



— SPRING TERM 2026 —

Curriculum Newsletter

St Mary's Catholic School



Dear St Mary's Community,

What an absolute privilege it is to share with you the wonderful news that St Mary's Catholic School has been recognised with an Educational Outcomes Award, placing us in the top 10% of non-selective schools nationally for student attainment in the 2025 end of Key Stage 4 examinations. This is truly outstanding recognition, and I want to extend my sincere and heartfelt thanks to every single member of our school community who has contributed to this remarkable achievement.

This award is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and commitment of our students, staff, and families. It reflects the collective effort of everyone who believes in our mission and works tirelessly to ensure that every pupil in our care has the opportunity to flourish and succeed. Whether it's our teaching staff going above and beyond in their classrooms, our support teams providing invaluable guidance, or our families nurturing and encouraging their children at home, this success belongs to us all.

This Spring Term edition of our newsletter showcases the breadth and depth of what makes St Mary's such a special place. Throughout these pages, you will discover a selection of wonderful snippets from what has been an exceptionally rewarding Spring term. From our academic achievements and milestone moments to our wide and diverse range of super and extra-curricular opportunities, it is clear that our students are thriving in every aspect of school life. These opportunities enrich their experience, develop their talents, and help them grow into well-rounded, confident young people.

I am immensely proud of what we have achieved together, and I am equally excited about what lies ahead. Our award is not an endpoint but rather a stepping stone on our journey of continuous improvement and excellence. I am confident that with the same dedication and passion that has brought us to this point, we will continue to build on these successes and create an even brighter future for all our students.

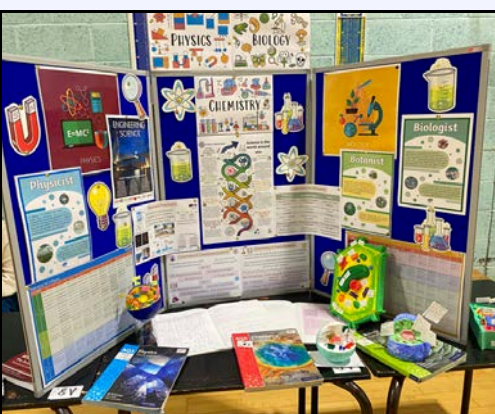
Thank you for your continued support and belief in St Mary's Catholic School.

God Bless you all!

Deirdre McHugh

Spring Term 2026 Highlights

- Extend Project Qualification
- Art
- Business & Economics
- Computing
- Design Technology
- Drama
- English
- Geography
- History
- Maths
- Modern Foreign Languages
- Music
- Physical Education
- Politics
- Psychology & Health and Social Care
- Religious Education
- Science



LOVE - RESPECT - FLOURISH

ART

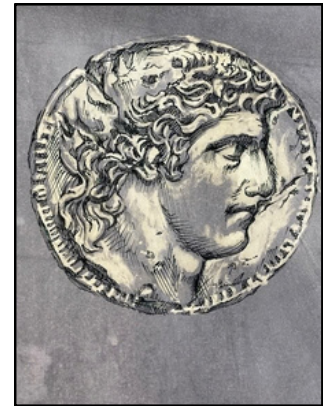
Year 12 create some stunning ceramic work with Sarah Hollis

Year 12 artists have recently glazed and fired the work created with local ceramicist Sarah Hollis. The outcomes have been breath taking. We are so proud of the progress Year 12 have made with this high-level skill of throwing on a wheel and we look forward to supporting them with more ceramic work as the A level course progresses.



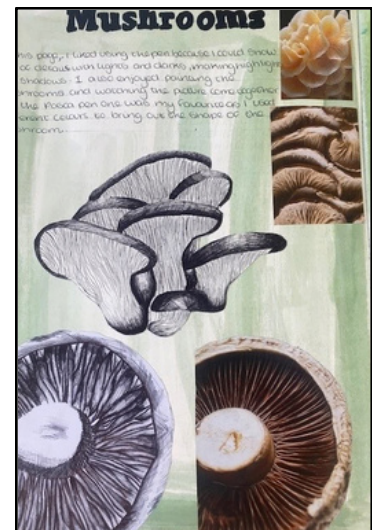
Well Done Year 11!

Mrs Reece and Ms Nairn want to say a huge congratulations and well done to our wonderful Year 11 group who completed a very successful 2-day mock exam in February. Students spent the day creating work using Milton Fluid and Lino printing all of which was hugely successful. We wish them the very best for the end of their GCSE courses and look forward to a wonderful GCSE exam in April! We are very much hoping to see lots of students back to undertake A level Art or Photography in September 2026.



Year 10 go from strength to strength this year!

Mrs Reece and Ms Nairn want to congratulate Year 10 on some wonderful progress with their Art coursework. Sketchbooks are looking absolutely wonderful – a selection of which you can see below.



South Mill Key Stage Three and A Level Art Exhibition

Calling all parents, teachers and wider community of SMCS – we are so lucky to have been given the mezzanine floor at South Mill Arts for the entire months of June, July and August! We will be hosting a Key Stage 3 Art Exhibition in June and then changing this to hang our A level work in July!

It would be wonderful if you are interested to pop along to see the amazing work on display, all parents of students involved will be contacted by Miss Nairn nearer the time.

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

As we move into the Summer term, students across Years 10–13 will be building on the foundations laid earlier in the year while also developing the analytical and evaluative skills required for success in Business and Economics. This term places a strong emphasis on applying theory to real-world contexts, practising exam technique, and preparing students for the key assessments that lie ahead.

Year 10 – Edexcel GCSE Business

Year 10 students will continue their journey through the Edexcel GCSE Business course by exploring key concepts within Theme 1: Investigating Small Business. This term has focussed on key areas such as franchising, liability and business ownership. Year 10 students were each given an imaginary £50,000 and had to investigate franchise opportunities they wish to pursue! Furthermore, students have been designing their own business plans, meaning that they will be ready to apply for finance from a bank when their idea is full ready.

Year 11 – Edexcel GCSE Business

Year 11 students will be completing their study of Theme 2: Building a Business. As the GCSE examinations approach, a major focus will be revision and exam technique. Students will practise analysing data, interpreting financial information, and constructing well-developed evaluation in longer responses. Timed practice papers and targeted feedback will support students in refining their exam strategies.

Year 12 – Edexcel A Level Business

Our wonderful Year 12 Business students completed presentations how motivation. They investigated the motivational theories and evaluated the effectiveness of financial and non-financial methods. Interestingly not all students were motivated by money!



