



Gobles Court
7 Market Square
Bicester
Oxon
OX26 6AA



ARCh Spring Newsletter

Issue 50

January 2026



01869 320380



info@archoxfordshire.org.uk



<https://archoxfordshire.org.uk>

Welcome to the National Year of Reading 2026!

**Proud to support
The National Year
of Reading 2026.**

**GO
ALL
IN.**

We are delighted that the government has designated 2026 the official National Year of Reading!

ARCh is an official delivery partner to promote the National Year of Reading (NYR) to all.

The aim of the NYR is to champion reading for pleasure and inspire everyone, children and adults alike, to pick up a book and discover the joy that reading can bring.

You can visit the NYR website [here](https://www.nyrofficial.org.uk).

Keep an eye out across the year for ways that ARCh will be promoting the NYR and celebrating the joy of reading!

We are already in discussions with Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford University Press and other local organisations about ways we can share the National Year of Reading with everyone.

We would like more volunteers than ever this year, as we aim to support 1000 children in 2026!

Tribute to Ian Hudspeth, OBE



Ian was our Chair of Trustees who sadly passed away in December. A former leader of Oxfordshire County Council, it was a huge honour for us that he chose to support ARCh. He had a real understanding of children's learning challenges. It was a pleasure to work with him and to get to know him as such a kind and generous man.

We will always remember, value and be grateful for the enthusiasm he shared for education in the county and how much he supported ARCh staff and our work. He will be hugely missed by so many - our thoughts are with his wife, daughter and family and friends.

If you'd like to share a memory of Ian or find out about his funeral, please do visit the Much Loved website below.

<https://ianhudspeth.muchloved.com/>

December Volunteer Meeting

Our December Volunteer Meeting was a wonderful afternoon of celebration and learning, thank you to all who attended.



We started with an impassioned speech from Deputy Lieutenant Miranda Markham (above left), a former ARCh volunteer, who spoke from the heart about the impact ARCh Reading Helpers have on the children they support. Miranda then presented ARCh Reading Helper John Clay with his Long Service Award! (above right)



This was followed by a presentation from Olga Zilberberg from The Missing Link all around Neurodiversity. This session was so interesting and full of useful hints and ideas to be used in your sessions with the children you support. **If you would like the slides from Olga's presentation, please do ask your Field Worker who will email these to you.** We have purchased some recommended books around Neurodiversity which will be available at book exchanges and from your Field Workers. Olga pictured with Jane and Elaine, above left. Olga delivering her presentation, above right.



And then it was time for lots of tea, cake and mince pies- here's ARCh Patron Korky Paul (left) enjoying conversation with some of our ARCh volunteers!

Spring Volunteer Meeting- Tuesday 17th March Kidlington Baptist Church, 2pm-4pm. Author Lucy Walker will be sharing ideas about the importance of oral storytelling, you can find out more about Lucy at her website <https://lucywalters.uk.com/>. Fortitude Communications, who will be supporting us with National Storytelling Week, will present ARCh with a book donation and will be filming this meeting.

Wolv Lit Fest

We were delighted to be a part of WolvLitFest on October 18th in Wolvercote, Oxford. The event, run by the Oxford Independent Authors group, was a fantastic day of literacy fun! There were book stalls and workshops for children and adults throughout the day.

We put on a workshop around Duologues- the magic of shared reading. A huge thank you to ARCh volunteer and duologue author Maggie Lloyd for leading the workshop, inspiring families to explore how duologues can be used to support their children with reading.

We have lots of duologues available for your reading sessions available on our website- if you'd like more information, please ask your Field Worker!

We would also like to say a huge thank you to Clare Winterbottom for running refreshments for the event and raising £150 which was donated to ARCh, and a thank you to Lynda Boodell for helping with refreshments. Thank you all!



Maggie led the "Magic of Shared Reading" workshop with support from Jane.

Oxford Indie Book Fair

Following on from WolvLitFest, Oxford Independent Authors kindly invited us along to the Oxford Indie Book Fair to host a stall and spread the word of ARCh to Oxford's book loving community!

