

Thorncombe, St. Mary's CE Primary Academy



Living, Learning and Growing Together



Autumn Term 26-27 Newsletter Issue: 7 Thursday 22nd October 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are so proud of the children this half term. They have been incredibly well mannered and have embraced our school and classroom routines.

Our focus has been on being ready to learn, including having the correct resources, being mentally prepared and respecting our learning environments. We have also explored our core value of Love and Compassion, learning from Bible parables and considering how we can show kindness and compassion in our everyday lives.

Friday's PFA Disco was a huge success, raising over £90! Thank you to Mrs Wheaton and the parents who volunteered their time to make the event possible.

Today's PFA Cake Sale also raised £45, which will go towards providing future resources for the children. Thank you to everyone who supported both events!

We look forward to welcoming the children back on Monday 2nd November.

Please remember that children should arrive before the school gates close at 8.45am and wear the correct school uniform each day.

We wish all our families a happy and restful half-term break! ❤️

Mrs Jessica Evans
Head of School

Our core value this term is:

Love & Compassion

Our golden apple winners for this week.



The winning house this week:

Silver Birch

Have a wonderful half term!

W/B 02.11.2026

Monday

R/1/2 PE

Tuesday

Forest School

R/1/2/3 PE

Wednesday

Music Lessons

Home Learning club

4/5/6 PE

Thursday

Orchard Home Learning due

Friday

Daily Breakfast Club | 8-8:30am

A relaxed start to the day with breakfast and play.

Daily After School Club | 3:15-4:30pm

Child-led play and activities based on children's interests.

Please like, comment and share on our social media posts to spread the word of our wonderful school! Click below to be taken to them.



Autumn is a gentle reminder that **changes** can be beautiful



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Class News from this Week!

Little Acorns - Mrs Wheaton (In Claire's absence for this week!)

We've gone a little pumpkin mad this week! 🎃 The children have enjoyed exploring pumpkins in lots of different ways, from drawing on them and hammering golf tees into them to investigating their different colours, shapes, sizes and textures. We also enjoyed listening to the story Pumpkin Soup. Our autumn exploration continued as we looked closely at leaves, noticing their different colours, shapes and sizes. We discovered that some leaves have smooth or wavy edges, whilst others have sharp, zigzag edges! We've also been developing our hand-eye coordination using a kickflip and beanbag. It was lovely to see the children growing in confidence and improving their control as they practised. Have a lovely half term!

Pippin Class - Mrs Wheaton

We have filled in our knowledge sheets this week and reflected on all the learning we have done so far this term. In Geography, the children had one last go at showing off their knowledge of continents and oceans. They have done a brilliant job at this and were really confident in identifying the 7 continents and 5 oceans.

The children have completed their independent writing assessment. It is really great to see the progress they make over the year and these assessments go into their 'Writing Through The Years' books which they can look back on as they get older. It also allows me to identify next steps to focus on with them in our learning.

From the assessments that took place last week, there is a big improvement on the children's reading compared to their last assessment in Summer - and for our Reception children, lots of new sounds learned! A big well done for working so hard on your reading!

Have a WONDERFUL half term. If you go on any walks and find any conkers or pine cones, we would love some please! 🍂🍁

Orchard Class - Miss Taylor & Mrs Balcer

Orchard Class have completed their independent writing assessments this week. It has been lovely to see all their ideas and hard work come together in their Writing Through the Years books. It is also wonderful to know that they will be able to look back on these fabulous pieces of writing as they grow older!

In Maths, Years 5 and 6 have started learning about fractions. They have been exploring equivalent fractions and using their times tables knowledge to help them find them. Years 3 and 4 have been practising written addition methods with numbers up to four digits. I have been so proud of how well they have remembered their place value!

We have also had a very creative week, with the children almost completing their fabulous lighthouses as part of our DT project. They just need to add their electrical circuits now! I know they cannot wait to take them home and show them off and they are all looking fantastic!

Have a fabulous half term and enjoy all the autumn festivities. 🍂🍁

Over the next week...

- Hear your child read at least 3 times each week. Please record this in their reading records. Parents - children are never too old to have a story read to them. They gain so much from this special time with you.
- Practise your multiplication and division facts using TTRS or other resources.

