

St. Helen's JNS

Easter Newsletter - March 2026

Goodbye and Thank You to our Wonderful Chairperson

The staff and pupils of St Helen's Junior School wish to dedicate our Easter newsletter to our Chairperson Ms Celine O'Connell who passed away peacefully on Friday 6th March.

We are all heartbroken to have lost our wonderful Chairperson who served on our Board of Management for the past thirteen years as well as having been an active member in the Parents' Association in earlier years. Celine was instrumental in setting up the swimming club for St Helen's many years ago.

She made an exceptional contribution to the progress and development of our school over the years due to her stellar commitment to the Parents' Association and Board of Management.

Celine always ensured that the wellbeing of our young pupils, their families and our staff was prioritised. We will miss her cheerful presence in the school, her genuine interest in what was going



on for each of us. Her generosity, empathy for others and dedication has been inspiring for us all. It has been a privilege to have worked so closely with Celine and we are very lonely to have lost such a treasured friend and outstanding member of our school community.

Celine's innovation and strong values will remain with us at the heart of St. Helen's Junior School. The Board of Management, the Parents' Association and the staff of St Helen's Junior School offer our sincere condolences to Cormac, Corinne, Gavin and Robbie and their families, especially to her loving & adored grandchildren at this difficult time. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam.

Celine had been under the care of St. Francis Hospice, Blanchardstown for the few weeks before her death and her husband Cormac and family were very comforted by the exceptional care she received in her final days. This year we dedicated our Lá Glas to her memory and because of your generosity we have been able to raise €1000 for St. Francis Hospice. Thank you to our wonderful families for your support.



Easter Chicks - Room 23



St. Valentine's Assembly

Love was in the air in St. Helen's as we celebrated St. Valentine's Day and Safer Internet Day with a whole school assembly. We acknowledged the winners of the Safer Internet Day Posters and remembered the important points when online to always Stop, Think and Check.

We talked about how we can show love to our friends and family on Valentine's Day. Ms. Magee and Ms. Cummins discovered some Valentine's cards in the staff room and needed help figuring out who they were meant for. The boys and girls did a fantastic job solving the clues in the cards and were delighted to present them to Ms. Lavin and Ms. Walsh.

Everyone enjoyed singing and clapping along to our Valentine's Song, H-E-A-R-T. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgAx_sQ0mqE) to finish off a lovely assembly.

Ciara Cummins



Daffodils - Junior Infants Room 11



Chinese New Year

In February, the children were engrossed and loved learning all about Chinese New Year. The children learned some interesting information about China; what it is like, the language they speak, their culture, etc. We then explored more about Chinese New Year itself and the various traditions and celebrations carried out each year at this time. We also read 'The Great Race' story about how each year got its animal name. We learned that this year is the year of the fire horse which only happens once every 60 years. To conclude our afternoon, the children had a brilliant time making chinese lanterns to bring home. We had a great day.

David Shevlin - First Class Room 21

A word of thanks from the Principal...

A thuismitheoirí go léir,

It has been a very busy and very successful term in St. Helen's Junior School. Every member of staff in the school has worked considerably hard to ensure the pupils have had meaningful educational and happy experiences throughout the three past months. Thank you very specially to Ms Smith our Deputy Principal and to the In-School Management team for their leadership and support over the term.

I would like to express my gratitude to all our staff for their wonderful dedication to our school and pupils over the term. The newsletter today will give parents a snapshot of how much is covered in the primary school curriculum and the effort and planning that goes into ensuring that the packed curriculum is delivered in an exciting and child centred manner.

We are extremely blessed to have such a dynamic and giving Parents' Association. They have brought so much happiness to us all throughout the term by giving so generously of their time. Míle buíochas. Thank you to Norma for her continued support to our 2nd class pupils who are making their sacrament of Penance on April 20th and their First Holy Communion on Saturday 16th May. The children love their prayer time with Norma.

To our fantastic traffic warden Gráinne who works so hard to keep our young pupils safe. Thank you for caring so much and we appreciate that days can be challenging at the bottom of the avenue. We look forward to inviting Gráinne in after Easter to talk to the children at assembly about road safety.

Again we ask that all parents take great caution at drop off and collection times each day and park in a safe manner. Our pupils are very young and if cars are not parked legally then they are put in great danger. Once again we ask for everyone's cooperation and vigilance to keep our school community safe. Thank you to the Board of Management, it has been a difficult term with the sad loss of our dearest Celine, please see our tribute to our wonderful Chairperson on the opening page of our newsletter.

