ARCh Autumn Newsletter
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Welcome to the Autumn Term!

We hope you have all had a restful and enjoyable summer break!

Proud to support The National Year of Reading 2026.

GO ALL IN.

We've reached the final term of the National Year of Reading, and it's time to "go all in"! Thanks to you, our amazing ARCh volunteers and supporters, we've already helped hundreds of children discover the confidence, skills and enjoyment that reading brings.

Every session, encouraging conversation and book you share makes a difference, helping children build confidence and believe in themselves. As we enter the final term, we're asking our ARCh community to keep spreading the word, encouraging others to get involved and continuing to give your time and enthusiasm.

More volunteers needed please!

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.

Our Recruitment Manager Emma is always available to talk to people who may be interested in finding out more about ARCh and is available for phone calls, Zoom meetings or meeting face to face with people who might want to have a conversation about volunteering. Please feel free to give our contact details to anyone who may be interested to arrange a time to talk with Emma. Her direct email is emma@archoxfordshire.org.uk or they can email info@archoxfordshire.org.uk. Thank you!

Summer Volunteer Meeting

Our summer volunteer meeting was held on July 14th.

We were honoured to welcome the Oxfordshire High Sheriff Jawaid Malik (and his grandson Yousef!) to present our Long Service Awards to ARCh volunteers who had completed 5, 10 or 15 years of service this year.



Our 15 year award winners!



Our 5 year award winners with High Sheriff Jawaid Malik

5 years

Jane Burrett
Lesley Conn
Judith Goldsmith
Kay Honner
Rena Kelly
Christine Mather
Colette Parekh
Sheila Richards
Julie Roberts
Janice Staniland

10 years

Susie Case

15 years

Pauline Carter
Sophie Mavor
Wendy Softley



Thank you to everyone for your commitment and dedication over the years!

We were also delighted to present this year's Christopher Quinton award to David Jones.

David has been an ARCh Reading Helper for 11 years, supporting children at St John's Primary School in Wallingford. His contribution goes far beyond his time in school – he has also served as an ARCh Trustee, shared his PR expertise and even starred in our 2023 promotional video!

His enthusiasm, generosity and commitment have made a lasting difference to ARCh and the children we support. Thank you, David, for everything you've done, and continue to do, for ARCh and the children of Wallingford.



David receives his award from Jawaid Malik.

We were delighted to welcome James Catchpole, who gave our volunteers an entertaining insight into the world of a literary agent. He brought his talk to life by demonstrating the importance of illustrations, the impact of how words are delivered and, of course, the power of a well-timed song!
James also shared the story behind his book, “What Happened to You?”, giving us a fascinating glimpse into the journey from an idea to publication.

Slides from his presentation are available from your Field Worker on request. You can also visit James’ website: https://thecatchpoles.net/



James entertained us all during his presentation.

We were thrilled to have copies of some of James’ books available for volunteers to snap up, and we’re also ordering several of the titles he featured in his presentation (see below). **Do come along to one of our book exchanges this term to pick up a copy and discover some new favourites to share with the children you support!**



We were pleased to share our 2025 Annual Report at the meeting- it was lovely to see so many people enjoying having a look through them over tea and cake during refreshments. We are so proud of our Annual Reports each year as they really tell the story of ARCh and all the incredible work you are doing in schools.

You can view our 2025 Annual Report on our website here.

We were delighted to premiere our new promotional video, kindly created by Fortitude Communications. Featuring ARCh Patrons Will Gompertz and Lucy Walters, alongside ARCh Volunteer Catherine Roffe, the video is now with Fortitude for a few final tweaks before we launch it on our website and share it with the world!
A huge thank you to everyone at Fortitude Communications, especially Shaun Reynolds, for producing the video for us free of charge. We are incredibly grateful for your support!

Thank you to Jane Donald, Marilyn Driver-Davidson and Sue Cavalier who helped with refreshments in the kitchen.
Thank you as always to Rose Somerset for the wonderful photos!

Staff News

Farewell to Kathryn and Marie

Kathryn joined ARCh in February 2025 and has worked wonders in growing our presence across West Oxfordshire. Her enthusiasm and hard work helped us reach more volunteers and schools, and she has made a real difference during her time with us. We're sorry to see her go and wish her every success as she completes her dance teacher training.