Economics

Students will focus on advanced macroeconomic and global topics, including international competitiveness, poverty and inequality, and financial markets. They will also explore the challenges faced by developing and emerging economies, as well as policy approaches used to promote sustainable growth.

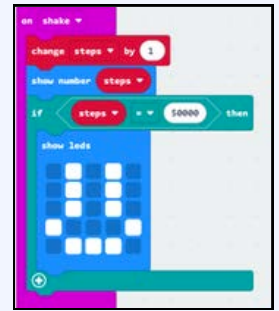
Throughout the term, students have and will be practising and constructing longer analytical essays and using economic diagrams accurately. Emphasis will be placed on developing chains of reasoning and balanced evaluation.

COMPUTING

This term has been another outstanding period of achievement in Computing, with students across all year groups demonstrating creativity, resilience and impressive technical skill. From first experiences of programming in Year 7 to sophisticated algorithmic thinking at A Level, students continue to thrive in a curriculum designed to stretch and inspire.

In **Year 7**, students have taken their first steps into programming using Micro:bit computers. Working with a block-based programming language, they have developed their understanding of sequence, selection and iteration in an accessible yet powerful environment. Their assessment challenged them to design and build a step counter, requiring them to apply their knowledge of variables, inputs and conditional logic. Students showed excellent problem-solving skills as they debugged their programs and refined their algorithms, gaining confidence in computational thinking while producing a practical, real-world application.

Opposite is an example of a Micro:bit step counter designed by Hayden L.



```
1 print("Good afternoon human, I am your new chatbot friend")
2 personName = input("What is your name? ")
3 print("Hello,", personName, "its nice to meet you")
4 robotName = input("Unfortunately I do not have a name, please give me a name: ")
5 print(robotName, "is a lovely name")
6 favouriteYear = int(input("If you could live in any past year what would be? I would live in 1979."))
7 print("Really! I know a typewriter who lived in", favouriteYear+10, "just ten years later.")
8 favouriteCountry = input("But they lived in New Zealand with all the other kiwis. Whats your favourite country: ")
9 favouriteThing = input("I've been there!, but what are they famous for?(i forgot...):")
10 print("you seem quiet smart", personName, "soooo... lets do a test!")
11 ans1 = int(input("Whats ham... 99?"))
12 print(ans1, "is.... correct(i think)")
13 ans2 = int(input("What year was Alexander Hamilton born in?"))
14 print(ans2, "ok i dont know the answer to this one either")
15 ans3 = int(input("Whats 1 + 1?"))
16 print("well tht was easy")
```

Python programming chat bot (Tabitha Y, Y8)

Building on this foundation, **Year 8** students began their transition into text-based programming using Python. They learnt how to use print statements to display output, define and manipulate variables, and collect user input to make their programs interactive. The move from block-based to text-based coding requires precision and attention to syntax, and students have demonstrated resilience as they adapted to this new level of challenge. It has been fantastic to see students begin to think like programmers, carefully structuring their code and testing their work systematically.

In **Year 9**, the focus shifted towards digital responsibility and critical awareness in an increasingly complex online world. Students explored e-safety, with particular attention to recognising deep-fake videos and understanding the serious risks associated with online threats such as sextortion. Rather than simply discussing these issues, students were tasked with building a website using Wix to present their understanding. This project combined technical web design skills with thoughtful research and clear communication, resulting in highly professional websites that demonstrated maturity, insight and creativity.



E-safety website homepage (Mariana A-F, Y9)

```
1 while True:
2     sentence = input("Enter a sentence: ")
3
4     words = sentence.split()
5     last_word = words[-1]
6
7     if last_word[-1] == ".":
8         print("Correct! Your sentence ends with a full stop.")
9         break
10    else:
11        print("Your sentence must end with a full stop. Try again.")
12
Shell:
>>> %Run starter.py
Enter a sentence: hamburger wins.
Correct! Your sentence ends with a full stop.
```

String manipulation to analyse if a sentence ends with a full stop (Dominic C, Y10)

At **GCSE Computer Science, Year 10** students have been developing more advanced programming techniques. They have explored string manipulation, enabling programs to analyse and process text, as well as file handling, which allows programs to read from and write data to files. These topics bring programming closer to real-world software development. In addition, students have completed a detailed unit on data representation, examining how all data is stored in binary form on hard disk drives and solid state drives. They will now move on to studying network infrastructure, further broadening their understanding of how computer systems connect and communicate.

Year 11 students recently undertook their mock examinations and have performed exceptionally well, reflecting their hard work and commitment. As they approach the end of the course, recent topics have included computational logic, which sharpens their ability to design and evaluate algorithms, and network security, where they explore threats, vulnerabilities and protective measures. Their progress is a testament to their perseverance and the strong foundations built throughout the course.

At A Level, **Year 12** students have completed the full unit on object-oriented programming and are now applying these skills to explore advanced data structures, including stacks and queues. These concepts deepen their understanding of how data can be organised and processed efficiently. Meanwhile, **Year 13** students have also achieved highly in their recent mock examinations. They are now focused on preparing for their final exams in June, carefully analysing and developing the pre-release code that they will extend during the examination itself.

DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

This term, the DT department is delighted to celebrate the fantastic work produced by our Key Stage 3 students. Our varied curriculum gives pupils the opportunity to design and make using a wide range of materials, including wood, plastics, metals, textiles, paper and board. Alongside this, students develop technical skills in electronics, mechanisms and computer-aided design. Take a look below for a snapshot of some of their outcomes.!

Year 7 pupils have been getting creative by making recycled plastic keyrings from bottle caps they collected themselves. The ever popular Block Head project also continues, with students designing imaginative characters while developing their wood shaping and forming skills.



Year 8 pupils have been exploring key concepts through the 21st Century Design project, studying sustainability and computer-aided design, alongside practical electronics where they solder their own nightlight.

In the Book Stand project, students are challenged to bring together wood and textiles practical work.



Year 9 students have been exploring mechanisms, applying their understanding of leverage to create spring celebration cards. In their textile rotation, pupils have worked with great care and precision to produce pencil cases decorated with appliqué. Well done, Year 9!



DRAMA

In Drama this term students have been developing their performance skills and knowledge of Dramatic styles.

Year 7 have been exploring characterisation through the much loved Roald Dahl story 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'.

Year 8 have been learning about Physical Theatre and, in particular, the key techniques of renowned theatre company Frantic Assembly.

