alastair Mitchell, David Bray and Graeme Smith.

Alastair is Co-Principal at Sir Christopher Hatton Academy, a large and successful secondary school. His extensive leadership experience and deep understanding of school improvement will be invaluable in supporting our schools and communities.

David brings a wealth of experience from across the education sector, having worked with schools serving different age ranges. His previous roles include Director of Education and Ofsted Inspector, offering insight and expertise that will strengthen our Trust's strategic vision.

Both Alastair and David have joined the Curriculum and Standards Committee, with Alastair taking on the role of Vice-Chair.

Graeme has over two decades of experience in secondary education. His current role as Trust Leader and Executive Principal at The Spencer Academies Trust gives him profound insights into systemic educational transformation. His extensive background encompasses strategic leadership, governance frameworks, and a nuanced understanding of the significant and multifaceted impact of educational institutions. The integration of such experienced leadership represents our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and strategic development. Graeme's expertise will contribute significantly to our governance structures, and he will sit on the Finance, Audit, Risk and HR Committee, as Vice-Chair.

The Trustees all met for their first strategy day of 2026 on Friday 6 March. There was a full agenda and lots of insightful discussion and helpful next step actions.

Meet the Governors...spotlight on Sonia, Manor High School



Sonia Vaidya - Careers Governor

With over 20 years of experience in HR and Resourcing, I bring a strong background in recruitment, employee relations, project management, and learning and development to my role. My career has spanned a variety of sectors including education, construction, NHS, and telecoms, which has given me a broad perspective on organisational operations and people management—skills I find invaluable in supporting the school’s governance.

On a personal note, I recently moved to Oadby from Humberstone with my husband and our two children, Aurora, aged 7, and Zen, aged 5. Balancing work and family life keeps me busy, but I enjoy every moment of it. I work part-time in the Recruitment Team at the University of Leicester’s HR Department, which allows me to stay connected to my professional passion while managing family commitments. Outside work, I love cooking and experimenting with new recipes. Staying active is important to me too, whether that’s through my weekly bhangra and weights classes or spending quality time outdoors with my children.

In my role as Careers Governor, I focus on supporting pupils’ pathways and opportunities as they prepare for their futures. Becoming a governor was always something I wanted to do, but the timing had to be right. I am passionate about being an active member of the local community and keen to learn more about the education system, especially as my children progress through primary school. My inspiration comes from my mum, who was involved in the PTA and Governing Board throughout my school years, and it’s a privilege to continue that legacy by contributing to Manor High’s success.

Meet the Governors...spotlight on Robert Britton

I'm Robert Britton, a parent governor at Overdale Junior School. Professionally, I work as a Research Scientist and Lecturer at the Cancer Research Centre at the University of Leicester. This role has honed my analytical skills and attention to detail, which I find invaluable when supporting the school's strategic decisions and ensuring we maintain high standards for all pupils.

Beyond my professional life, I have always been passionate about sport, having played throughout my life, and I still enjoy squash and open water swimming. These interests keep me active and connected to the community outside of work and school.

Within the school, I have specific responsibilities for behaviour, pastoral care, and supporting Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC). These areas are close to my heart because I believe every child deserves a safe, supportive environment where they can thrive.

With both of my children attending Overdale Junior School, I saw becoming a governor as a meaningful way to give back to the school community and help improve outcomes for all pupils, especially those who need additional support. I'm committed to working alongside staff, parents, and fellow governors to ensure the best possible experience for our children



Climate and Nature Action in Education

There is some wonderful sustainability work taking place across the Trust, led by Sophie Bodycote (read more about Sophie and her vision for sustainability [here](#)).

Thanks to Sophie and Premises Officer Alex, Brookside's pond in the forest school area has been cleared and is being restored as a safe haven for wildlife. Once oxygenating plants are added, we hope this valuable habitat will once again attract newts and other species, helping to enrich biodiversity on the school site.