After an incredible 11 years with ARCh, Marie is moving on to new challenges. During her time with us, she has played a huge role in ARCh's growth and supported countless volunteers, schools and staff. She has been a much-loved member of the team, and we're enormously grateful for everything she has contributed. We wish her all the very best for the future!



We said goodbye to Marie and Kathryn at our Summer Volunteer Meeting.

We welcome two new members to the ARCh staff team!



Sophie Stevens
Administrator

Having worked in primary schools for several years, I've seen first-hand the amazing impact ARCh volunteers have on children – the confidence they build, the joy they spark, and the difference they make every single week. I'm thrilled to now be part of the ARCh team, supporting the administrative side that helps bring volunteers and schools together.

'At home, I have two teenage daughters and three cats, and some of our happiest early memories come from reading together – especially at Christmas, my absolute favourite time of the year! Christmas books were a huge part of our family traditions, and I still have every single one of my daughters' childhood Christmas stories. I'm a devoted Newcastle United fan, and when I'm not cheering on the team, you'll usually find me cross-stitching, experimenting with my sewing machine, or baking something sweet.

Having spent 20 years working as a Housing Officer for a variety of Housing Associations, I decided I wanted a better work life balance and that I could use my skills in other arears. Using the experience and knowledge that I gained from achieving a PGCE in Primary Education in 2007 I recently worked as a volunteer in a primary school helping children to read and improving their confidence. I really enjoyed helping the children read and seeing the progress they made. This led to me applying to be a Field Worker, a role that I am really keen and excited to do!

I am an avid cyclist covering 12000 miles per year and enjoy both training and racing and especially the time spent outdoors enjoying the countryside. When I'm not on my bike I play percussion and perform with local orchestras across the county.



James Hunt
West Oxfordshire Field Worker

Victor Puddick, who attended the very first ARCh training course in 2008, hung up his ARCh lanyard after more than 18 years in school. We are so pleased that Victor and his wife Janet will continue to help ARCh by keeping our boxed games in order – they are looking forward to having lots of fun trying all the games out!

We are so pleased to share a tribute from the Headteacher of St Edburgs, where Victor has been an ARCh Reader for 18 years.



"Volunteering is fun" says Victor!

It is a great privilege to recognise and celebrate Victor as he retires after 18 years of outstanding service as an ARCh (Assisted Reading for Children) volunteer.
Over nearly two decades, Victor has given his time, patience and encouragement to support hundreds of children at St Edburg's in developing not only their reading skills but also a genuine love of books and learning. Week after week, year after year, he has been a calm, familiar and reassuring presence, helping children to grow in confidence and discover the joy that reading can bring.
The impact of Victor's dedication cannot be measured simply in years of service or the number of children he has supported. His kindness, consistency and unwavering commitment have helped shape countless young lives, leaving a legacy that will continue long after his retirement.
On behalf of everyone at St Edburg's, we offer our heartfelt thanks for 18 years of exceptional volunteering. Victor, your generosity, compassion and dedication have made an immeasurable difference to our school community. You will be greatly missed by staff and pupils alike, but your contribution will never be forgotten.
Please join us in congratulating Victor on this remarkable achievement and wishing him a long, happy and well-deserved retirement.
Andy and everyone at St Edburg's CE Primary School



A huge thank you to Whitley Stimpson for choosing ARCh as their charity at their annual Charity Golf Day on 1 September at Frilford Heath Golf Club.
Following an 18-hole Stableford competition and two-course meal, our Joint CEOs, Jane and Elaine, joined guests to share more about ARCh and the difference our Reading Helpers make to children across Oxfordshire. Thank you to ARCh volunteer Paul Mabbutt for participating in the golf competition.
We're thrilled that Whitley Stimpson raised an incredible £1,000 for ARCh – thank you!

Blenheim 7k Fun Run

A huge thank you to former ARCh volunteer Tracey Woods for arranging, sponsoring and joining an ARCh team at the Blenheim 7k Fun Run in May.

Jane, Elaine and Amanda Frank joined Tracey and friends on the 7k route, raising an incredible £2,000+ between them for ARCh! Thank you to everyone who donated or supported us.