Year 9 have been creating their own original drama by developing ideas from various stimuli. This is a particularly important skill for those students who will be taking Drama for GCSE next year.

Year 10 Drama students have spent the term exploring the starting points for Component 1 of the GCSE course. They have developed their understanding by creating their own responses to a chosen stimulus and using these ideas to devise and refine a performance. Alongside the practical work, students have been drafting their portfolio, documenting their creative journey. This includes recording their initial ideas, development process, rehearsals, and reflections on their work

Finally, **Year 11** have been working very hard this term. Firstly, preparing for their Component 2 exam which required them to perform 2 extracts from published plays. This saw students working on 'Teachers' by John Godber and 'The Crucible' by Arthur Miller. The class are now focused on the upcoming final written paper in May.



ENGLISH

The Catenian Speaking Competition at St Edmund's College in Ware was a great experience which I thoroughly enjoyed. I was one of 15 competitors who were each tasked with delivering a four minute speech to an audience of competitors, teachers and three judges including the Bishop of the Diocese.

I chose to deliver a speech based on why a large number of Gen Z young people are returning to religion. I wrote and practiced the speech with the help of Mr Ockendon, and two other Year 12 St Mary's students did the same, giving feedback to each other. On the day of the event, we travelled to St Edmund's and mingled with the other competitors and stewards before the speeches started.

We found out the order of speakers upon entering the room in which the competition would take place, on a stage with a lectern and a microphone, in front of the panel of judges.

The standard of speeches delivered was very high, with all 15 competitors performing confidently and clearly. Following the speeches (I went 12th) we received a tour of the school which included the impressive chapel and buildings. The speeches covered a wide variety of topics, from astrology to literature to medicine and ethics.

The experience was very valuable and helpful for me, allowing me to observe confident public speakers with different strengths and weaknesses, allowing me to reflect on my own skills and areas I need to develop. The competition allowed me to understand that public speaking is a skill which needs to be balanced and honed in order to be most effective. For example, too much energy can intimidate the audience, but not enough can lose their focus.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and it was helpful in developing my confidence in public speaking and an opportunity to support and represent the school.

(Oliver D, Year 13)



Macbeth performance - the students' voice



“The Macbeth play helped me with my GCSE revision as it was a good recap of everything we have learnt. I was able to pick out the key quotes and acquired a more firm understanding of the order of events in the play. I enjoyed the experience as the actors were skilled and the play was put together very well. (Harriet)”

“I really felt a confidence boost watching Macbeth because I can now understand the tone in which the words were spoken thanks to the actors' – I now understand the characters' feelings and emotions better and can include it in my analysis. Watching the play also gave me a better grasp of the text as a whole. (Franklin)”



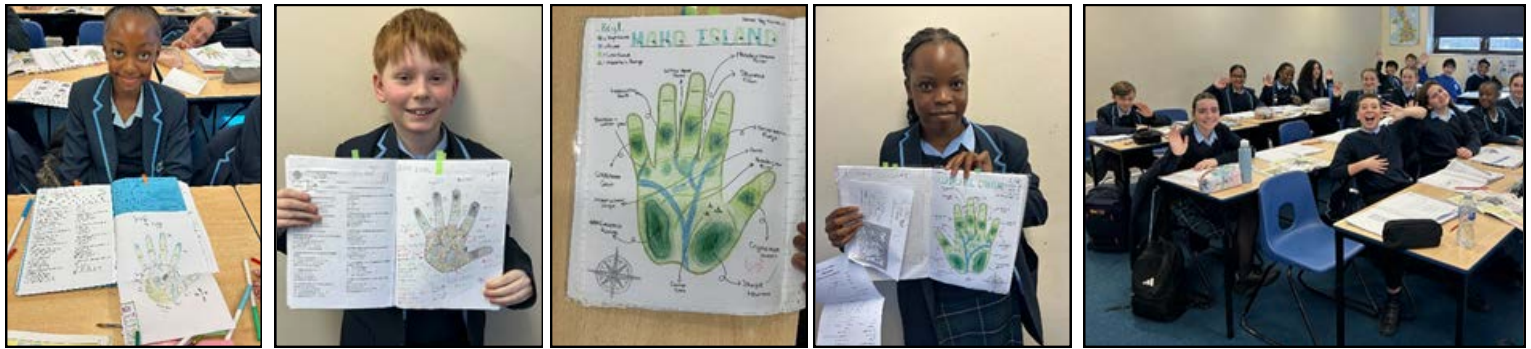
“I think that watching Macbeth was a refreshing event to experience as we studied the text quite a while ago and it kind of jogged my memory. The good thing about it was that since it's theatrical it helped me to understand the different tones of the characters speaking and the effects of settings. (Jayden)”

“Watching the play was a great revision experience – it allowed me to refamiliarise myself with the sequence of the play and key events. Being part of the audience also allowed me to experience firsthand the effects of Shakespeare's methods. (Olivia)”

“Seeing Macbeth in its intended format was an incredibly fun yet useful form of revision. It gave me new perspectives of the characters and themes of the play, encouraging my revision. (Orla)”

GEOGRAPHY

Our **Year 7** students have recently completed a 'Handy Maps' extended homework assignment where they designed imaginary desert islands with a range of human and physical features, as part of their 'Exploring the world' map skills unit.

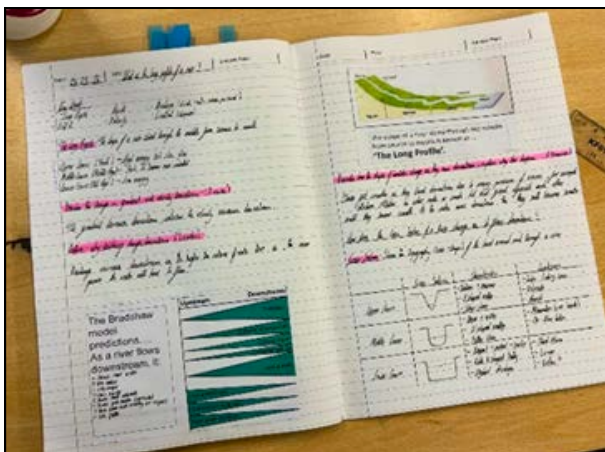


Year 10 students have been encouraged to work both in groups and independently to complete 'Market stall' or 'Treasure Hunt' style activities, where they have to find / sequence / sort / summarise information that has been placed in different parts of the classroom. They have enjoyed the competitive element as well as the chance to move around the classroom and share ideas.