Further hedgerow planting has been taking place on the Brookside fields too, to continue supporting biodiversity across the Trust.



Spotlight on...the Central Team

This term, we are pleased to highlight Nirmal Kaur, **Finance Officer** at OAK Multi Academy Trust. Nirmal plays an important role in ensuring financial transactions across the trust are recorded accurately, supporting processes such as banking reconciliation, invoice payments, payroll coding and budget monitoring. Her work helps to ensure compliance, reduce risk and support the trust in delivering the best possible outcomes for pupils.

We also spotlight Danielle Benyon-Payne, **Governance and Sustainability Lead** at OAK Multi Academy Trust. Danni joined the Trust in January 2021, during a national lockdown, and has since played a key role in strengthening governance, compliance and sustainability across OAK's schools. With a background in events coordination at the University of Leicester, Danni brings strong experience in organisation, strategic thinking and stakeholder engagement to her work. Danni supports Trustees and local governing bodies to ensure effective governance, clear accountability and strong oversight, always with pupil outcomes at the centre. Alongside this, she leads on sustainability strategy across the Trust, helping schools embed environmental priorities into their vision, policies and practice. She is particularly passionate about how strategic leadership and collaboration can drive meaningful change.



Children from Overdale Junior School and Overdale Infant School have been presented with awards at the unveiling of a new mural in a celebrity-filled event at Leicester Central Library. Twenty children from each school have been involved in a very exciting project over the past year with Leicester Libraries and Leicester University Libraries. Yuki and Nathan Lound created the workshops to honour their daughter Ayana who passed away suddenly on 19 January 2023, just before her 11th birthday. Ayana was an avid reader, whose love of stories, people and life are celebrated through this new art installation.

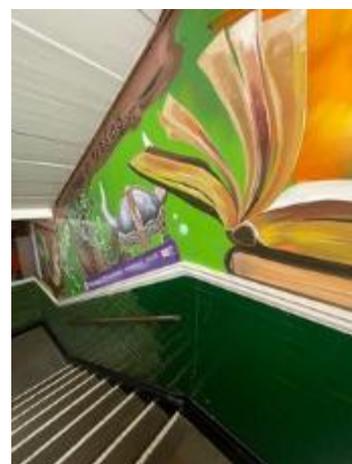
An outstanding piece by Overdale Junior school student Din was selected to win the Benjamin Zephaniah People's Poet Art Award while Overdale Infants student Evelyn was chosen by Two Queens Leicester, an artist-run and community-owned gallery and studios based in Leicester's Cultural Quarter, for her innovative design.

The series of workshops were led by writer and poet John Berkavitch, who encouraged the children to think about and discuss their favourite book characters, stories and environments, capturing these ideas through drawing and creative writing. These were then passed onto Peachzz, an international award-winning muralist who has created a large-scale mural that winds around the central staircase of Leicester Central Library. The mural is in the style of a large painted bookshelf leading all the way up the stairs, with magical objects and iconic characters identified by the children of Leicester. At the top of the staircase is a portrait of Ayana to the backdrop of her reading imagination.



Also in attendance at the unveiling was Kiran Millwood Hargrave, an international award-winning, Sunday Times bestselling novelist of more than a dozen books for children, young adults and adults. Her work has won numerous awards including her wonderful book *Julia and the Shark*, which was the last book Ayana read.

All of the children involved got to attend the grand opening of the new mural with the Assistant City Mayor for Culture, Libraries and Community Centres, the celebrity authors and representatives from Leicester University and Leicester Libraries as part of their celebrations for World Book Day. A selection of the children's artwork has also gone up on display in Leicester Central Library. We are extremely proud of them all.



Sector News

DfE: Allergies in schools

The government has announced plans to strengthen protections for pupils with allergies. The measures aim to improve how schools prevent and respond to allergic reactions, ensuring staff are better prepared and that pupils with allergies are safer during the school day.