A huge thank you to Chris Poad, Peter Coggins, Catherine Roffe, and Marilyn Driver Davidson for coming along and helping out, and representing ARCh so brilliantly!



Cathy, Jen and Jane manned the stall with support from ARCh volunteers Peter and Chris.

Upcoming event- The Velvet Tones

The famous Big Band Double Header, featuring the Velvet Tones and a guest band, is happening on **Thursday 19th March at 8pm at Oxford Golf Club, Hill Top Road, Oxford, OX4 1PF**

It is free to attend, there is ample parking, a cash bar, and dance floor. There will also be a raffle and a collection for ARCh on the night!

Jen and Cathy will be at the event and would be pleased to see ARCh volunteers there!



For more information visit
<https://www.velvettonesbigband.co.uk/>

Youth Mental Health First Aid training

We are delighted that Oxfordshire Mind have offered us FREE Youth Mental Health First Aid training, so that ARCh volunteers have awareness about mental health, how it can affect children, and when to raise concerns with school.

The course is a 2 day course from 9am to 5pm, in person. The venues are still to be confirmed, but we have one in each area of Oxfordshire. If you would like to come along and haven't already done so, please let your Field Worker know ASAP so we can get you signed up!

If you have any questions, please contact us
info@archoxfordshire.org.uk



North Oxfordshire- Monday 23rd and Tuesday 24th February

Oxford City- Wednesday 4th and Thursday 5th March

South Oxfordshire- Wednesday 11th and Thursday 12th March

West Oxfordshire- Wednesday 18th and Thursday 19th March

Important Safeguarding Notice: Children's "Spy" Books

Some children's books by Andrew Cope (including Spy Dogs, Spy Cats and Spy Pups) contain a web address that is no longer controlled by the author. The domain has been taken over by another party and now links to inappropriate adult content.

The publisher, Puffin, has paused sales and is working with schools, libraries and retailers to remove affected copies. The website has no connection to the author or publisher.

What this means for you :

Please check these books and ensure children do not visit the website link.

The stories themselves are safe to read; the issue is only the outdated web address.

We recommend reminding children not to follow web links in books without adult permission.

We will share further updates as they become available.



Goodbye to Michelle

In September our Administration Assistant Michelle left ARCh to move Chichester with her family. We will miss Michelle in the office and want to say a huge thank you to her for all of her hard work!

We will have a new Administration Assistant joining us in January, who we look forward to introducing to you all in the new term.

Remembering ARCh Reading Helper Barbara Jeffries

In 2025 we received the sad news that ARCh Reading Helper Barbara Jeffries had passed away.

Our volunteers come from all walks of life, united by a love of reading and a willingness to give their time to support children's learning. We were truly fortunate to count Barbara among our ARCh reading helpers. Her dedication and commitment made a meaningful difference to the lives of many children.

Barbara volunteered at her local school, Kirtlington Primary, where she supported numerous children over four years. She will be fondly remembered by the pupils she helped, the school community, and all of us at ARCh. We are sincerely grateful to have known her kindness, generosity, and the lasting impact of her time and care. We were deeply moved by the generous donations made to ARCh in memory of Barbara.



“Barbara was a highly valued part of our community who gave her time so generously to the school. She had a wonderful rapport with the children, who always looked forward to their reading sessions with her. She was endlessly supportive, attending other school events such as leavers’ services and open afternoons, and this dedication was greatly appreciated. Her warmth, kindness, and enthusiasm made her a beloved presence among both pupils and staff. With a life full of rich experiences, she would share fascinating stories that captivated us all. Her legacy will live on in the joy she brought to our school community, and she will be greatly missed.”

Kyla Bates, Kirtlington Headteacher

Volunteer Fairs across Oxfordshire

We attend Volunteer Fairs across the county to spread the word about ARCh and encourage new people to join us!

Upcoming Fairs:

Thame on Saturday 24th January 10am-2pm at Thame Town Hall.

If you able to come along and share with people about ARCh, please let us know!