Our **Year 13** students have also been simultaneously working hard the final stages of completing their independent investigations (NEA fieldwork). This is worth 20% of their final overall grade. They have covered 4 out of the 5 sections and so they are over half-way to securing as many of the 60 marks available for their final submission in April 2026.

The general standard of the quality of extended written responses for the Year 10 end of topic assessments was impressive. The students were proud of their work and they engaged positively with their response to teacher feedback in their Green Pen editing. An example of a student's work is shown below:



Year 11 Geography Easter Revision

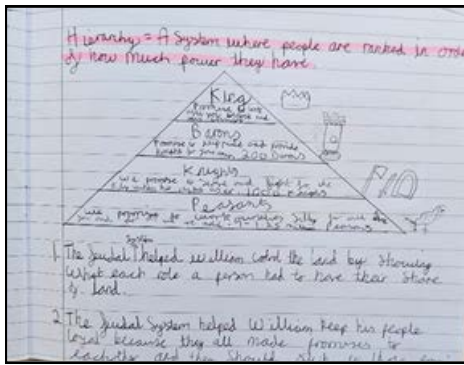
Don't forget the Easter revision session for Geography that will be on Wednesday 1st April. Please check the list that has been emailed out, and sign up in advance, remembering to pay the £1 donation via ParentPay.



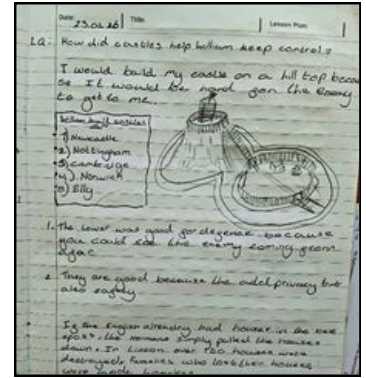
The session will focus on Paper 3 fieldwork questions, and geographical skills (numeracy and graph skills), for Papers 1, 2 and 3.

HISTORY

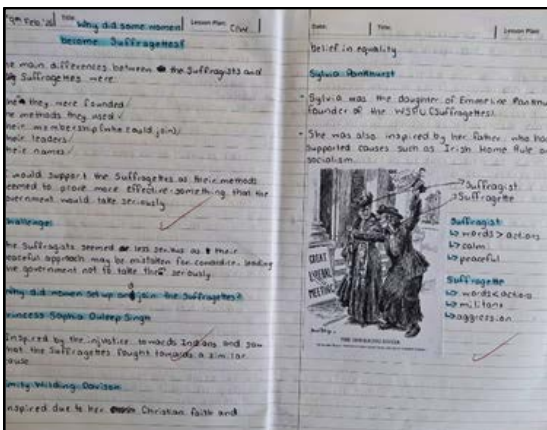
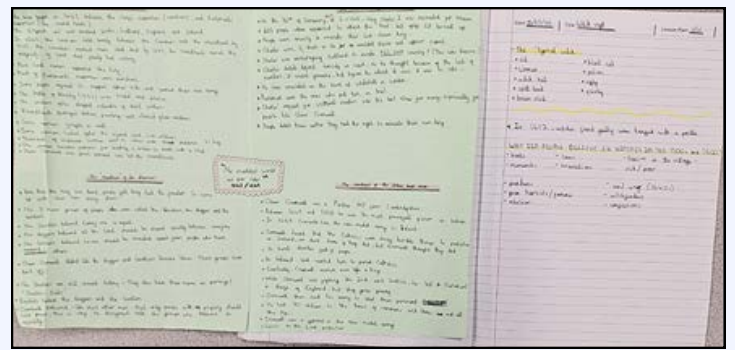
It's been another fascinating term of historical exploration for the students. They have been delving into a diverse range of topics, bringing the past to life and grappling with the complexities of the present. Here's a glimpse into what each year group has been up to:



Year 7: Our youngest historians have been transported back to 1066, exploring the dramatic events of the Norman Conquest. They've investigated the battles, the castles, and the lasting impact of William the Conqueror's victory, discovering how this pivotal moment shaped the future of England.



Year 8 have plunged into the eerie world of the 16th and 17th century witch hunts. They've examined the social and religious anxieties that fuelled this dark chapter in history, uncovering the stories of those accused and the devastating consequences of mass hysteria. It's been a chilling but crucial exploration of how fear can grip a society.



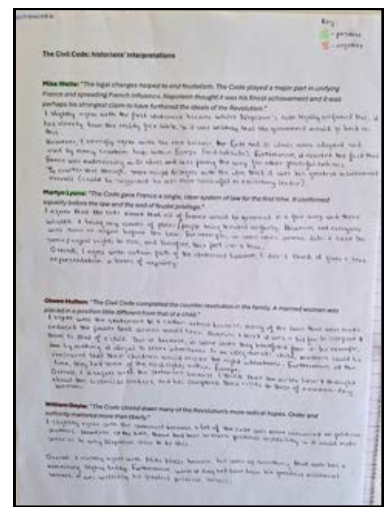
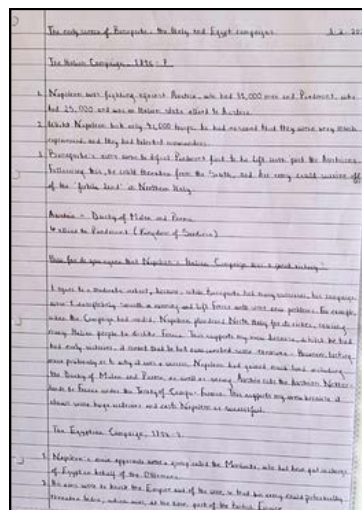
Our **Year 9** students have been passionately exploring the fight for women's suffrage in Britain. They've investigated the diverse tactics of the suffragettes and suffragists, from peaceful protests to radical actions, and analysed the key figures who campaigned for equality. They've come to understand the long and arduous journey towards women gaining the right to vote.

Year 10 have been studying the First World War, focusing on the Western Front. They've examined the devastating injuries suffered by soldiers and the revolutionary medical treatments developed in response. They have learnt the brutal realities of trench warfare, and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable suffering.

Year 11 have been navigating the tense beginnings of the Cold War, examining the ideological clash between East and West. They've explored the key events and figures that shaped this era, from the Potsdam Conference to the early stages of the arms race, understanding how the world was reshaped by this global conflict.