RSHE: Statutory changes you need to know

From September 2026, all schools will be legally required to update their RSHE curriculum and have an up-to-date written policy in place for RSE. See here: [updated RSHE guidance](#).

Some of the curriculum changes include:

- Primary: A stronger focus on physical and digital safety, the use of accurate anatomical language, and the development of emotional resilience and personal boundaries.
- Secondary: Now addresses modern social challenges including AI literacy, misogyny, and knife crime, alongside expanded education on gynaecological health and navigating healthcare systems

Findings on bullying from the Parent, Pupil and Learner Voice survey

The DfE survey indicates that bullying continues to be experienced by a notable proportion of pupils. Around one quarter of key stage 3 pupils and around one sixth of key stage 4 pupils reported being bullied in the previous year. A similar proportion of parents also reported that their child had experienced bullying during that period.

[Findings on bullying from the Parent, Pupil and Learner Voice survey](#)

Parents and teachers will be supported to have important conversations with children about the challenges facing families in poverty, as the government today publishes a child-friendly version of its landmark Child Poverty Strategy, designed to give children a clear and reassuring explanation of what poverty means, why some families struggle, and the steps the government is taking to help.

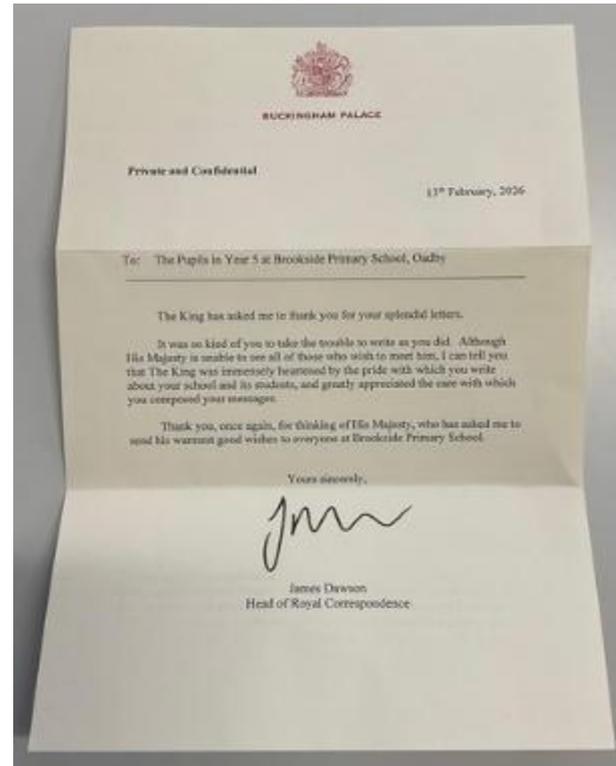
[New tool for families and schools to cut stigma of child poverty - GOV.UK](#)



Challenge Partners Area of Excellence Accreditation

We're thrilled to announce that Brookside has achieved Challenge Partners Area of Excellence accreditation! This prestigious recognition celebrates the outstanding practice happening in our school. Challenge Partners is a collaborative network that brings together schools to share best practice and drive improvement, and this accreditation demonstrates that we're delivering exceptional provision for our Brooksideers! Huge thanks to Mrs Cox for all her hard work in this area

In the autumn term, the children in Year 5 completed an English unit on persuasion. The final piece of writing was a formal persuasive letter to His Majesty The King. All the children's letters were written up and sent off to Buckingham Palace in the hope of receiving a response as the children were extremely proud of their work. This term, we were amazed to find a letter had arrived in school on behalf of His Majesty from the Head of Royal Correspondence. Whilst we were disappointed his Majesty was unable to accept our offer to visit Brookside, it is exciting to know the King took the time to read all of the children's letters and reply so thoughtfully.



Digital Innovation: Apple HQ Training

Our digital lead attended cutting-edge training at Apple HQ, bringing back the latest insights and strategies to enhance digital learning at Brookside. This investment in staff development ensures we're at the forefront of educational technology, preparing our pupils with the digital skills they'll need for their future.



