

World Book Day - Thursday 5th March 2026

World Book Day 2026 was held across AHMAT on Thursday 6th March 2026.

All year groups from Foundation to Year 6 engaged in themed activities based on either Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler or Roald Dahl and Quentin Blake.

World Book Day Intent

Developing a reading for pleasure culture across the Trust remains a key priority, with raising the profile of reading continuing to be a central focus of school improvement. Following the successful use of Quentin Blake's distinctive illustration style during our Holy Week learning, we chose to build upon this enthusiasm by incorporating both authors and illustrators into our World Book Day celebrations.

The Reading Framework (2023) states that teachers can inspire pupils to read widely by embedding a whole-school culture that values and supports reading for pleasure. It emphasises that fostering positive reading habits is a collective responsibility shared by all staff. Our World Book Day provision was therefore designed to celebrate high-quality literature while immersing pupils in the work of significant authors and illustrators. By doing so, we aimed to strengthen pupils' appreciation of books, develop their motivation to read and write, and reinforce reading as an enjoyable and valued part of school life.

Following collaborative discussions between staff, Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 focused on the work of Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, whilst Key Stage 2 explored the writing of Roald Dahl alongside the illustrations of Quentin Blake.



Theme

- The theme of World Book Day will be Roald Dahl/Julia Donaldson/Axel Scheffler for KS2 and Julia Donaldson/Axel Scheffler for KS1.
- Prior to WBD, EYFS/KS1 to read as many Julia Donaldson picture books as possible!
- KS2 Class Readers before WBD:
- Y3 – The Enormous Crocodile
- Y4 – Fantastic Mr Fox
- Y5 – George's Marvellous Medicine
- Y6 – James and the Giant Peach

Features of Julia Donaldson and Roald Dahl




Julia Donaldson	Roald Dahl
- Predictable, rhythmic language - Repeated phrases - Simple story structure (easy for young children to retell) - Memorable characters - Includes themes such as friendship, kindness and bravery	- Bold, imaginative worlds - Clear heroes and villains - Adults often cruel and foolish and children are clever and resourceful - Dark of mischievous humour - Invented words, powerful vocabulary - Includes themes such as good triumphing over bad, standing up to unfairness - Stories end with twists for the villains

Foundation – The Gruffalo



- Characters for children to write about... The mouse, the fox, the owl, the snake, the Gruffalo.
- Each child to be in a group of 5-6 pupils and they will be given an animal to write about.
- They will write a dictated sentence which matches their phonic knowledge.
- Examples for Set 1:**
 - The Gruffalo is big. The mouse is quick. The snake is long. The snake can hiss. The fox can run. The owl can sit.
- Examples for Set 2:**
 - The owl can see at night. The Gruffalo has big horns. The Gruffalo can shout. The owl can see at night.
- They will then sketch and paint a picture of their animal.
- Final sentences and painting to be collated together to form a class book.

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Planning and Whole School Approach

To ensure pupils were fully immersed in the chosen authors prior to the event, each phase spent time exploring a range of texts during the weeks leading up to World Book Day.

Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 read a wide selection of Julia Donaldson picture books, enabling pupils to become familiar with recurring themes, characters, rhyme and repetition, as well as Axel Scheffler's distinctive illustrations.

Key Stage 2 classes studied Roald Dahl through their class readers:

Year 3 – *The Enormous Crocodile*

Year 4 – *Fantastic Mr Fox*

Year 5 – *George's Marvellous Medicine*

Year 6 – *James and the Giant Peach*

This preparatory work ensured pupils had a secure understanding of each author's style before applying this knowledge during World Book Day.

Activities across the school were carefully planned to ensure progression whilst maintaining a consistent whole-school theme. Every pupil experienced reading, writing, illustration and publication, culminating in opportunities to share their finished work with another class and celebrate themselves as authors.

