

Friday 2nd October 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

We were so pleased this week to receive our SIAMS inspection report for St Nic's. The report is a very positive one, and recognises many of the fantastic things that happen in both of our schools. Below, I have shared the main strengths that were recognised in the report:

- The embedded Christian vision underpins the strategic decisions that leaders make. As a result, pupils and adults at St Nicolas Junior School flourish in a loving and creative environment.
- The vision inspires an approach to learning that ignites pupils' curiosity and deepens their understanding of the world. Consequently, they develop a wide range of skills and knowledge.
- Collective worship is a central and valued part of school life. It contributes significantly to the spiritual growth of the school community.
- A commitment to 'the good of all' shapes daily routines and relationships, creating an inclusive culture.
- Pupils who encounter additional challenges receive tailored support, enabling them to flourish alongside their peers.

Teacher Absence

This term, we have had an unusual amount of teacher absence. We have made every effort in both schools to minimise the disruption for the children, but I do understand that this may have led to difficulties for some. We have been really impressed with the resilience and maintained good behaviour that we have seen from the children, but acknowledge that this is a difficult situation for all.

Sponsorship



This newsletter is proudly supported by Ken Dowling Property, a boutique estate agency based in Newbury. If you or someone you know is thinking about moving home, Ken Dowling Property would be delighted to help. For every property sale completed following an introduction through the school newsletter, £1,000 will be donated directly to the school to support its pupils and future projects.

Cycle Helmets

If your child cycles or scooters to school, please ensure that they are wearing a helmet. These are essential pieces of safety equipment.

Additionally, can parents of children at St John's School please ensure that children do not ride on their bikes or scooters in the school car park, as there are often cars coming in or out and we are very keen to avoid an accident.

Bikes and scooters should also not be ridden on St Nic's playground.

WhatsApp

We have become aware recently of a number of children, particularly Year 6 children, who have been using WhatsApp. Whilst for adults, WhatsApp may seem like a harmless messaging app, for children it can lead to cyber bullying from children being excluded from group chats or from harmful messages within group chats.

We would encourage all parents to stop their children from using WhatsApp, but if they do continue would urge you to monitor the messages that your child is sending and receiving. Please remember that the recommended minimum age for WhatsApp is currently 13 but also that the government is legislating currently for all social media to be banned for children under the age of 18.

St Nicolas School Harvest Service

The St Nicolas School harvest service takes place on Wednesday 7th October at 2pm at St Nicolas Church. We are still short of adults to walk with the children. If you are able to help out, please contact the school office. Parents are welcome to attend the service. If you would like to collect your child after, please indicate this on ParentPay. All other children will be walked back to school.

Early Years' Parents' Evening

Parents' Evening for children in Nursery will be taking place on Tuesday 13th October from 2pm to 4pm, and for children in Reception on Tuesday 13th and Wednesday 14th October from 3.30pm to 6.30pm.

We encourage all parents to sign up for an appointment as this is the first opportunity that your child's teacher will have to share how they have settled into school and are developing in their learning.

An email with a link to book an appointment will be sent to priority 1 contacts only on Monday 5th October at 7pm. Please check your junk folder if you do not receive the email as it does not come directly from the school. The booking system will close at 2pm on Monday 12th October.

Phonics Talk for Parents

Next Friday at 9.00am or 2.45pm there will be phonics talks for parents. These are aimed at parents of children in Reception. In the talks, we will be sharing information about our phonics and reading schemes and how parents can support their children at home with learning phonics.

Celebration Worship Time Change Next Week

Due to a clash of events with a world record reading attempt that we are taking part in, celebration worship next week will be changed to 1.15pm. Parents of children getting certificates will receive communication from the school office with details of the assembly.

BBC 500 Words Competition



Dear Parents,

The BBC 500 Words Competition is back for 2026! It is the UK's largest story-writing competition for children aged 5–11 and is a fantastic opportunity for children to let their imaginations run wild and enjoy creating a story of their own.

There are two age categories: 5–7 and 8–11.

To enter, children need to:

- Write an original fictional story of 500 words or fewer.
- Make sure the story is entirely their own work and their own ideas.
- Either ask an adult at home to submit the finished story through the BBC 500 Words website, or email the story to me and I will submit it on your child's behalf. lagibbons@stnics.w-berks.sch.uk

I run a Writing Club every Friday lunchtime in the 3N classroom, and any St Nic's children who would like to work on their 500 Words entry are very welcome to come along. They can use the time to develop their ideas, start writing or continue working on their story.

Stories can be about absolutely anything; the aim is simply to write a story you would love to read. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are not marked; the judges are interested in children's creativity, imagination, characters, plot and use of language.

Please note that AI must not be used to create, write or develop any part of the story.

Entries open on Tuesday 29 September and must be submitted by 9pm on Friday 6 November 2026. There are some fantastic prizes, and the top 50 entrants will have their stories recorded and published on the BBC 500 Words website.