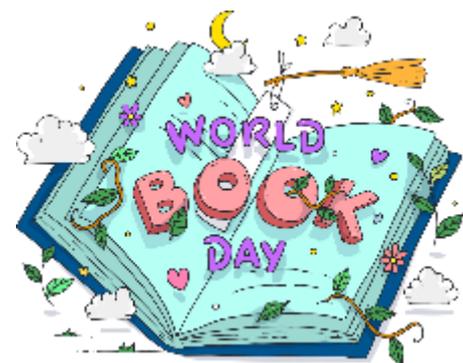
Our pupils became environmental champions when the Wombles visited for a special litter-picking session and assembly! The children learned about the importance of looking after our environment and keeping our community clean. Armed with litter pickers and bags, they worked together to tidy our school grounds and local area. The informative assembly helped reinforce the message that we all have a responsibility to care for our planet – a lesson our pupils took to heart.

Think Tank Trip

Year 2 enjoyed a fascinating trip to Think Tank in Birmingham, where they explored interactive exhibits and engaged with science and technology in exciting new ways. From planetarium shows to hands-on experiments, the children were captivated throughout the day. These real-world learning experiences are invaluable for bringing classroom learning to life and inspiring our pupils' natural curiosity.

Book Week Celebrations

Book Week was magical! A special highlight was Miss Brown reading to every single class across the school. Sharing stories across year groups helps build our reading community and shows our pupils that reading is valued by everyone at Brookside. The children loved hearing different stories and experiencing the joy of shared reading.



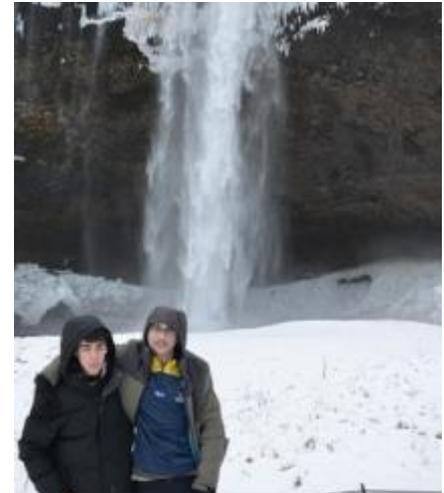
Manor High School

Students from Manor High School recently returned from an incredible geography trip to Iceland, where they explored some of the country's most spectacular natural landscapes.

From geysers and glaciers to lava caves and waterfalls, the trip gave pupils the chance to see geography come to life beyond the classroom. Highlights included visits to the Golden Circle, the Sólheimajökull Glacier, the Blue Lagoon and Iceland's famous volcanic landscapes.

The trip was also an important opportunity for many pupils to travel abroad for the first time, with a significant number of students with SEND and pupil premium students taking part.

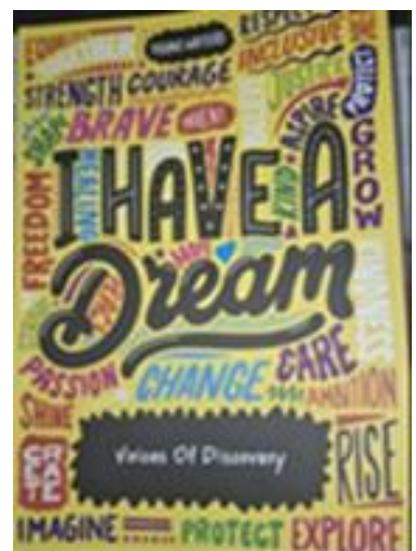
Experiences like this help build confidence, independence and lasting memories while bringing learning to life.



During British Science Week, KS3 students have taken part in a series of web chats with real scientists! The topics included STEM careers, Robotics and Aerospace engineering. Discussions ranged from which A levels the scientists had chosen, favourite subjects at school and best aspects of their current role. We thank Mrs Jenkin for organising these events and giving up her time.