Year 12 have been exploring post-war British politics. They are gaining a deeper understanding of the forces that shaped British society in the 20th Century.

Year 13 have been diligently completing their coursework, demonstrating their research and analytical skills. Alongside this, they have been studying the dramatic rise to power and rule of Napoleon Bonaparte in France, examining the military strategies, political upheavals, and enduring legacy of this era.

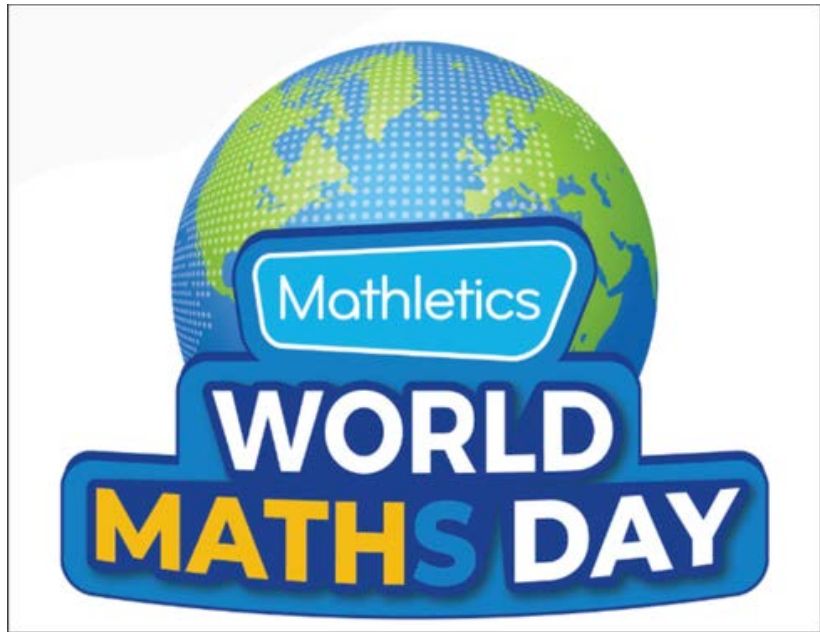


MATHS

Our school took part in this year's World Maths Day from 25th to 27th March, joining students from across the globe in a celebration of numbers, problem-solving, and friendly competition. This year the theme was 'United by Numbers' celebrating the belief that everyone can learn and excel in maths.

With an impressive entry of around 550 students, the 48-hour online event was a showcase of enthusiasm and mathematical talent.

Over two evenings, students engaged in a series of fast-paced challenges designed to test their arithmetic skills, logical thinking, and accuracy. Competing in real time against peers worldwide, participants demonstrated resilience, focus, and a strong spirit of competition. This competition brings a lot of joy in learning maths!

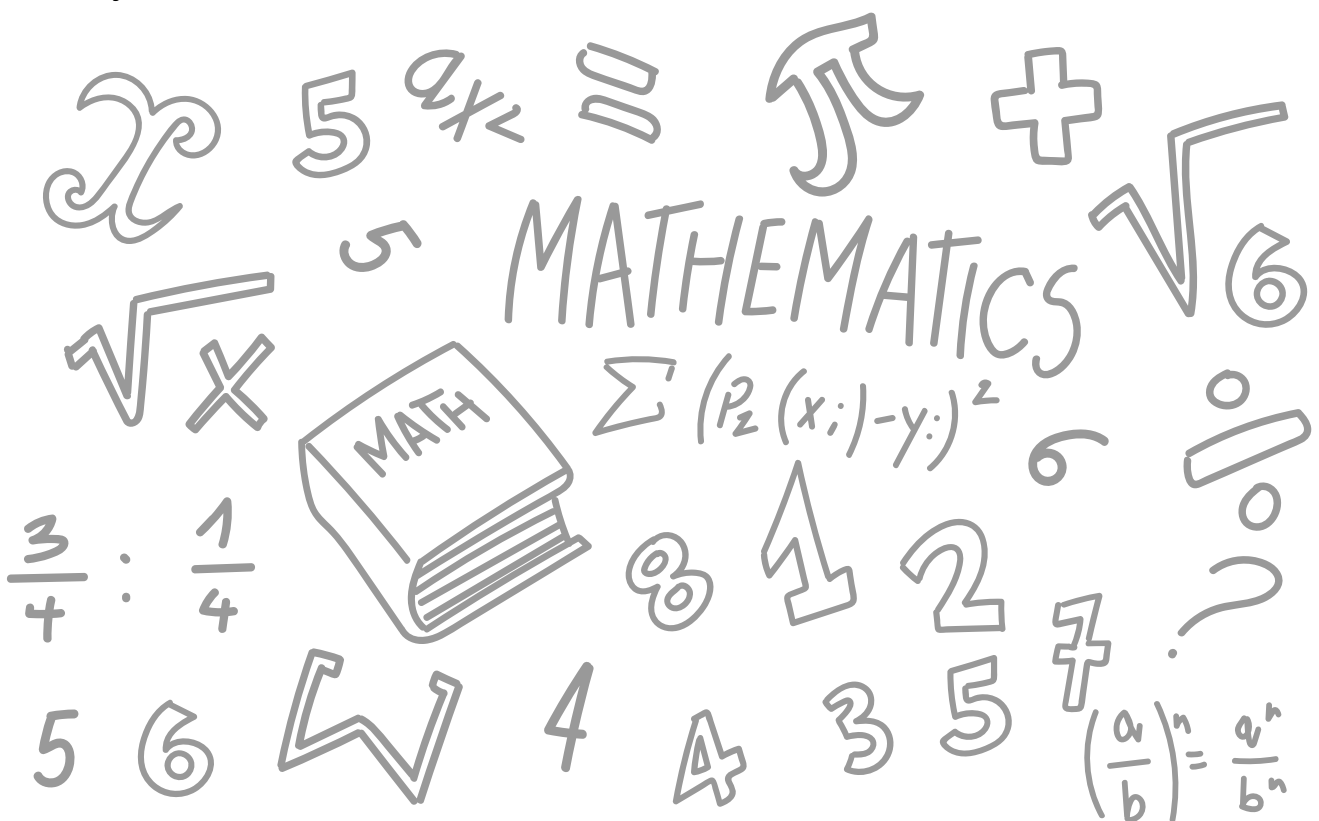


The atmosphere across Key Stage 3 was lively, with students eager to improve their scores and climb the global rankings. Year 7 were particularly enthusiastic to take part as many had participated before when they were in Key Stage 2. Many embraced the opportunity to challenge themselves, while also enthusing their classmates and celebrating each other's achievements.