Full details, competition rules and the online entry form can be found on the BBC 500 Words website. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/500-words/articles/zctk7v4>

We would love to see lots of our children entering this year. Good luck and happy writing!

Mrs Gibbons
English Lead

Book Fair

There will be a Travelling Book Fair in both schools from 6th October 2026 to 12th October 2026. The Book Fair will be open after school each day in both schools and is an ideal opportunity for parents to purchase books for Christmas, as well as for current reading. The schools will get a percentage of all books sold and this money will be used to buy further books for the schools.

Writer of the Week

Congratulations to Aarna and Marilou who have been selected as Writers of the Week for their stories, this week. Next week's inspiration is below:



Attendance

Well done to Cherry class at St John's with 98.1% attendance and 3S and 5S at St Nic's with 100%.

31 children have been late across both schools this week. Please ensure that your child arrives in school on time, each day.

Overall attendance for each school for last week was as follows:

- St John's: 95.1%
- St Nic's: 97.9%

Phonics Books for the Week

Reception: https://parents.fft.org.uk/viewer/?pdf=S01_Tap_Tap_Tap&d=Tap%20Tap%20Tap
<https://vimeo.com/691867051/244e58a683>

Year 1: https://parents.fft.org.uk/viewer/?pdf=S36_Let-s_Sort_it_Out&d=Let%E2%80%99s%20Sort%20it%20Out
<https://vimeo.com/731075786/ef9e5e1e4f>

Upcoming Dates

Tuesday 6 th October 2026:	Book Fair at both schools
Tuesday 6 th October 2026:	Year 5 Roman Day and Trip
Wednesday 7 th October 2026:	2pm St Nicolas School Harvest Service
Thursday 8 th October 2026:	Celebration Worship changed time – 1.15pm
Friday 9 th October 2026:	Phonics talks for parents at 9am or 2.45pm
Tuesday 13 th October 2026:	Reception and Nursery Parents' Evening
Wednesday 14 th October 2026:	Reception Parents' Evening

Yours sincerely,

Keith Harvey
Executive Headteacher

Hawk Conservancy Events

There are lots of exciting events taking place at the Hawk Conservancy in Andover. Please see below for further information:

WE'RE LOCATED JUST OFF THE A303. STOP BY FOR A BITE TO EAT OR FOR A FULL DAY OUT!

TO NEWBURY
A342 A343 A344
TO DEVIZES
TO EXETER
TO Basingstoke
TO BOURNEMOUTH
TO ROMSEY
TO WINCHESTER

Hawk Conservancy Trust, Visitor Centre, Sarson Lane, Wayhill, Andover, Hampshire, SP11 8DY
www.hawkconservancy.org
info@hawkconservancy.org
CHARITY NO. 1092316
COMMUNITY NO. 4301611

SPRING
Owls by Moonlight
Biodiversity Breakfast
FUNDRAISING EVENT

SUMMER
SUNSET AT THE TRUST
BIG WILD WEEKEND
Whether you're keen to come back following a day out with us or you would simply like to see our beautiful birds fly at a different time of day, we have something to suit everyone. To get the latest news on our events, visit our website.

AUTUMN
OWL-O-WEEEN
Christmas Carols & Owls
FUNDRAISING EVENT

WINTER
WOODLAND WONDERS
WINTER WOODLAND LIGHTS
FUNDRAISING EVENT

Love nature
Be inspired
Feel better

Young Singers Workshop



YOUNG SINGERS WORKSHOP

@WBMC OPEN DAY

FREE- SIGN UP NOW!

Come and have a go in our YOUNG SINGERS workshop, open for all students in years 4-6! All abilities welcome, come and give it a go!

Saturday 17th October, 10:40-11:20am
Kennet School, Thatcham RG19 4LL

WITH TEACHER
GEORGIA OLDMAN

What else is on at WBMC Open Day?

- Live Band & Orchestra Performances
- Have-a-Go on Musical Instruments
- Discover Drums, Brass & Woodwind
- Join the World Singing Day BIG SING!
- Early Years Music, Games & Concert
- Coffee, Cake & Chat

BERKSHIRE MUSIC TRUST
Making music for everyone

OPEN DAY: Saturday 17th October 2026
Entry between 10.00am - 3.00pm
West Berkshire Music Centre
Kennet School, Thatcham RG19 4LL

Questions? Email musiccentres@berksmusictrust.org.uk for more info!

Lee Dillon Christmas Card Competition



Primary school students of West Berkshire...

Enter Lee Dillon MP's Christmas Card Competition to be in with a chance of having your artwork featured on the official MP Christmas card - sent to community groups, local leaders, and Parliament!

Hand-draw your design on an A4 piece of paper (no glitter or glued-on items).

Email to: lee.dillon.mp@parliament.uk
(Subject: Christmas Card Competition)

Send to: Park Street Offices, Newbury,
RG14 1EA

Deadline: Wednesday 21st October 2026