Performing Arts

Our school production of Matilda was a huge success. There were four performances of the show across the two days – two in the evenings with almost 500 audience members joining us, and two daytime performances to almost 500 students from our feeder primary schools Brookside Primary, Woodland Grange and Overdale Junior School. Thank you to everyone who came to support the performances – the show really brought our whole community together. The talent and professionalism of our staff and students really shone through in the performances and we are so proud of everyone involved. They have worked tirelessly since the summer rehearsing, and the levels of enthusiasm, commitment and resilience have been exceptional. Special thanks go to the production team – Mrs Woods, Miss Jennings and Miss Hutchinson and also to Mr English for overseeing the sound and lighting, Mrs Moseley for props and stage management and Mr Hings for displays and stage decoration.

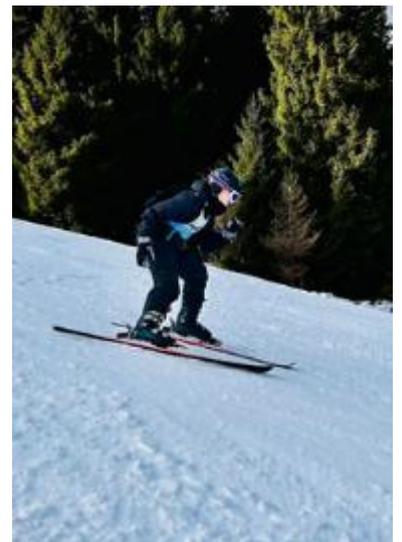


Young Writers Competition

Congratulations to Poppy (Year 8) who has won the Young Writers Competition for Her poem, 'My Home', which has been published in the anthology "I Have a Dream". This is a fantastic achievement!



This term, 42 Manor High students enjoyed an unforgettable trip to the Italian Dolomites, spending a full week skiing every day in one of Europe’s most breath-taking mountain regions. Beyond the slopes, evenings were packed with exciting activities including ice-skating, sledging, and visits to the local mountain village of Folgaria. Our students demonstrated incredible resilience and determination throughout the week. By the final day, every student was confidently skiing full runs across the resort—an especially impressive achievement given that the majority were complete beginners at the start of the trip. It was a truly rewarding experience for all involved and a fantastic example of our students rising to a challenge.



MFL

This term, the Modern Languages department was delighted to host a fabulous performance of Un Ensayo Desastroso by @onattiprodsLtd for 270 Year 8 and 9 Spanish students. Two native-speaking Spanish actors performed for our students in this tale of a disastrous theatre rehearsal of Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet! There was some incredible audience participation by our wonderful students and everyone was engaged throughout and given the opportunity to use their language skills in a real-life context.

Boys football team

Under a blue sky, but still on an extremely heavy pitch, the Year 7 boys team booked their date in the county final at Seagrave with an emphatic victory over St Pauls. The passing and high pressing game that the team use paid instant rewards. The final result was **St. Pauls Catholic School 0 – 8 Manor High School**. The team is now County Cup Final-bound after a dramatic quarter-final win. Good luck in the final in April, boys — and well done!



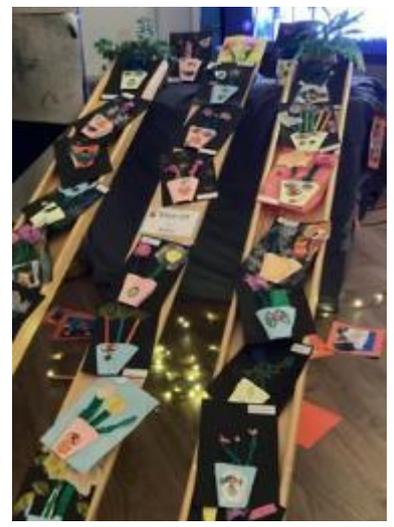
Girls Football Team

Congratulations to the Year 8/9 Girls football team who came out victorious in the Oadby/Wigston Schools league, qualifying for the County stage of the competition, remaining unbeaten. The Girls showed what true excellence is by starting the football fixtures off with a resounding 8–2 win against Beauchamp, followed with a 3–2 win against Gartree and finally showing that Manor High School resilience with a penalty shootout win against Wigston Academy. We await the news of who we will play in the next round!

