

NATIONAL YEAR OF READING EVENTS: AUTHOR CELIA REES VISITS



The National Year of Reading began in April, but at St Mary's School, every year is a year of reading. Popular children's author Celia Rees, who was shortlisted for the Whitbread Children's Book Award with her book 'Sorceress', visited to talk to Year 8 and 9 students, read from her latest book and for a book-signing.

Head of English, Mrs Helen Garrett, said of the event: "It was wonderful to have a well-known author such as Celia Rees visiting the school again. On this occasion, she read from her new novel, 'Sovay', which was published the day before her talk, so the book was quite literally hot off the press. Celia Rees' visit is just one of many activities we have planned during the National Year of Reading, to encourage a love of reading amongst pupils and parents."

As part of the many events taking place at St Mary's during the National Year of Reading, the School is welcoming more visiting authors to speak to pupils. Esteemed poet Anne Stevenson, who has won the prestigious Northern Rock prize, visited Sixth Form English Literature groups who are studying her poetry, to read some of her poems and hold a question and answer session with the students.

The English department organised a large number of activities to celebrate World Book Day in March. There were massed performances by Years 7-9, who acted out their versions of fairy tales and Norse and Greek myths. A 'book swap' stall was set up, so that pupils and staff could bring in their books and recycle them by swapping them for another person's.

The Senior School Readathon, launched on 23rd April – the date of Shakespeare's 444th birthday – saw pupils in Years 7-9 gaining sponsorship to read a number of books over a period of a month. The Readathon was held in aid of the charities CLIC Sargent, who care for children and teenagers with cancer, and The Roald Dahl Foundation. The money raised can be added to

St Mary's Junior School's total, who have already raised an impressive £1,339 for the same two charities from their Readathon.

And that's not all in terms of celebrating reading. The Senior School's Readers and Reviewers Group (A.K.A. Books and Biscuits), who meet every week, have discussed some of the long-list of books and all of the short-list in the Carnegie Medal award for children's literature and have written and displayed book reviews. The Senior and Junior School Parents' Reading Groups also meet regularly to discuss selected teenage fiction and books for younger readers respectively.