A huge thanks to Simon Archer for his amazing help with producing our informative and colourful newsletter.

Thank you so much to all our parents for your support over the term, for your trust and cooperation. Our beautiful and happy young pupils are a credit to you all. Wishing you all a very happy, restful and healthy Easter. Beannachtáí na Cásca oraibh go léir.

Lorna Lavin



Food Dudes 2026

An exciting 16 days of Food Dudes tasting took place during the week beginning 26th February to 24th March in St. Helen's Junior School. The children were so enthusiastic and really enjoyed tasting a variety of fruits and vegetables as part of our 5-7 portions a day of fruit and vegetables and our Food Dudes tasting challenge.

Each morning we received a delivery of fresh fruit and vegetable portions individually packaged in compostable packaging for each of our pupils. The enthusiasm throughout the school was amazing with each child excitedly awaiting what would arrive each day! We enjoyed apples, carrots, mandarins, cherry tomatoes, peppers, blueberries, bananas and cucumbers.

The pupils in St. Helen's Junior School are champions and their lunches are always so healthy with a variety of fruits and vegetables for their early morning fruit break.

Congratulations to you all on making good choices and enjoying the benefits of eating all the colours of the rainbow. Each child will receive a food dudes drink bottle and lunchbox to transport their healthy snacks. This cycle of Food Dudes tasting marks a new 4 year cycle after our school was awarded with a special Bord Bia award last year to mark our school's successful engagement with the Food Dudes programme for the past 4 years!

Andrea Smith



Fingal County Council Recycling

The school welcomed Craig Benton from Fingal County Council Recycling Programme for a visit in February. Craig has been working closely with Gerry in recent months to improve the sorting of general waste and recycling waste within the school. Fingal County Council gave a grant to the school to invest in green bins for each classroom. The Green School Committee participated in a workshop with Craig about recycling. Craig was very impressed with the knowledge of the pupils about recycling and the environment.



Planting of new trees

New trees were planted on the avenue to replace those that were felled recently to ensure the continuing safety of all. A competition was held to name the trees. The children's imagination and humour can be seen in the choice of names.

Emer Rooney

Winners

- Junior Infants: Root Blossom
- Senior Infants: Rosie Blossom
- 1st class: Helen and Rua
- 2nd class: Woody and Twigy
- Autism classes: Spikey



We would like to extend our sincere thanks to our former student, Lottie, who recently undertook a truly generous act by having 12 inches of her hair cut in support of the Little Princess Trust.

Through her incredible efforts, Lottie also raised a significant amount of money and kindly used it to purchase new tuff trays, an Air Toobz game, and beanbags for our 3 Autism

Thank you Lottie!



classrooms. These valuable resources are much-needed additions and will greatly enhance the learning environment for our students. Lottie's kindness and initiative will have a lasting impact, and these resources will be enjoyed for many years to come. We are incredibly proud of her achievement – and we absolutely love her fantastic new hairdo too!





The Moon and Sixpence Puppet Theatre

We were delighted to welcome the Moon and Sixpence Puppet Theatre back to St Helen's for a very special performance. The children were so excited sitting together in the school hall which had been transformed into a darkened puppet theatre especially for the occasion.

The colourful show told the well-known story of Cinderella and was packed with interactive sing-along-songs as well as plenty of hilarious jokes. The laughter echoed through our corridors during the live marionette show and as the story unfolded much to the children's amusement the puppets were not afraid to pick on their teachers!

The visit gave the children the opportunity to experience the magic of the theatre in the comfort of our own school. Thank you to the Moon and Sixpence Puppet Theatre for such an enjoyable and memorable visit! We are already looking forward to their return visit next year!

Mary Ahern



Visual Arts and Wellbeing *First class*

We love being creative in our school and we have been noticing how crafting, drawing and colouring can help make us feel calm and regulated. Enjoying making something nice while chatting together can feel wonderful!



Soundscapes at the National Concert Hall

A group of our pupils visited the National Concert Hall on January 29th for a performance that celebrated neurodiversity. The quartet of Riona (vocals), Eamonn (percussion), Johnny (piano) and Graham (double bass) provided a fun and relaxed programme. Pupils were encouraged to move around, dance or chill as the mood of the music guided them. The concert provided many opportunities for pupils to interact with the musicians and experience live music. We really enjoyed this wonderful experience in our National Concert Hall.