In addition to the global competition, students have also been competing within their own classes for the Top Award. These awards will be presented at the beginning of next term, adding an extra level of excitement and motivation for everyone involved.

Taking part in World Maths Day not only strengthened students' confidence in mathematics but also highlighted the importance of perseverance, and global connection. We are proud of all who participated and represented the school so positively on an international stage.

Well done to everyone involved!



MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Joyeuses Pâques! Feliz Pascua! Buona Pasqua! to all our French, Spanish and Italian students. We look forward to seeing you after Easter! Have a fun and relaxing Easter break.

This half of term, we're running an MFL Interhouse Passport Project Competition. We look forward to judging entries. Please see the image opposite for details:

Key Stage 3

In **Year 7**, MFL students have been learning to use irregular verbs in the present tense and to use the near future. In French we've focused on describing free time activities, (including sports in Francophone countries) and on family, breakfast traditions in France and Bastille Day. In Italian, students have been learning how to describe where they live, daily routine, hobbies and sports. In Spanish, students have been learning to describe school, family members and where they live.

MFL Inter-House Competition
Passport Project: Adopt a Country

🇫🇷 Studying French or Spanish? Show off your language skills and base your homework on a country.

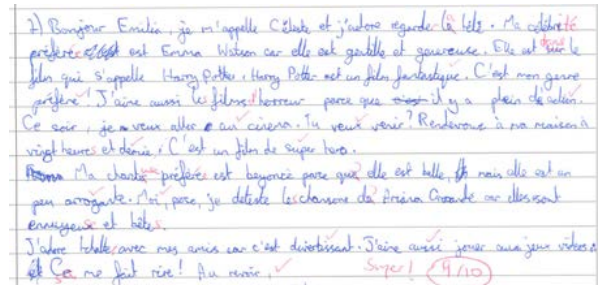
🇮🇹 Studying Italian? Show off your language skills and base your homework on a city or region.

🇪🇸 Create ONE creative homework piece:
• Poster OR Leaflet

🇫🇷 You must include:
• 10 key phrases in the target language
• 5 cultural facts
• A famous person (e.g. Kylian Mbappé or Rosalía)
• A famous landmark (e.g. Brandenburg Gate or Colosseum)

🇮🇹 **Win Inter-House Points & Impress Your Teachers!**
Start date: week commencing 9th March Deadline: week commencing 23rd March.

Bonne chance! ¡Buena suerte! rrs



In **Year 8**, MFL students have continued to build on their knowledge of the present, past perfect and future tenses. In French, students have been learning to describe digital activities, the cinema, leisure activities where they and those in Francophone countries live, household chores and daily routine. In Italian, students have been learning to describe clothes, school uniform, parts of the body and healthy/unhealthy foods and how to make lifestyle changes for the future. In Spanish, students have been learning to describe mealtimes and foods for celebrations, making arrangements/excuses for going/not going out and discussing getting ready to go out.



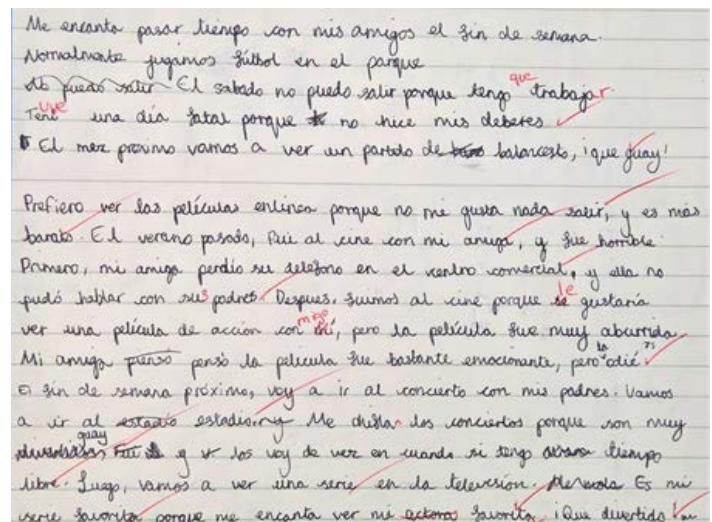
In **Year 9**, MFL students have continued to build on their knowledge of the present, future, perfect and imperfect tenses. In French, students have been learning how to describe musical tastes, life at primary and secondary school and how times have changed and will change. They have also learnt how to describe animals using the superlative. In Italian, students have been learning to describe what they used to be like, to compare primary and secondary school and to discuss environmental issues and how they would like to improve the world. In Spanish, students have been learning to describe healthy eating, active lifestyles, ailments, discussing children's rights, social issues and fundraising.



Key Stage 4

Year 10 and 11 French and Spanish students are coping very well with the rigours of a new GCSE specification where the focus is on mastering grammar in order to be able to manipulate the language. Students have also been learning phonics in order to ensure that they can pronounce the language accurately to achieve well in the new read aloud section of the oral exam and in the dictation. Year 10 and 11 Italian students have been making excellent progress with the old specification.

Year 11 MFL students have been working hard to ensure that they are very well prepared for the forthcoming GCSE exams. We wish them well as they continue to revise carefully over the Easter Holidays.



Over the Easter holidays, please do encourage your children to dabble in the activities outlined on the supercurricular documents for French, Spanish and Italian which can be found on the school website (under curriculum) and on Teams.

MUSIC



On 3rd February we had our Year 9 Battle of the Bands. This has become a yearly event in the Hall which results from the 'Musical Futures' Scheme of Work that we run. Seven bands performed and the standard of music was excellent. The judges had a really tough decision to pick the winning band and the runners up. The judges also treated us to a performance of 'Sultans of Swing' by Dire Straits.

The winning band, made up of Lucas B, Rhema B, Maame-Yaa P, Rianne M, Joshua B and Phoebe O, performed 'I Will Survive' by Gloria Gaynor with a fantastic a cappella section in 3 part harmony.

The runners up were another six-strong band made up of Ranniel M, Edmund M, Josiah F, Ruairi H, Yooku N and Charlotte E. They performed 'Blinded by your Grace' by Stormzy with some superb vocals from Edmund. All of Year 9 came to watch and were a very supportive audience cheering on their peers. A great event every year and we look forward to the next one.



EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION (EPQ)

During this half term our wonderful Year 13 Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) cohort wrapped up their projects with impressive presentations.

The students have spent a year on an enrichment option that led to them securing a qualification equivalent to half an A-Level. They have chosen and refined their research questions, independently undertaken primary and secondary research, written 5000-word essays and presented their findings to an audience of staff members and the Senior Leadership Team.



It has been an absolute privilege to learn from these young people and see their journeys unfold. The students have gained academic skills that exceed their A-Level studies, preparing them for the world of Higher Education and beyond. The research questions ranged from 'How feasible is it for humans to reach type 1 on the Kardashev scale?' to 'What are the architectural lessons learnt from the Grenfell Tower fire?'

We wish them all the best as they now await their results and share our pride in their accomplishments.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

As we approach the end of Term 2, it is a pleasure to reflect on another busy and successful period for Physical Education at St Mary's. Across all key stages, students have continued to demonstrate enthusiasm, resilience, and a commitment to developing their physical skills and teamwork. This term has been particularly encouraging, with high levels of participation in lessons and an exceptional turnout at extracurricular clubs and competitions.

Key Stage 3 Highlights: Students have taken part in a varied and engaging curriculum designed to develop core physical skills while introducing students to a range of sporting experiences.

Girls have completed units in netball, gymnastics, and Outdoor Adventurous Activities (OAA). Through these activities, students have developed coordination, balance, and teamwork, while also building confidence in both individual and group challenges. The OAA programme has been particularly valuable in encouraging communication, problem-solving, and leadership skills.

Boys have participated in football, OAA, basketball, and handball. These activities have supported the development of tactical awareness, passing and movement skills, and overall physical literacy. A highlight this term has been the introduction of guest coaching sessions delivered by England handball certified coaches. These sessions aimed to introduce boys to the sport of Handball and encourage greater participation in the game. Students responded enthusiastically, demonstrating excellent engagement and a willingness to develop new skills.

Key Stage 4 Highlights: Students have continued to refine their technical ability while developing a deeper understanding of tactics and performance. Their commitment and effort has been excellent, and the students have continued to support one another in their learning.

Girls have participated in dance, trampolining, badminton, and netball. These activities have encouraged creativity, agility, and precision, while also allowing students to demonstrate teamwork and performance skills.

Boys have taken part in football, basketball, Gaelic football, and volleyball. Through these sports, students have developed strategic thinking, fitness, and coordination while applying their skills in competitive situations.

GCSE PE and A-Level PE: students are now approaching the final stages of their courses as they prepare for their summer examinations. Many students have performed very well in their recent mock exams and coursework assessments, demonstrating strong knowledge and understanding across both the theoretical and practical elements of the courses. We are proud of the commitment shown by these students and encourage them to continue working hard as they move towards their final assessments.

Competitive Success and Extracurricular Sport: This term has seen the highest number of students attending extracurricular sports clubs to date. Both netball and football clubs regularly attract over 100 students, reflecting the strong sporting culture within the school and the enthusiasm students have for representing St Mary's.

Our teams have enjoyed considerable success in both local and regional competitions, securing a number of impressive victories against strong opposition. We would like to give a special mention to the Year 8 girls, who were crowned District Football Champions, and the Year 9 girls, who achieved an outstanding result by becoming Hertfordshire County Netball Champions.

Success Beyond School: We are also incredibly proud of the many students who have achieved sporting success outside of school. Kai F recently competed at the men's Indoor Athletics Nationals in the 400m, representing his club at a very high level. In swimming, Heloise F competed at the Essex County Championships, where she reached the final of the 100m Breaststroke and finished an impressive 7th overall. She also placed 10th in the demanding 400m Individual Medley. Atticus F also enjoyed an outstanding championships, achieving 11 personal bests and reaching the finals of both the 200m Backstroke and the Medley Relay.

In athletics, Bella continues to excel and was recently crowned the Essex and East of England 800m Champion, securing the title at the weekend with a fantastic performance. Isla has also been performing exceptionally well in cross country, finishing 2nd in her competition and earning a place at the English Schools Cross Country Final.

These achievements highlight the dedication, commitment, and passion our students show for sport both in and beyond the school environment.

Looking Ahead to Term 3: We are excited to begin our athletics, cricket, and tennis programmes. These activities will provide students with further opportunities to develop new skills, challenge themselves, and enjoy being active outdoors as the weather improves.



POLITICS

Year 12 have been exploring the fascinating world of political ideologies, focusing on Liberalism and Socialism. They've been analysing the core principles of these ideologies and their impact on society, engaging in lively debates and developing their critical thinking skills.

Year 13 have been delving into the intricacies of the UK and US political systems, comparing their structures, processes, and cultures. They've been analysing the strengths and weaknesses of each system, gaining a deeper understanding of the diverse ways in which power is exercised.

We are incredibly proud of our students' engagement and enthusiasm for history and politics. We look forward to another term of stimulating learning!

Two of our Year 12 Politics students, Daniel and Jonathan, completed their work experience in the House of Commons before half-term. Here's what they had to say about this amazing opportunity:

Jonathan: *During the parliamentary work experience placement, we gained a valuable insight into the dedication and professionalism that define daily life at Westminster. The scale of hard work and organisation across Parliament was immediately clear, particularly within the Conservative Party, while also evident across the wider parliamentary community.*

Observing debates in the House of Commons was a highlight of the experience, especially watching Prime Minister's Questions. The energy, scrutiny and passion demonstrated by Members of Parliament during these exchanges reflected the importance of robust democratic debate in shaping the direction of the country.

We were also able to observe proceedings in the House of Lords, where debates offered a contrasting but equally engaging atmosphere. The more measured and detailed discussions provided an interesting perspective on how legislation and national issues are carefully considered and reviewed.

Overall, the experience was inspiring and educational. It reinforced how passion for public service, combined with hard work and determination, can play a meaningful role in shaping the future of the country and showed us that with commitment, ambitious goals can be achieved.

Daniel: *During my recent work experience, I was incredibly fortunate to gain an amazing opportunity working within politics. What made this experience even more meaningful to me was not just what I learned while I was there, but the journey it took to get there.*

One of the biggest lessons I've learned is that opportunities don't just appear, you have to actively look for them. Anyone can achieve something similar if they are willing to put the effort in to find the right contacts, send the emails, make the calls, and most importantly, not be afraid of rejection.