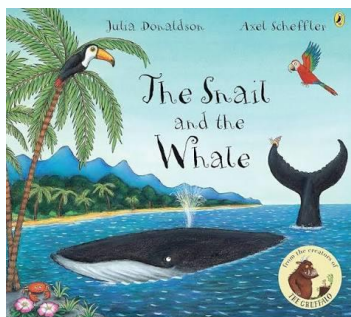
Foundation Stage

Children were introduced to the roles of an author and illustrator before sharing *The Gruffalo*. Through whole-class discussion, pupils explored the characters and collaboratively created a class book inspired by the text.

During adult-led sessions, children composed and wrote simple descriptive sentences about characters using carefully scaffolded sentence stems appropriate to their stage of development. Continuous provision was enhanced with role-play opportunities linked to Julia Donaldson's stories, allowing pupils to revisit vocabulary, retell narratives and develop communication and language through imaginative play.



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Planning and Whole School Approach

Key Stage 1

Following a shared reading of *The Snail and the Whale*, pupils wrote character descriptions of one of the main characters. Teaching was carefully adapted to meet the needs of all learners. Year 1 pupils composed dictated sentences matched closely to their phonic knowledge, whilst Year 2 pupils were encouraged to orally rehearse and independently compose descriptive sentences where appropriate.

A carousel approach enabled teachers to provide targeted writing support whilst pupils engaged in meaningful independent activities including book reviews, role play and rhythm and rhyme tasks inspired by Julia Donaldson's writing. During the afternoon, pupils studied Axel Scheffler's illustration style before producing their own artwork using sketching and painting techniques.

Lower Key Stage 2

Pupils explored how Roald Dahl transforms ordinary situations into extraordinary adventures through imaginative storytelling. Using the stimulus 'The Day Something Unexpected Happens', pupils planned and wrote their own original narratives, beginning with a whole-class story map before creating individual four-page story books.

Appropriate scaffolding, including sentence starters, supported pupils requiring additional guidance, whilst higher attaining pupils planned independently and developed their own creative ideas. The afternoon provided opportunities for editing and proofreading before pupils illustrated their stories in the style of Quentin Blake.

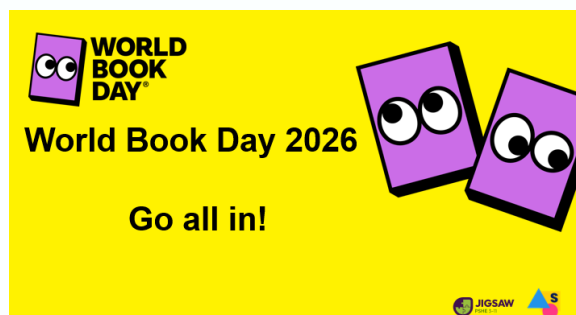
Upper Key Stage 2

Older pupils built upon the Lower Key Stage 2 approach by independently planning and writing extended six-page story books inspired by Roald Dahl's writing style. Pupils brainstormed imaginative ideas before applying curriculum writing objectives within their own narratives. Teacher support was carefully targeted for pupils requiring additional scaffolding, enabling all children to successfully publish a completed story.

As in Lower Key Stage 2, pupils concluded the day by illustrating their work in the distinctive style of Quentin Blake.



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Highlights of the Day

To launch our World Book Day celebrations, a whole-school assembly was delivered which explored the origins and purpose of World Book Day, reinforcing our commitment to developing a culture of reading for pleasure across the Trust. A key message of the assembly was that *everyone is a reader* and that reading extends far beyond traditional novels. Pupils discussed the wide variety of texts they engage with in everyday life, including graphic novels, comics, recipe books, instruction manuals, magazines, newspapers and information texts. This helped pupils to recognise that reading can be closely linked to their own hobbies, interests and aspirations, encouraging them to seek out texts that genuinely motivate and engage them. By broadening pupils' perceptions of what reading looks like, we aimed to remove barriers for reluctant readers and demonstrate that reading is both purposeful and enjoyable.