Young Scientists - cress growing experiment and observing tadpoles

This term, Room 6 have been busy developing their scientific skills of predicting, observing and recording. They carried out an experiment to learn what plants need to grow, setting up four pots with different conditions such as sunlight, water, cotton wool and soil.

The children discovered that cress grew best with water and sunlight, and were surprised to see that without light, the cress still grew but turned yellow. They learned that plants need light for photosynthesis to stay green.

They also enjoyed a visit to the senior school, where Mr. O'Riordan showed them tadpoles which he has been caring for. The children loved observing them up close and learning about their life cycle.

Thank you to Mr. O'Riordan for this wonderful experi-

ence! We look forward to another visit to watch their continued growth.

Emer Rooney 2nd class Room 6





STEM in Room 18

Recently the Senior Infants in Room 18 have enjoyed several experiments and investigations that Ms Leer shared with us. The children loved taking on the roles of scientists and engineers. Experiments included balloons pushing a toilet roll forward showing how forces work. We investigated whether warm or cold water would more quickly diffuse the food colouring on skittles. The children constructed their own paper helicopters for Engineers' Week. We have been observing our cress plants daily to make sure they have all they need to grow strong and tall. Just like us, they need plenty of water, sunshine and nutrition. These experiments were a great way to use our curiosity to learn more about the wonderful world around us.

Carine Natin

Safer Internet Day

On February 10th the first and second class children took part in Safer Internet Day. The children learned all about the motto of the HTML heroes "Stop Think and Check". Each class had the opportunity to engage in activities and learn about being safe while online. They each designed a poster for the Safer Internet Day art competition. Two winners from each class received a homework pass to use in class. Congratulations to all our winners.

Webwise is a great resource for parents and there's lots of information available here <https://www.webwise.ie/parents/>

Deirdre Magee



Georgia Reale



Isabella Krawczyk

The DAA Easter Art competition

The DAA held an Easter colouring competition to promote the primary schools that are being awarded by the Elevate'25 initiative.

Pupils throughout the school submitted their artworks on the theme of Easter including bunnies, chicks, spring, and easter eggs.

We are delighted to announce that St Helen's Junior National School had two winners, Georgia Reale and Isabella Krawczyk (2nd class - Ms Rooney's class) who will both receive a €50 One4All voucher and their artwork will be displayed as part of the Easter Creative artwork around the airport terminals.



Maths Stations for Junior Infants

Primary Maths Curriculum

This year sees the embedding phase of the new Primary Maths Curriculum, which is really about consolidating and normalising the new approaches to teaching maths across the whole school. This phase shows the children are becoming familiar with maths chat and problem-solving, and engaging in playful activities. It's fantastic to see them regularly reflecting on their own work and tasks. Our Maths Journals are an excellent tool for demonstrating what stage each child is at with their own learning. Engineers' Week provided the children with the opportunity to engage in STEM activities and explored maths in real life contexts too.

Louise Rooney





Engineers' Week

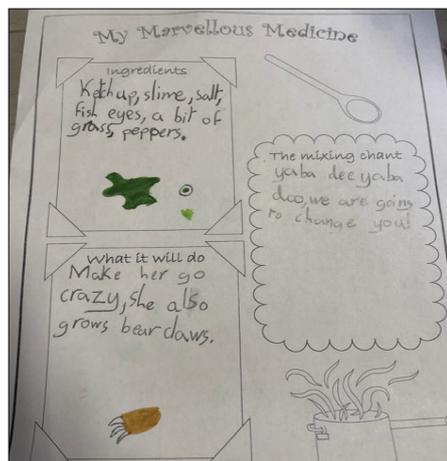
We celebrated Engineers' Week in St Helen's from 2nd to 6th March.

It was a great opportunity for our students to learn all about what engineers do and how they solve problems, build amazing things and make the world a better place. We kicked off the week by exploring the big question: what is an engineer? We read stories about famous engineers learning how their creativity and curiosity changed the world. But the most fun came with our hands-on activities. The students took part in exciting challenges from building tall towers to designing paper airplanes. It was amazing to see their teamwork, problem solving skills and their imagination in action.