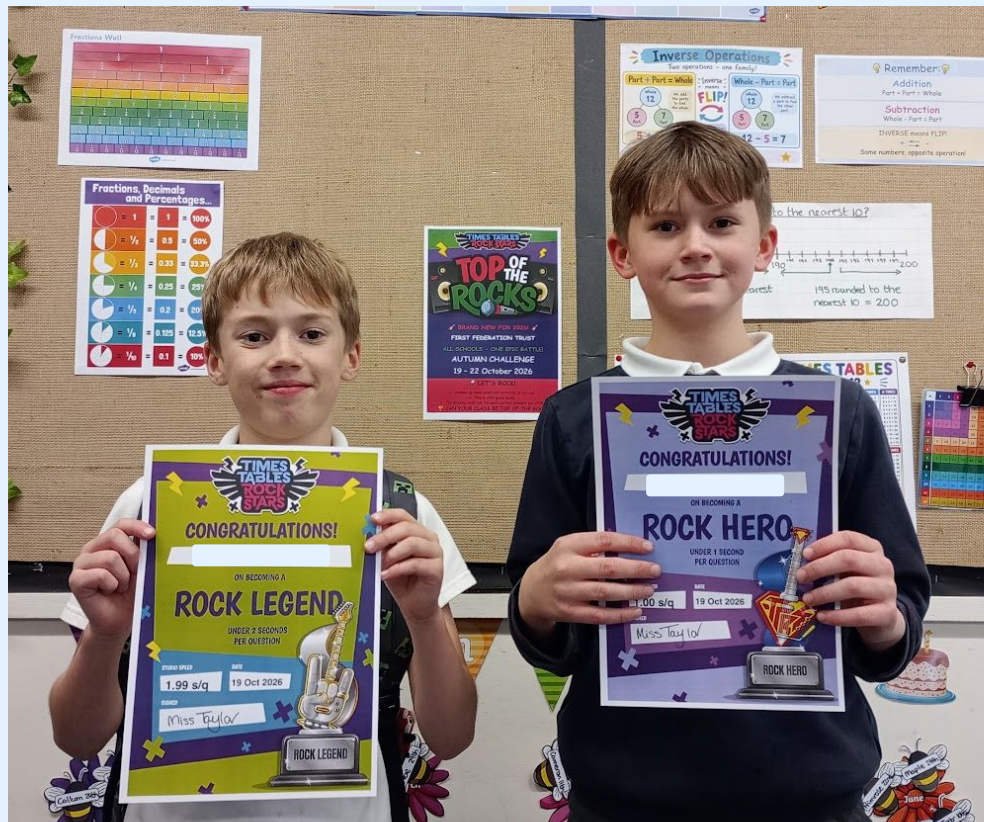
Year 1	2s, 5s, 10s
Year 2	2s, 5s, 10s
Year 3	3s, 4s, 8s
Year 4, 5 and 6	all multiplication tables up to 12x12

Children learn
4,000 to 12,000
words per year
through reading.

What a lovely week!



What a lovely week!

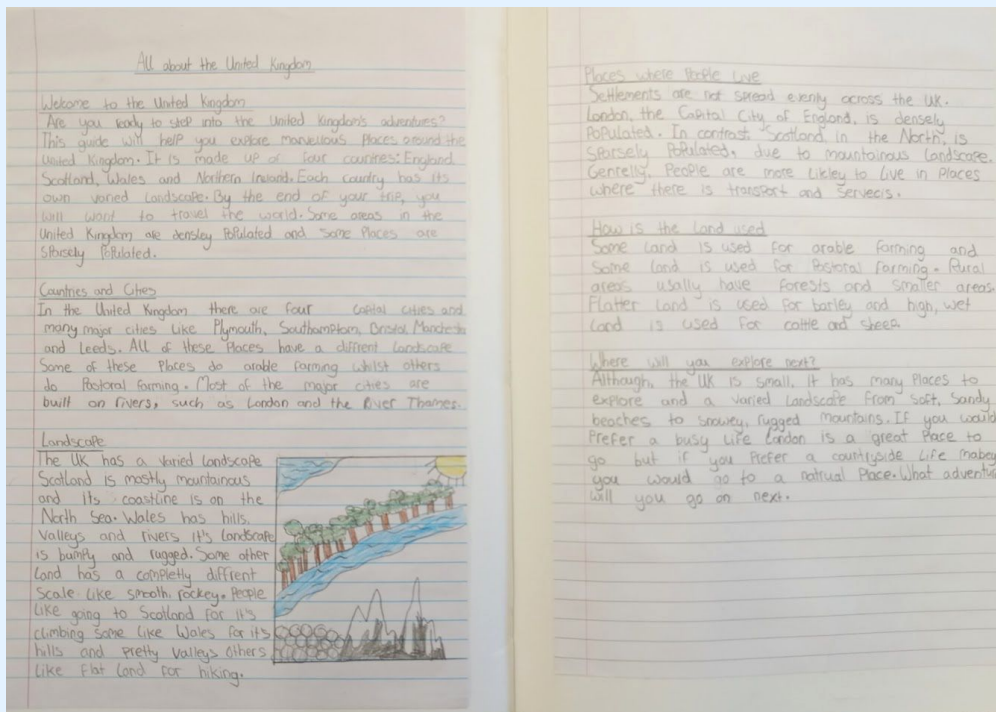


TTRS Status awards this week! Well done boys, very well deserved! TTRS Superstars!!

AUTUMN CHALLENGE
First Federation Trust 2025



We are so proud of all the children in our little school who have been absolutely fabulous this week and have come 3rd overall out of 17 school in the First Federation Autumn TTRS Tournament! Well done everyone! What a great achievement!



A fabulous piece of independent writing from one of our Year 6 children!



An amazing year 6 Christmas card!

Forest School - Autumn 1

Hi everyone,

Welcome to our Autumn Forest School news at St Mary's, Thorncombe! Forest School has been full of autumn colours, seeds and fruits. The children have enjoyed learning through discovery and experimentation, creating crafts, practising their tool skills, identifying trees and exploring leaf printing and natural pigments.

