

**It's official – St John's is 'An Outstanding Catholic School'!!!**

It gives me great pleasure to share with you the report from our recent Section 48 Denominational Inspection and to announce that St John's is officially recognised as an 'Outstanding Catholic School'. This is the first time that St John's has been judged as 'Outstanding' by an external inspection team and is, therefore, a very special moment in our development as a school. A link to our school website, where you can find a copy of our report, can be found at the following link; <https://www.stjohnscs.com/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=198>

The inspection team focussed on three distinct areas during their visit, 'Catholic Life', 'Religious Education' & 'Collective Worship', and I am delighted to say that we were judged as 'Outstanding' in each one of these three categories; a truly wonderful achievement.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone associated with the school – staff, students, parents & governors – as all have played their part in this outcome and deserve much credit for this success. I know that by continuing to work together, St John's will carry on going from strength to strength and, in the words of the report, ensure that our children continue to '*derive great benefit from attending St John's*' and '*excel in a spirit of care*'.

I do hope that you enjoy this latest edition of our Newsletter and congratulations, as always, to those pupils who gained a mention!

Matt Barron  
Headteacher

**St Joseph's School Art Workshop**

The pupils from St. Joseph's Prep had a wonderful time in the art loft. Pupils benefitted from a talk and a tour of the art loft by Mrs Stone. Her idea to build an 'ice world' complemented their current theme, which was inspired and based around the famous German painter Caspar David Friedrich. The pupils created a sculpture using foam board and mod rock.

Mrs D. Lal    *Art Technician*

## History Department News

### Westminster Visit

The Year 13 Politics' students enjoyed the unique experience of visiting both the Houses of Parliament and the Supreme Court in mid-January. The annual visit is arranged by Mr Adam Holloway, MP for Gravesham, and includes a full guided tour of the Palace of Westminster. With Mr Zeqiri, Head of Politics, accompanied the group and there was much to take in for the students. Mr Zeqiri also took the students to the Supreme Court building as there was no session in progress. This was quite an additional aspect to the experience.



### Normandy Memorial Trust



The History Society at the School has been striving to raise money for the Normandy Memorial Trust. Among the work carried out to raise money has been the biography of George Batts [which is selling well and is still available from the school at £15], the stalls at the Christmas Fayre and various collections and appeals. The work has been recognised by the Trust and readers are recommended to visit the Normandy Memorial Trust website and facebook pages where the work of the History Society is advertised.

### Memorial Service, Squadron Leader Palmer DFC VC

A memorial service commemorating Squadron Leader Palmer was held at St Peter and St Paul Church, Denton. This was held on the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the action over Cologne [on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1944] which not alone led to his death but also the action for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. The service was held exactly on the 75th Anniversary and was organised by local historian Andrew Marshall. Mr Marshall has, of course, a lengthy association with St John's. St John's was well represented with several staff to include Mrs Burns [British Legion Chairperson] and Mr Murphy [Head of History] in attendance but also several parents and students, some of whom currently serve in the Air Corps.



### Battlefield Visit

Ninety students from Year 7 made the pilgrimage to the Ypres Salient on December 13<sup>th</sup>. The trip involved two tour guides – in this case Mr Broome and Mr Murphy. The day included visits to Essex Farm Cemetery [John Macrae], Poelkapelle Cemetery [John Condon, youngest casualty], Passchendaele Museum, Spanbroekmolen Crater and Prowse Point [Christmas Truce, 1914], ending with the visit to Ieper. The highlight of the day then followed – not the Christmas and chocolate shopping – with the Last Post Ceremony. Wreaths were laid on behalf of the students, parents and staff and on behalf of the Borough of Gravesham.



### Christmas Fayre

The annual Christmas Fayre was held on the last week of term before the Christmas Holidays. Stalls sold a variety of items from chocolate through to sweets thorough to bric-a-brac. Charities included the Kenya School appeal, 6<sup>th</sup> Form Prom and the Normandy Memorial Trust. Over £600 was raised for the various good causes.

### Battle of Britain Memorial Visit

Ninety Year 8 students visited the Battle of Britain Memorial at Capel-le-Ferne in early February. The students in Year 8 are currently studying World War 2 so the visit was most timely. The students enjoyed a guided tour of the site and, once inside, enjoyed the simulator of the cockpit of a Hurricane being the highlight for everyone. Some enemy planes were brought down even if a large number of birds and wildlife suffered from the inexperienced student aviators!

### Fund Raising for the British Normandy Memorial

A regular visitor to the school, George Batts landed on Gold Beach on the morning of June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944 – making him a D-Day Veteran. Mr Batts was the instigator of what is now under construction in Normandy – a Memorial to the servicemen who lost their lives under British Command during the Normandy Campaign of 1944.

A fund-raising initiative suggested by the English Department saw each Year Group in the School attempt to raise enough money to fund the inscription of a name on the Memorial – adopting in some senses a serviceman from Gravesham. All the Year Groups, from 7 through to 13, raised the £130 with Year 7 doubling the amount!

Mr Batts was presented with the cheque for £1,000 at a recent Assembly at the School.