Deirdre Magee



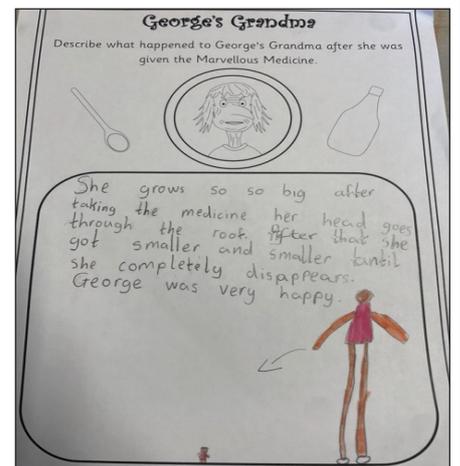
George's Marvellous Medicine



Gerry Longobardi

This term the second class pupils in Room 7 enjoyed reading an entertaining and exciting novel George's Marvellous Medicine. We followed the story of George, who creates a magical medicine to deal with his grumpy grandmother. The class loved imagining what they would put into their own "marvellous medicine" and shared lots of creative and funny ideas! Throughout the study, the children worked on their reading, comprehension, and writing skills. They described characters, predicted what might happen next, and wrote their own alternative endings to the story. The pupils showed great enthusiasm and creativity during this novel study. It was wonderful to see their confidence grow as they shared their thoughts and ideas. Well done to everyone in Room 7 for their fantastic work this term!

Ms Ciara Mullins 2nd class Rm 7



Hannah Lyons



Piano Workshop

St Helen's welcomed Maki Mutai from the Dublin International Piano Competition for a series of workshops. The piano competition is held every three years and features some of the leading young international pianists. Their outreach programme introduces the world of the piano to schools around Dublin and hopes to inspire a future generation of young musicians.

We were delighted to welcome Maki back to our school again this year to deliver a piano workshop for the boys and girls in second class. It was a two-day piano workshop providing the children with the wonderful opportunity to learn the basics of playing the piano in a fun and engaging way. Using creative methods, including making a piano on the floor with tape, the children explored notes and learned how to play a simple tune together. It was fantastic to see their enthusiasm and confidence grow over the two days. A big thank you to Maki for such an enjoyable and inspiring experience!

Emer Rooney



Art Activities in Room 14



Mother's Day



Easter



St. Patrick's Day



Pancake Day

Thank you so much to our wonderful Parents' Association for organising such an exciting Pancake Tuesday in our school hall. The children were amazed with the selection of healthy toppings and thoroughly enjoyed eating their delicious pancakes. It was such a special treat and it made the day so memorable for us. The delicious aroma filled the school and the smiles said it all!



St. Helen's JNS takes on the Fyffes Fittest School Challenge

St. Helen's JNS has been taking part in the Fyffes Fittest School Challenge 2026, competing with schools across the country for the title of Ireland's Fittest School. As part of the programme, the children have been taking part in a variety of active breaks, fun fitness challenges and team-building activities that promote movement and wellbeing throughout the school day.

Our enthusiasm for the challenge was rewarded in February when RTÉ cameras visited the school to see how we are engaging with the programme. Our Second Class students in Room 13 were filmed taking part in an energetic exercise session, showcasing the skills they have developed. A few lucky students even had the chance to share some wise words with the nation! Those who saw the segment will agree they did St. Helen's JNS proud.

A special thanks to Sharon Flanagan, Fyffes ambassador and mother of Sophie (Room 13), Kayleigh (15) and Rosie (11), who led the session on the day and helped make it such a great success.

Next goal: bringing the title of Ireland's Fittest School to St. Helen's!

Mr Jennings



First Aid Training for St. Helen's Staff

At St Helen's Junior School we are consistently reviewing our Health and Safety, First Aid and Medication Administration Policies to ensure our practices are up to date and respond to the needs of our young pupils and their families. In October and February of this school year, the whole staff engaged in First Aid Training with Resus First Aid. These informative and practical sessions allowed all school staff to revise important key skills in the areas of CPR and the use of the Defibrillator, allowing us to respond confidently in the case of an emergency. Ray helpfully answered our questions on best practise when treating bumps, cuts and scrapes, choking and anaphylaxis. It was so beneficial to apply this information to our school setting and to reflect on our practices as a staff. We are keenly aware that 'an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure' and so ensure to update our risk assessments regularly to plan for a safe and healthy school. Following on from this, I was lucky enough to attend an evening course on 'Managing Allergies in the School' with Navan Education Centre in March, gaining new insights and revising key principles to apply to our practice.

Ms O'Callaghan



Grandparents' Day in First Class

On Thursday 22nd January, as part of our Catholic Schools Week programme, the boys and girls in Ms O'Mahony's class had a fantastic time welcoming their grandparents to Room 12. The children recited some acrostic poems that they had written about their Granny or Grandad. Songs were sung and memories were shared. The children had completed portraits of their grandparents and they were displayed proudly, for all to see. We had a very special visitor in our class- Ollie's Great-Grandad who recently celebrated his 102nd birthday!