Little Acorns and Pippin Class enjoyed making a fire and preparing apple slices dipped in cinnamon and sugar, which they cooked on skewers. This was a lovely opportunity to talk about gratitude and the harvest season.

Orchard Class have been developing their skills using tools, including peelers and knives, and exploring different types of wood for crafts. They have also enjoyed games and den building, strengthening their friendships and teamwork skills.

In the garden, we've successfully grown corn, which we hope to dry and turn into popcorn in the spring! Thank you to the parents who have kindly donated seeds.

We always welcome donations of seeds, bulbs, digging tools, old kitchen utensils and pans!

Wishing you all a lovely half-term break.

Best wishes,
Paloma Gordon-Watson
Forest School Leader



10 top tips for safely using SMARTWATCHES

Kids love gadgets, and smartwatches – available to buy from as little as £20 online – make a tempting gift. As with any type of mobile technology, though, smartwatches can pose risks to children unless they're used safely. Receiving unwanted calls, cyber-stalking and distracting a young person when they're crossing the road are all known risks associated with smartwatches. However, these devices can bring plenty of benefits for children and parents alike – so let's examine the pros and cons of smartwatches.

AVOID CHEAP OPTIONS

A quick search online yields a torrent of cheap smartwatches for kids, costing as little as £20. It's wise to avoid this bargain basement tech: it tends to deliver a poor experience with inferior battery life, and it's hard to have faith in the software's safety. There have been cases of smartwatches being hacked to track or contact children; stick to known brands who have a reputation to protect.

CONTROL CALLING

Many smartwatches have the facility to make or take calls. As with a phone, you may want to restrict who your child can call – or be called by. On Apple Watches, you can select trusted contacts who are allowed to ring your child, while other watches' controls vary hugely. Some need to connect to a linked phone for calls, so you may be able to block unknown contacts via that device instead.

BEWARE HIDDEN COSTS

For a smartwatch to allow calls independently (that is, without being connected to a phone via Bluetooth), it will need its own mobile data plan. This might take the form of a tiny SIM card that you slot into the watch – or an eSIM, where the physical card is replaced by software settings. Either way, this will incur an additional monthly cost that you'll need to factor into any buying decision.

ENABLE FAMILY SHARING

Apple Watches aren't cheap, but they do offer superb safety features – allowing parents to control calls, messages and emails on the device, as well as a location tracking system that can send alerts if kids wander beyond pre-set boundaries. Their SOS function enables children to contact emergency services instantly if they're in trouble, which simultaneously also alerts parents and carers.

MAKE THEM COOL FOR SCHOOL

Some schools have banned smartwatches, as pupils have been using them as substitute phones. If your child's school does permit them, some devices can be set to prevent distractions in class. For example, Apple's Schooltime feature turns their watches into ordinary time-keeping devices during school hours. The display changes in this mode, showing teachers that it isn't being used for other purposes.

TRACK ITS LOCATION

Both Apple and Android devices have apps which allow you to track a smartwatch's location. They can also initiate an audio alert – avoiding those cushion-hurling panics when a treasured device can't be found at home. If you're planning to track your child's location via their watch, make them aware of that in advance. You could even make it a condition of them getting the watch in the first place.

THINK 'SAFETY FIRST'

Smartwatches are often worth hundreds of pounds, which can make young people wearing one a target for thieves. Advise your child to keep the watch hidden in public (when possible) and not to resist if muggers demand their watch. If you manage to track a stolen device, pass that information to the police; location data isn't always accurate, so you could end up wrongly accusing someone.

STORE MEDICAL INFO

Devices including the Samsung Galaxy Watch and Apple Watch can store the owner's medical details (such as their blood group and any pre-existing medical conditions), potentially giving emergency services access to vital information in a crisis. These devices also have 'hard fall' detection, which sends a text message to selected contacts along with a map showing the wearer's location.

USE THEM AS MOTIVATION

If you're worried your child's spending too much time slumped on the sofa staring at screens, smartwatches are great fitness trackers and can be a powerful incentive to get moving. Some devices will alert the wearer if they've been inactive for a long time and encourage them to do some exercise. Many watches record the user's daily step count and measure other health metrics.

BE MINDFUL OF BEDTIME

Many smartwatches offer sleep tracking, which some (usually older) children use to justify wearing them to bed. However, that also presents a temptation to message friends or check social media late at night, even if their phone is downstairs. Unless there's a valid reason not to, you could encourage your child to remove the watch in the evenings and ensure the charger stays in a different room.

Meet Our Expert

Barry Collins has been a technology journalist and editor for more than 20 years, working for titles such as the Sunday Times, Which?, PC Pro and Computeractive. He's appeared regularly as a technology pundit on television and radio, including on BBC Newsnight, Radio 5 Live and the ITV News at Ten. He has two children and writes regularly about internet safety issues.



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#WakeUpWednesday

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Safeguarding Information

Mrs Jessica Evans
Head of School
Designated Safeguarding Lead



Mrs Merryn Wheaton
EYFS Lead and Pippin
Teacher
Deputy DSL



Our child protection policy can be found [here](#).