UKMT Maths Challenges



In March, a team of Year 8 and 9 students competed in the UKMT Team Maths Challenge, which involves teamwork, cross-number puzzles, and mathematical relays, requiring students to apply logic, communication, and problem-solving under pressure. Meanwhile, well done to our Year 10 students selected to take part in the Intermediate Maths Challenge, which encourages mathematical reasoning, precision, and problem-solving skills. We are incredibly proud of all students who participated, and especially those who achieved certificates.



The children were excited to identify their own artwork at the OJS/OIS joint art exhibition. There was some beautiful work on display. The artwork formed part of a joint art trail and exhibition showcasing a piece of work from every pupil.

Events like this reflect the importance we place on enrichment, creativity and collaboration across our trust, giving every child the opportunity to express themselves and share their work with the wider community.

Well done to staff and pupils for bringing this to life.

Earlier in March we celebrated World Book Day. The children all loved diving into the wonderful world of books. Across school, children listened to different stories, played games and took part in activities to celebrate books. It was wonderful to see the children and staff dressed as their favourite book characters too!



We are proud to share that two pupils from Overdale Junior School were selected to take part in the University of Leicester's Founders of the Future - 2121 campaign. The campaign explores themes of people, planet, health and culture, encouraging young people to think about the world they will help shape. This opportunity reflects the importance of giving pupils meaningful experiences beyond the classroom and aligns closely with OAK's commitment to sustainability and long-term impact. Well done to our pupils for representing their school and community so confidently.



Recently, four of our pupils were selected to take part in the Overdale and Local Authority project with the Transport Development Team on Tuesday 3 March. They contributed to the creation of a short film promoting the benefits of Leicester City's School Street schemes, and represented the school brilliantly throughout the session. The children also had the exciting opportunity to experiment with the filming equipment themselves, gaining hands-on experience and developing a valuable life skill.



To start off National Science Week at Overdale Junior School, the whole school took part in the BBC Live Lesson, learning all about space. Astronaut Tim Peake made a special guest appearance sharing facts about the Moon, and children were asked to make a movie starring the Moon from CBBC's Horrible Science.

Year 6 celebrated British Science Week by learning about different science careers, and enjoying some nature photography in the woodland. Children then edited their images and uploaded them to enter a class competition. How amazing are some of these photos!



As a Trust, we recognise the importance of and encourage outdoor learning where possible and are lucky to have some incredible outdoor spaces.



Thank you to everybody who attended the art exhibition at Overdale Junior School. The display showcased an inspiring range of work from across all year groups, highlighting the children's imagination, skill, and growing confidence in expressing themselves through art. The exhibition has been a wonderful opportunity for pupils to take pride in their achievements and for families to share in the joy of their artistic journey.

Hedge Planting

On 19th March, our Year 3 children along with our Eco-Council took part in a wonderful hedge-planting project on our school grounds, and we are incredibly proud of everything they achieved.

It was a memorable event that brought learning to life and gave our pupils the chance to make a meaningful contribution to the future of our school environment. With support from members of the Trust, as well as staff from Overdale Junior School, the children worked with great care, planting young trees into pre-dug holes, firming the soil around each one to help them take root securely. It was a hands-on experience that required patience, teamwork and attention to detail.