In Room 14, Lily's grandad brought in his guitar and played us a song from the familiar movie Shrek. We all joined in for a lovely sing-along. Some grandparents also read out some poems and other songs from their childhood. Ellen's grandad told us some interesting stories about his time spent in army school. We would like to say a huge thank you to all the grandparents who visited our school, making this day a lovely occasion for all of our pupils.

In Room 21 the children shared various pieces of work and sang a couple of songs; 'Molly Malone' and 'Here Comes the Sun' by the Beatles, which the grandparents thoroughly enjoyed. The children read out some of their interviews that they had carried out with grandparents and the common theme was certainly golf! We have a lot of golfing grandparents in this class! We also did a Q & A with the grandparents in attendance which was a great way for the children to see similarities and differences to their own school experiences.





Seachtain na Gaeilge

Bhí Gaeilge bheo i Scoil Naomh Léan. Bhí na paistí go léir ag caint in nGaeilge sa seomra ranga, ag am lón agus sa chlós. I rith Seachtain na Gaeilge, bhaineamar sult as an nGaeilge a chleachtadh in gach cuid dár lá scoile. Bhain muid an-taitneamh as cumarsáid a dhéanamh as Gaeilge le linn neart gníomhaíochtaí spráilúla. Eagraíodh na gníomhaíochtaí seo mar chuid de Sheachtain na Gaeilge, ceiliúradh dhá sheachtain ar ár dteanga agus ar ár gcultúr Éireannach. Rinne Mo Mo Productions dráma darb ainm "Trioblóid sa Chaisleán". Bhí seisiún ceoil croíúil againn leis na ceoltóirí – i gcónaí thar a bheith taitneamhach le neart fuinnimh, rithim agus sár-amhránaíocht. D'imríomar cluichí in nGaeilge, rud a chuir ar chumas na bpáistí taithí a fháil ar chluichí as Gaeilge. Bhí dioscó sa halla againn agus na páistí go léir ag taispeáint a gcuid damhsa is fearr! Chuaigh na ranganna sinsearach in iomaíocht sa Tráth na gceist le neart obair foirne agus roinnt chuimhneacháin teannais. Ba chríoch dhiograiseach agus ildaithe é Lá Glas ar ár gcoicís cheiliúrtha. Rinne na páistí paráid tríd an gclós ag taispeáint a gcuid éadaí féile, bealach speisialta i gcónaí chun Lá Fhéile Pádraig agus Seachtain na Gaeilge a cheiliúradh. Ar deireadh, bhí tionól againn dár ranganna sóisearacha agus sinsearach. Bhronn gach rang dhá theastas 'Gaeilgeoir na Seachtaine' as an gcaint in nGaeilge. "Tír gan teanga, tír gan anam!" Féach thíos ar an bhfíseán de chuid den cheol, den chraic agus den damhsa.





Best wishes to our friend Geraldine on her retirement...

On Tuesday the staff, pupils and parents wished our dearest friend and SNA Geraldine all the best on her retirement and to celebrate the wonderful 22 years of service that Ger gave to St Helen's Junior School. The calibre of Ger's many years of service has been nothing but exceptional.

Ger has so many wonderful qualities which endeared her to her colleagues and pupils in her care. Her amazing work ethic, her positivity & kindness, her empathy, her sense of fun and beautiful smile is why Geraldine has been treasured in our school by ALL.

Ger's car was always one of the first to pull into the carpark and she would skip into the school completely focused and highly organised to set up and prepare resources for our young pupils. It was noted by all that there wasn't a day when Ger didn't check in with everyone first to see who needed help at the beginning of each day. The staff appreciated this willingness to always help and it was a true measure of her consideration and respect for her colleagues and pupils.

Ger always demonstrated a remarkable level of enthusiasm and engagement in continuous professional development because of the dedication and affection she had for the young pupils in her care. Ger's everything is possible attitude and her genuine & energetic demeanour is going to be greatly missed. Geraldine Shaw is a pure example of what our school stands for. St Helen's Junior School has been blessed to have had her for so long.

Mr Jennings, Pauline and all the pupils in 2nd class, Room 13 have been very busy for months planning how to make Tuesday the most memorable and celebratory day for Ger. She was speechless at all the generous gifts she received and very moved when the pupils presented her with an exquisite quilt knitted by every child in the class under the expert guidance of Pauline.