Tracey has kindly offered to support us again next year, and we'd love an even bigger team – perhaps with a social afterwards! Interested in joining, or getting your employer involved- an ideal team building event! Let us know!



Elaine, Amanda, Jane and Tracey enjoying the event!



WolvLitFest

We had a fantastic day at WolvLitFest in June, a family literary event organised by the Oxford Independent Authors group (OxIA).

Jen and Jane hosted a well-received children's workshop, while Ann Horrell, Chris Poad, Marilyn Driver-Davidson and Indrani Sigmany helped on the ARCh stall and spread the word about our work.

A huge thank you to Clare Winterbottom and Cathy for running the refreshments, which raised an amazing £130 for ARCh!

St John's Literary Festival

Emma (pictured right) spent the day at St John's Literary Festival in May, chatting to families about ARCh.

We're delighted to have developed a close relationship with St John's College, with 10 members of staff training as ARCh Reading Helpers in September! We are hoping to replicate this across other colleges in the near future.





We wanted to say huge congratulations to ARCh Reading Helper Ann Heath for her award for 17 years of ARCh volunteering service from Kidlington Town Council.

Volunteer Fairs and Community Events

Over the Summer Term, we were lucky enough to be included in a range of Volunteer Fairs and Community Events. These included:

- A stall at the Friday market in Gloucester Green Oxford
- A community stand in the Westgate Oxford
- A stall at the Friday market in Bicester
- Carterton Volunteer Fair
- Didcot Festival of Cultures

Thank you to Julie Higgs, Vanessa Rhone, Victor and Janet Piddick, and Rob Blackburn for helping on the Bicester stall.
Thank you to our Chair of Trustees Ben Morrel-Allen and volunteers Derek Thornhill and Wendy Way for manning the Carterton stall!



Julie, Rob and Vanessa manning the Bicester Market Stall.

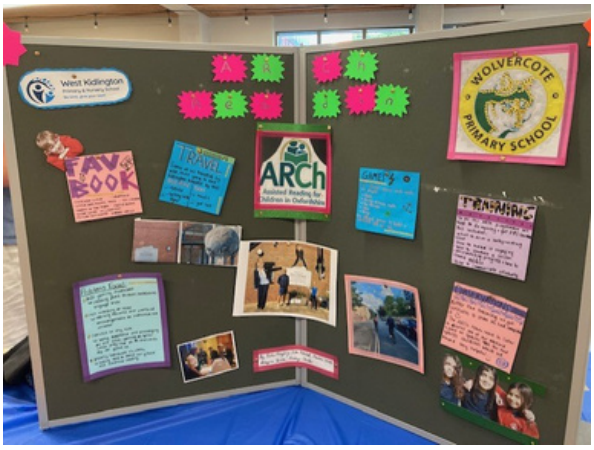
Upcoming events

- Abingdon Volunteer Drive *Friday 25th September* 10am-2pm
- Oxford Brookes Student Volunteer Fair *Tuesday 29th September* 11am-2pm
- OCVA Volunteer Fair Templars Square *Wednesday 30th September* 10am-1pm
- Wallingford Literary Fest *Saturday 3rd October* 10am-4pm
- Banbury Canal Day *Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th Octobe*r 11am-5pm
- UN Older Peoples Day Oxford Town Hall *Wednesday 7th October* 10am-2pm

Please let us know if you would like to come to any of these events to share your ARCh experience with others!

Ambassadors
ARCh
Assisted Reading for Children in Oxfordshire

We're looking for a small group of ARCh Volunteers to become Ambassadors across the county, helping raise awareness of ARCh in their local communities.
Working alongside ARCh staff, Ambassadors would represent the charity at volunteer fairs, community events and local group meetings. They'll help spread the word about our work, encourage new volunteers and build connections with schools and organisations.
If you'd like more information, please contact Emma by email emma@archoxfordshire.org.uk



Teddies Sixth Former Volunteers

Each year, we train lower sixth form students as ARCh volunteers and they support children in local primary schools. In June, we were invited to a presentation evening at St Edward's (Teddies) Oxford, where students shared their community work from the past year.
Last year, Teddies students ran ARCh sessions at Wolvercote Primary and West Kidlington Primary. It was lovely to hear how much they've enjoyed being ARCh Reading Helpers, and we look forward to welcoming a new group in September!