To further inspire pupils, author visits were arranged through the Maidenhead Big Read Festival, providing every school within the Trust with a visit for Key Stage 2 pupils from a published local author. Authors included Philip Kavvadias, Dave Barker, Matt Oldfield and Ben Lyttleton, each sharing their own writing journey, creative process and passion for storytelling. Providing children with the opportunity to meet real-life authors is invaluable; it helps to bring books to life, demonstrates that authors are real people with stories to tell and inspires pupils to see themselves as readers, writers and future storytellers. These experiences provided an authentic and memorable dimension to our World Book Day celebrations and further strengthened our whole-school reading culture.



What stops reading being fun?

Match-up these barriers to "fun" reading:

Barrier	Solution
I can't find a book I like	Ask a friend or teacher for ideas
The words are tricky	Read with someone, or try audio
I get bored	Try a different topic or shorter story
I forget to <u>make time</u> to read	Make a "reading time" each day

How could you go all in?

"I could read the description of my favourite film."

"I could read a recipe for my favourite meal."

"I could read to relax just before I go to bed."

"I could read on the bus as I travel to my favourite place."

"I could read to find out more about something I'm into."

"I could read some tips for playing a tough level of my game"

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Highlights of the Day

One of the most memorable aspects of our World Book Day celebrations was the enthusiasm shown by pupils through their choice of costume. Children were invited to dress as their favourite character from the works of Julia Donaldson or Roald Dahl, resulting in a wonderful celebration of some of children's literature's most recognisable and well-loved characters. The high levels of participation demonstrated the excitement generated by the event and provided valuable opportunities for pupils to discuss books, recommend stories to their peers and celebrate the authors and illustrators that had been the focus of their learning. Dressing as a character helped pupils to develop a deeper connection with the texts they had explored throughout the week, reinforcing the idea that books can inspire creativity, imagination and enjoyment. The photographs below capture the excitement, engagement and sense of community that made this year's World Book Day such a successful whole-school celebration.



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Impact

The impact of this year's World Book Day was evident in the enthusiasm shown by pupils, the quality of discussion surrounding books and authors, and the pride children demonstrated in their completed work. Throughout the day and in the days that followed, staff observed a noticeable increase in book talk across the school, with many pupils choosing to discuss their stories and ideas with friends during breaktimes and lunchtimes. This sustained engagement demonstrated that the event had extended beyond the classroom, successfully encouraging pupils to immerse themselves in literature and storytelling.

Pupil voice further reinforced the success of the day. Many children commented positively on the opportunity to be creative and make independent choices within their writing. One pupil reflected, *"I liked being able to think of my own ideas, it could be anything. We don't usually get to do that as we have a set subject to write about."* Another explained how they had applied advice shared during the author visits, commenting, *"I tried to use some of the strategies we learnt from the author visits when I was writing my story, such as thinking about things that are most familiar to you, even if you think they are boring. I wrote my story about a magical jewellery box because of my jewellery box at home."* These comments demonstrate that pupils were not only inspired by the visiting authors but were able to transfer their learning into their own writing.



Children also valued the opportunity to celebrate themselves as authors. The publication of individual books, followed by sharing them with another class, provided an authentic audience and gave pupils a genuine sense of achievement. One pupil described the experience by saying, *"Reading our stories to other classes made me feel proud of the work I'd done and to have it appreciated and listened to by other children in the school was fulfilling."* This opportunity to publish and celebrate writing continues to be one of the strongest features of our World Book Day provision and reinforces the message that every child has a story worth sharing.

Within Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, the use of dictated sentences enabled pupils to focus their cognitive effort on the mechanics of writing, including segmenting words, applying phonics knowledge and developing accurate letter formation, rather than becoming overwhelmed by simultaneously generating ideas and composing sentences. This approach supported pupils in producing successful written outcomes whilst building confidence as emerging writers. Alongside writing, pupils developed their understanding of illustration through carefully modelled step-by-step drawings of characters from *The Gruffalo*. Staff observed children independently revisiting these techniques during continuous provision and in the days following World Book Day, demonstrating an increased understanding of how illustrators construct characters through a sequence of manageable steps. This spontaneous application highlighted the lasting impact of the learning beyond the planned lesson.