On behalf of the Board of Management, staff and parents, former and present, we wish Geraldine, Geoff, Alan, Mark and all her family many years of happiness as she begins her retirement. God bless you and all your family dearest Ger. Go raibh míle maith agat



A word Ger and the PA...

We had lots of lovely events in the school which we were delighted to help out with Grandparents' day in January was a fantastic morning. The Grandparents got to see their grandchild's class, teacher & all of their lovely art work. They then joined us in the hall for some tea, scones & chats. Pancake Tuesday was a big hit. The children had great fun selecting their toppings, sitting down and enjoying them with their class. It was lovely to see them all so happy. To mark St. Patrick's Day, we had our annual Lá Glas dress up day which created great excitement and lots of green in the yards! Our families contributed to a very special cause in memory of our dear friend Celine O'Connell. We are so grateful to Celine for everything she has done for our school. We are also very thankful to the staff of St Helen's Junior School and members of the PA who raised €500 to support Daffodil Day for the Irish Cancer Society. The Easter bunny visited the school today and got to see all the boys and girls - we hope the children enjoy their Easter egg. Lastly, we kindly remind everyone of the importance of keeping the roads and avenues around our school safe for all children, families, and staff and with many young children walking, cycling, or scooting. It is essential that we all play our part in ensuring school is a safe environment. We hope you have a wonderful Easter.

Ger Keogh



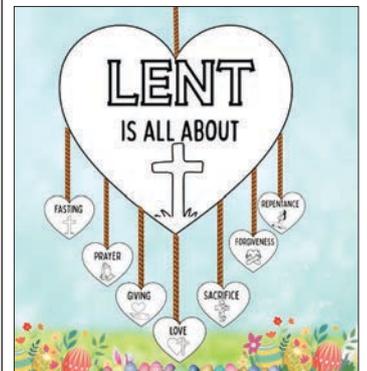
We committed to producing a child-friendly flyer to promote our new Anti Bullying - Bí Cineálta Policy. Thanks to Ms Magee for designing our Bí Cineálta flyer which is displayed in our school and on our website.



Ms Kane and baby Lara call to visit



Lenten promises in our school



Scroll less, Talk more
Encourage one another and build one another up.
Complain less, Give Thanks More
Welcome one another and Share more
Say sorry when you know you should.
Smile and help each other
Ask others to join in your game



We have been so busy this term. We have gone for some lovely walks and posted important cards to our special mummies for Mother's Day. We have been cooking up a storm in the kitchen and getting used to new flavours and textures. Food Dudes has helped us get used to lots of fruit and vegetables. We had lots of fun doing our Easter Art. **Noise and the team in room 24**



World Book Week 2026

At St. Helen's Junior School, we celebrated Book Week and encouraged the students to explore reading for pleasure. The children were provided with lots of opportunities to look at books, read books, share books and to listen to stories being read aloud. We celebrated with some wonderful activities.

The Masked Reader - The staff read an excerpt from their favourite books while hiding behind the book. The children thoroughly enjoyed guessing who was reading before the person was revealed.

D.E.A.R (Drop Everything And Read). Everyday in each class time is allocated for quiet reading and enjoyment of books.

School Visitors - The highly entertaining Mr Read returned to our school to read some popular books to the children and staff.

Visual Arts - Children were busy designing and making bookmarks, book covers, creating their favourite scene from a book and adding colour and interest to the corridors with their book displays.

Favourite Character Day - Everyone was encouraged to dress as their favourite book character. The staff and students always love sharing in the fun of this day!

Library Visit - Pupils visit our school library to share books and choose their own books to read.



Where's Wally Walk - Each class engaged in a trail around the school to spot the Wally, Wanda and Wizards while answering lots of book-related questions.

Book Week Vouchers - Every child in the school received a special Book Week voucher to buy a special World Book Day book in their local book shop.

Susan Kavanagh



Room 25 Recycling Adventure!

Room 25 have been busy learning all about recycling and how to sort our waste correctly. We discovered why recycling is so important and how it helps to protect our environment.

As part of our project, we collected a variety of items including cans, bottles, batteries, and clothes. We talked about which bin each item belongs in and how to prepare them for recycling.

The highlight of our learning was a special trip out into the community! We visited a return machine, a bottle bank, a clothes bank, and a battery bank. This hands-on experience helped us understand exactly what happens to our waste and how we can all play our part in keeping our environment clean.

Room 25 did a fantastic job and are now recycling experts!