A reminder to please read updated version of Part One Keeping Children Safe in Education – Sept 2026.
You can read KCSIE Part 1 here
Please also ensure all your safeguarding trainings are up to date.
The ARCh Safeguarding Policy has been reviewed; the new version will shortly be available on our website and emailed to all volunteers with request to confirm this has been read and understood.

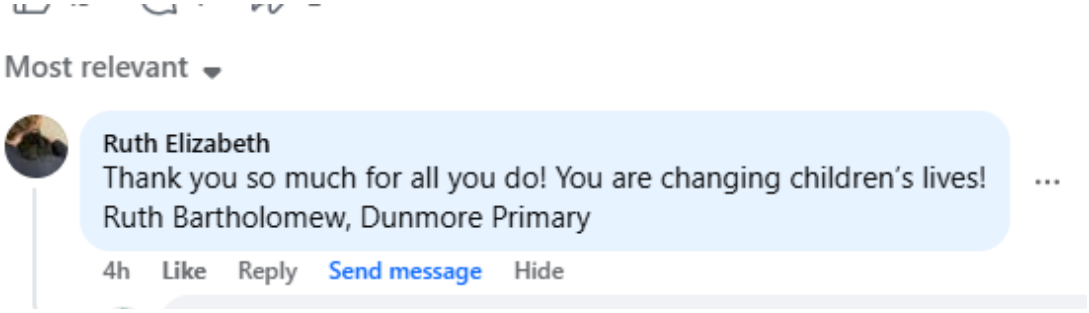
We have been contacted by the Oxfordshire Library service and thought some of our volunteers may be interested in the additional volunteering opportunity below:
Baby Week Oxfordshire returns from 14–20 November 2026, bringing organisations, families and communities together to celebrate and support the best start in life for children aged 0–5.
This year's theme, "Chat, Play, Read with Me: Together We Build the Best Start", highlights the importance of talking, playing and sharing books from birth. It also aligns with the National Year of Reading, encouraging families to make reading part of everyday life.
Libraries across Oxfordshire will be hosting special storytimes for babies, toddlers and pre-school children, with some looking for volunteers to help deliver sessions. If you enjoy reading stories to children and families, we can connect you with a local library looking for support.
To find out more or volunteer during Baby Week, please contact Liz Barnard at liz.barnard@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Pupil Survey Results

During the Summer Term, all schools were invited to complete our Pupil Survey to help us gather information about the progress and experiences of the children we support, including about their reading ability, confidence, and overall attitude to learning. The results are currently being evaluated by Research Oxford LTD and we look forward to sharing the results later this year!
A reminder that our Impact Report from 2025 is available on our website here.

Trustee Vacancy

We have a space on our Trustee Board for a current volunteer to join us. Having a current volunteer on the board is important to us, so we know that Volunteer Voice is represented. If you're interested and would like more information, please email info@archoxfordshire.org.uk



We received this lovely comment on Facebook from Dunmore Primary School in Abingdon!

Funding thank yous

Foresters Hall Kidlington
Nigel Simpson
Councillor Laura Gordon
Bicester Town Council
Banbury Charities
WellTogether
JA Pye
Beeching Trust
Old Possums
Cash for Kids
Didcot Town Council
PlanetIT
Dorchester Abbey TeaRoom
Witney Rotary Club
Bicester Lions Club
Henley Education Trust
Blake Educational Trust
Dragon School
Banbury Cherwell Rotary
Kennington Parish Council
Henley Rotary
Councillor Matt Webb
Dovecote Cafe
Abingdon Rotary
St John's College
Lincoln College Rectors
Witney Education Foundation



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
Please do share this link with your contacts- donations make a huge difference to our work.

VN Accountacy and Bookkeeping

Earlier this year, we were delighted to be chosen as VN Accountancy and Bookkeeping's Charity of the Year for 2026-2027. In July, we received our first donation from them- an incredible £981! Thank you so much to Vicky, Natalie and the team for choosing ARCh.
Emma was invited to the offices to meet the team (including office dog Dug!) and discuss the impact their support will make (pictured right).