If you hear of any Volunteer Fairs in your local area, or any other events that you feel we could have a presence at, please let us know and we will do our best to come along.

We are also able to provide presentations at different community groups such as Rotary Clubs, U3A and any other local organisations. If you have a contact at a local group and think they would be interested in hearing about ARCh, please let us know!

Jane was invited to talk on Greatest Hits Radio about the work ARCh is doing after news was published revealing 1 in 4 children leave primary school not meeting the age expected standard in reading. A subsequent article was published and you can read it [here](#).



Facebook



LinkedIn

Please do have a look at our social media and interact with our posts with “likes” and “comments” or by sharing the post. This will help us to reach more people!

Social Media Policy - Update

Please take a moment to revisit our Social Media policy. It can be found on our website in the volunteer resources area, or ask your Field Worker for a copy.

An important reminder - you must not post anything about the children you work at ARCh with on your personal social media accounts.

Volunteer Resources on our website

Do remember that we have a section on our website for you to access Volunteer Resources.

There is a wide range on there, including some new duologues from Chris Poad- thank you Chris! Please see message from Chris below:

"I have found duologues are very popular. Over the last couple of years I have written a few duologues which I tailored explicitly for my children. They went down extremely well, mainly because in most of them the two characters were myself and the child. They loved being a character in a play.

They are available on the ARCh web site. To find them, on the ARCh web site select Volunteer Resources, and click Click here to access the volunteer login page and enter the ARCh password, then select Duologues and then Chris P Plays. You can then click on a play to view it and download it. I hope they prove to be useful."

These are in Word format so that they can be downloaded and personalised to suit your children if you wish!

The Volunteer Resources page is here:

<https://archoxfordshire.org.uk/resources/>

The password for the website can be found in your Volunteer Manual, or you can ask your Field Worker if you need a reminder.

More volunteers needed please!

To celebrate the National Year of Reading, please help us by spreading the word about ARCh – our volunteers are always our best ambassadors!

Please let us know if you would like any posters or leaflets to display or share.

We are also looking for advertising opportunities such as in local newspapers, noticeboards and community groups - if you know somewhere you could recommend to us, please let us know!

**Proud to support
The National Year
of Reading 2026.**

**GO
ALL
IN.**

Funding thank yous

Ruth Botting

Edgar Family Foundation

Councillor Susanna Presell

Councillor Thomas Ashby

Councillor Nathan Ley

WolvLitFest

Councillor Mark Cherry

Councillor Liz Leffman

Barnwood LTD

Bicester Golf Club

Thank you to PCC of Holy Trinity Church, Hinton in the Hedges, Northamptonshire for their generous donation and to ARCh Volunteer Lavinia Mains for suggesting ARCh.

Localgiving

Thank you to those who have donated to ARCh via our LocalGiving Page.

Remember you can give a one off donation, or set up a monthly donation, at <https://localgiving.org/charity/arch>



We are grateful for the long-standing support of the Witney Educational Foundation (WEF).

In the current year, WEF has once again provided funding to support the school's contribution, ensuring that every Witney primary school can benefit from at least one funded ARCh volunteer. This sustained investment has enabled hundreds of children across Witney to access one-to-one ARCh sessions delivered by trained, supported, and well-resourced volunteers. The positive impact of this funding continues to be felt across our schools, and we are sincerely thankful for WEF's ongoing commitment.

Company Volunteering Update

We have been working with companies across Oxfordshire to offer our Employee Volunteering Scheme to staff. We are pleased to currently be working with staff from the following organisations...

- Oxford City Council
- Forvia HELLA
- Oxford University Press
- Elsevier
- Anders Electronics
- Rhubarb Seating
- Knights PLC
- Huber+Suhner
- BMW
- Unipart House
- Oxford North
- CRBE
- Freeths
- Oxford Brookes University

With 2026 being the NYR, we are hoping to connect with even more organisations and businesses!

If you have any connections with businesses across Oxfordshire who you feel would be interested in our volunteering programme, please get in touch via email:

info@archoxfordshire.org.uk