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Impact

Similarly, pupils across the school spoke enthusiastically about developing their artistic skills through sketching in the styles of Axel Scheffler and Quentin Blake. One child remarked, *"It was nice being able to sketch in the style of Quentin Blake again, because we've done it before I feel like I got better at it this time around,"* demonstrating how repeated exposure to high-quality illustrators helped pupils build both confidence and technical skill.

Teacher feedback also highlighted the positive impact of allowing pupils greater creative freedom within Key Stage 2. Staff commented that pupils were highly engaged by the opportunity to write original stories with minimal prescription, resulting in imaginative ideas and purposeful application of descriptive language. Children who initially found independent story creation challenging benefited from collaborative planning, with one pupil explaining, *"I found it hard to think of my own story but my teacher helped us create a story map as a class and then I decided to use that plan rather than getting stressed out thinking of my own story."* This demonstrates the importance of providing appropriate scaffolds whilst still encouraging creativity and independence.

*We thought of ways
to describe the snail
and the whale
together as a class
first before we wrote
our sentences. I
thought of the word
'slow' for the snail.*
Freddie – Year 1

*Axel Scheffler makes
the eyes of all the
characters look to the
side. I did that in my
drawing too.*
Archie - Foundation

Evaluation and Next Steps

Overall, World Book Day was highly successful in meeting its core aims of raising the profile of reading, celebrating high-quality authors and illustrators, and further strengthening our reading for pleasure culture across the Trust. The enthusiasm demonstrated by pupils, the quality of conversations surrounding books and storytelling, and the pride children took in publishing and sharing their own work all contributed to a memorable and purposeful celebration of literature.

The evaluation process has, however, identified several opportunities for further development. Although the writing outcomes produced across the school were of a high quality, staff consistently reported that the scale of the writing tasks required significantly more than one school day to complete. This is the second consecutive year that this has been identified, suggesting that future World Book Day activities should be carefully refined to ensure pupils can fully experience the complete writing and publishing process within the allocated time.

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Evaluation and Next Steps

As Reading Lead, I also recognise the importance of ensuring that World Book Day remains firmly rooted in its primary purpose: promoting reading for pleasure. Whilst writing as an author remains a valuable and highly motivating experience, the balance of the day has gradually shifted towards extended writing. Future planning will therefore place a greater emphasis on reading, book discussion and immersive literary experiences whilst still retaining opportunities for pupils to publish and celebrate their own work. Hearing children proudly refer to themselves as "authors" remains one of the most rewarding outcomes of the day and is a tradition that should continue to be celebrated.

A further priority for next year will be extending author engagement into Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Whilst Key Stage 2 pupils greatly benefited from workshops delivered through the Maidenhead Big Read Festival, younger pupils did not receive the same opportunity. Providing author or illustrator experiences for our youngest children will help ignite curiosity, foster positive attitudes towards books from the earliest stages and continue to strengthen the foundations of lifelong reading for pleasure.

This year's World Book Day demonstrated that, when pupils are immersed in high-quality literature and given authentic opportunities to create, discuss and celebrate books, reading becomes far more than a curriculum subject - it becomes a shared culture. The experiences provided have further embedded reading at the heart of school life and will continue to shape the future development of our reading curriculum.

Making a story map as a class always helps me think of my own ideas. Then I can usually see a part of the story I can change for my own story.

Victoria – Year 3



Its interesting meeting authors in real life because then you get to find out where their inspiration comes from.

Holly – Year 6



It's fun dressing up as a character from a book and then seeing other people who have also dressed up as characters from the same story. Then you can act out parts together.

Molly – Year 5