From the moment they arrived on site, the children showed genuine excitement about being part of something that will grow and flourish long after their time at school. Their teamwork was exemplary, with pupils encouraging one another, sharing tools, and taking pride in doing the job well. Their respect for the environment was clear in the thoughtful way they handled each young tree, understanding that these small saplings will one day become a thriving hedge that supports wildlife and enhances our school grounds. We are thrilled at the prospect of these hedges growing into a beautiful and lasting feature of our school for many years to come. This simple act of planting today will become part of the legacy that our children begin—and also one they leave behind for future generations. It is not often that pupils get the chance to create something so long-lasting, and we are delighted to have given them the opportunity to contribute to something so meaningful.



Spring term in Preschool

We have been learning about lots of different festivals such as Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Eid, Holi, Chinese New Year and Easter. We have tasted food from around the world and learnt how to cook/prepare some recipes too! We also took part in a colour throwing celebration for Holi where all of the children (and staff) fully embraced getting messy chasing each other with different rainbow powder.

We celebrated World book day for 2 days in preschool, sharing the children's favourite stories from home and dressing up. Before the end of term, we also invited parents in for an Easter egg hunt, bonnet parade and Egg rolling competition.

Our favourite time of year is the arrival of our eggs and incubator, this year we successfully hatched 8 chicks. Whilst they are with us we look after them, feed them, clean them and handle them. The children have been amazing at remembering how to care for them; they will be going to live at the working farm at Stoughton.



Year 5 Bikeability

At the end of the spring term, many of the children took part in the bikeability training scheme. They got to practice in school, gaining confidence, before venturing onto small roads.

Throughout the week, they completed first the Level 1 and then the Level 2 training. The children learnt about junctions, signalling and riding safely!



EYFS Playground

Our EYFS playground has recently been refurbished to create an exciting and engaging outdoor learning environment for the children. The space now includes a range of different areas designed to support a variety of play and learning opportunities. Under the shelter, we have begun developing dedicated role-play houses and spaces where children can explore, create and collaborate, whatever the weather.



As part of a Trust funded EYFS project, we are currently in the process of purchasing new equipment to further resource the area and enhance the experiences available. The children have already shown great enthusiasm and have thoroughly enjoyed exploring the new space, using their curiosity and imagination as they discover all the different areas. We are excited to continue developing the playground and seeing how it supports their learning and play.



Year 6 Houses of Parliament

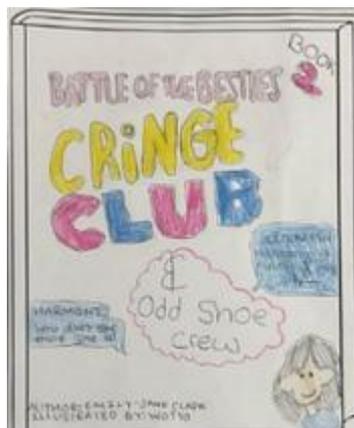
In January Year 6 travelled to London to visit the Houses of Parliament. The classes took part in a workshop to help them understand how laws are passed in Parliament and the role of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. We also had a tour of the Houses of Parliament, walking through the 1000-year-old Westminster Hall and the hallowed corridors where our Members of Parliament gather. We were able to see the House of Lords, where we spent some time listening to a health debate in the public gallery.



Whole School - World Book Day

For our World Book Day this year, children and staff came dressed as a favourite book character. We started our day with parents coming in to school for a 'Stay and Read' session; we have had three 'Stay and Read' sessions this year as we celebrate the National Year of Reading. During the day, year groups spent time on creative reading activities, you can see the Year 5 bookmarks and Year 6 newly designed book covers below.

The highlight of the day was the official opening of our new school library. Opening our new School Library on World Book Day was a very special treat. This has been a much-loved project and without the continued work from Miss Smith, the financial support from FOWG, the expertise from Kibworth Book Shop and the enthusiasm of our children we wouldn't have such a special place for us to now all enjoy. We were really pleased to be joined by Craig Brown, the Oak Director of Education, Mrs Merriman, our Curriculum Governor, Kirsty from Kibworth Book Shop and our Reading Ambassadors.





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