During my time working with the Conservative Party and at Conservative Campaign Headquarters, I was able to see first-hand how political strategy, campaigning, and communication operate behind the scenes. It opened my eyes to the scale of work that goes into representing people and shaping the direction of the country.

One of the highlights of my experience was being able to speak personally with Kemi Badenoch. We discussed how she and the party aim to work hard to deliver meaningful change that better supports young people across the country, a group that is often overlooked in national politics. It was inspiring to hear directly about the importance of youth engagement and the recognition that young voices matter. The Conservatives also have a youth wing that allows under-18s to contribute to politics on a more youth-focused level. If anyone in the school is interested in politics and would like to get involved, please feel free to reach out to me, I would be more than happy to connect you with the right people so you can begin your own journey into politics.

This experience has truly helped me realise what I want to pursue in life. I now plan to begin by volunteering and building experience locally, and in the summer of Year 13, I have even been offered the opportunity to return for a paid internship at CCHQ.

I am incredibly thankful to everyone within the Conservative Party who gave me their time, guidance, and trust. Being welcomed into such a professional and driven team has meant a lot to me, and I genuinely feel like I have found my future in politics.

Looking ahead, I also hope to bring more political engagement into our school community. Whether that means inviting MPs to speak, hosting discussions, or encouraging greater participation in democratic debate, I believe it is imperative that young people are engaged in politics. We are the next generation who will influence the direction of our country, and developing strong democratic values now is crucial.

Overall, this experience has not only given me practical skills and insight, but it has given me direction. It has shown me that with effort, resilience, and ambition, doors really do open, and sometimes they lead you exactly where you are meant to be.



PSYCHOLOGY

Year 12 Psychologists (with a few Year 13s who joined us for revision just before their exams) have been studying social influence, where they've explored conformity, obedience, social change and looked at well-known studies such as Milgram's 'shocking' obedience experiment.

Year 12 are photographed in a line of continuum to represent their own locus of control. According to the theory, those on the right have an internal locus of control and are most likely to attribute their outcomes to things within their control, taking responsibility for their own actions. Those on the left are the externals, taking less personal responsibility and attributing outcomes to factors beyond their control. Those on the left are most likely to be obedient - there was some dispute amongst the class about this theory!



HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

Year 12 (AAQ) and Year 13 (BTEC) Health & Social Care students welcomed PC Dunn to speak about her career in policing. The session was carefully linked to the curriculum, enabling students to explore how policing connects to safeguarding, multi-disciplinary team working, professional values and supporting vulnerable individuals, which are key themes within their studies.

Students asked insightful, well-prepared questions and engaged thoughtfully with topics such as mental health, partnership working with hospitals and social services and balancing care with public protection. A live arrest demonstration brought learning to life and helped contextualise classroom theory in a real-world setting and students were incredibly keen to volunteer themselves and their peers for arrest!

PC Dunn offered great inspiration and shared how she once delayed her police training before asking herself, "What am I waiting for?" Realising that the only person holding her back was her own hesitation, she chose to take the leap. This acted as a powerful reminder of our values of courage and determination and resonated with our students, some of whom are now seriously considering a future in the police force.

We are grateful to PC Dunn for supporting and inspiring our students and of course for the excellent conduct of our wonderful sixth formers. We are very proud of their engagement and the warm welcome they extended to our visitor.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Students in RE have been studying a range of topics during this term.

Our **Year 7** students have been focusing on the life of Jesus and the structure and meaning of the Mass. They have produced some beautiful creative projects showing talent, inspiration and creativity.

Year 8 students have been deepening their knowledge of Jesus' ministry and have been tackling the deep theological problem of evil and suffering.

In **Year 9** students have been learning about discipleship. They have been considering the role of Jesus' followers and how discipleship is expressed in the modern world. They have also learnt about the key Christian values of forgiveness and redemption.

Our **Year 10** GCSE students have been learning Catholic teachings on relationships and families. One of our classes put together a wedding and reception. Their enthusiasm and contribution was superb, and as you can see from the attached pictures, everyone really enjoyed the opportunity to learn outside of the normal classroom format. They are now taking a break from studying Catholic teachings and delving into Judaism. Our **Year 11** students have now finished the syllabus and are focusing on revision and exam practice.

We have 15 students pursuing the A Level Religious Studies course. They have been studying Liberation Theology, Feminist and Black Theology as well as considering the role religion plays in developing a moral society. They were recently visited by a Franciscan friar who enjoyed chatting with them about their course and he was quizzed on his beliefs and lifestyle!

In the **Sixth Form** all students have one period of Core RE per week. These lessons are an opportunity to look at religious issues and developments worldwide. Much of the material we cover helps to support students in other areas of learning. This term **Year 12** have been looking at Justice and Conflict – particularly apt at the time unfortunately! This had involved learning about Just War Theory and arguments for and against capital punishment. Our **Year 13** students have been examining Catholic Social Teaching and animal rights. We hope that they are able to see the contribution that Christians make in trying to create a better world and the responsibility that they have to be part of the change.

In addition to delivering the normal curriculum, the RE department has also been involved in extra-curricular activities. We have been running a chaplaincy group after school on Wednesdays. We have enjoyed a range of activities from discussing 'big questions' to making origami.

In the Summer Term our KS3 students will be studying other world faiths – Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. Our GCSE and A Level students have exams to prepare for, and in Core RE we will be learning about Buddhism.

The RE department would like to thank all our students and their families for their hard work and support this term. We are very proud of the work our students do and the contributions they make in lessons with their enthusiasm and willingness to share their faith experiences.

We wish everyone who is taking public examinations next term every success.

May the joy of Christ's resurrection fill your heart with hope, peace, and renewed faith this Easter.



SCIENCE

Science Week was an exciting and engaging time for our pupils, packed with hands-on investigations and creative problem-solving. Throughout the week, pupils explored a wide range of scientific concepts through practical activities.

They experimented with chemistry by making salts and extracting DNA from strawberries, giving them a glimpse into the fascinating world of molecules and genetics.

Our Electrifying lesson sparked curiosity as pupils investigated how electricity works, while activities such as Circuit Makers, circuits and switches, and Code Breakers challenged them to think logically and build functioning electrical systems.

Pupils also discovered the science behind everyday processes by making bread, learning about yeast and chemical reactions. Creative experiments like lava lamps demonstrated density and chemical reactions in action, and the design challenge of building wind turbines encouraged pupils to think about renewable energy and engineering.

Science Week was a fantastic opportunity for pupils to explore, experiment, and develop their curiosity about the world around them.