Councilor Gurdip Ram Bungar, Mrs Rosemary Dymond and various other distinguished guests were also in attendance.



Mr C. Murphy. *Head of History*

### County Rowing Finals

St John's enjoyed a remarkable day at the County rowing finals. In the recent past we have been fortunate to get one team on the podium, and maybe an individual, but in these finals we had a magnificent haul of fourteen silver and bronze medals in our best ever performance at this prestigious event.

The year 10 girls followed up their podium finish from last year with another fine performance. They gained a bronze placing with one personal best and two season bests and one new school record. Grace also won a bronze in the individual event. We were up against the likes of King's School, Highworth Grammar School and Mayfield. All of these girls have attended the rowing club, now in its 4<sup>th</sup> year. I am always pleased when they add to their medal collection. Grace was one of those that stepped up to join the rowing club.

The year 11 girls, despite not winning a medal, still achieved three personal bests, one season best and one new school record, and should be rightly proud of their performance on the day.

The year 11 boys put in a massive effort to work hard together to gain a silver medal. An absolutely excellent result as many of these have attended the rowing club and progressed on to join the Gravesend rowing club.

The year 12 and 13 girls got together for the qualifiers with 3 of them having rowed at various points in the last four years at the school club. It was fantastic to see them gain a silver medal overall. Gracjana, another student to progress from the school club to the rowing club, was also awarded a bronze medal in the individual event. There were three personal bests, two season bests and two new school records. A special mention must go to Chrissie who trained outside of school and knocked 42 seconds off her previous best time!

I have to say this was the one of the best days in my career to date, seeing not only the grit and determination of the finals but the journey the students have taken to get to this point. Truly magnificent, and the result of fantastic funding for a rowing machine to allow the club to be set up and the time and effort of a brilliant coach. Just the ingredients required to make our young people realize their potential and gain some experiences that will stay with them forever.

Mr S. Ward. *PE Teacher*

## Lego House Building Challenge



St John's hosted the Lego House Building Challenge where sixty of our most talented mathematicians in years 7 and 8 competed in teams to design and build, within a budget, and according to brief. Year 8 students Gina, Jessica and Adwoa were the winning team. Everyone had a fantastic time and learnt the importance of planning before action!



We were invited to the regional finals on February 11<sup>th</sup> where we took a team of year 7 boys. The three year 7 boys won the mini quiz and the main event coming home with a trophy, £10 each, chocolates and certificates. Very well done to Phelim, Harry and Jayden.

Mrs S. Taylor. *Maths Teacher.*

## Performing Arts News

### GCSE dance workshop 16th January

Students taking GCSE dance took part in a performance workshop where they created the beginnings of their exam piece. Once again they showed great resilience and perseverance, as well as showing how talented and passionate they are about dance. The workshop leader from Juka Dance Company was extremely impressed with all the students involved.

### Great Big Dance Off - National Schools Competition

We are delighted that the 'Velocity' Dance Company have been successful in gaining a place in the South East heats of the National Schools' Dance Competition - 'The Great Big Dance Off' - on 23rd March 2020. This is an excellent achievement, good luck to all involved!

### Dance leaders

The dance leader students recently lead a group of 120 year one students from St. John's Primary School in two workshops. They showed excellent leadership skills and were very much admired by the younger students! They will be leading year 5 in a series of workshops in March when we have no doubt they will continue to represent the school incredibly well with their professionalism and positive attitude.

### Velocity Dance Company on tour!

St. John's dance company, 'Velocity', have been invited to perform in Bruges to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Holocaust. This is an amazing opportunity for our dancers and a great honor to be part of such an event. The company will perform a group dance as well as a trio, both of which sensitively portray the stories of those who fought in World War 2 as well as those who lost loved ones.

Mrs R. Steadman. *Dance Teacher.*



## Year 8

### Year 8

This term, the entire Year 8 cohort had the wonderful opportunity this term to work with the Teaching and Learning team in order to carousel around a number of different workshops. The aim of all workshops was to prepare students for Year 9 where they will potentially be studying BTEC and GCSE option subjects. Using “Social

Media” as the focus, students explored a variety of ‘command’ words such as “identify”, “describe”, “explain”, and “evaluate” and learnt how to apply these to a range of tasks. All students were engaged in the sessions and worked hard to complete the booklet that had been made for them.

Mrs L Weller Assistant Headteacher

**TODAY**  
is the day to  
learn something  
**NEW**

Dear Parents/Carers

It was safer internet day globally on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

**New research** by the UK Safer Internet Centre released on the 11<sup>th</sup> February reveals the internet is a fundamental part of young people’s identity, helping them find their own voice offline.

Research finds that being online is both liberating and limiting for children

- New research from the UK Safer Internet Centre reveals young people’s online experiences are an essential part of who they are offline, with 38% saying it’s easier to be themselves online than offline
- The internet is creating an informed and inspired generation that is taking action
- But some feel pressure to shape their online identity for others – 62% are careful about what they share because they’ve seen people be mean
- Certain groups are being targeted with identity-based hate
- UKSIC call on people to start conversations with young people about online identity

Please see below for some links to support those conversations with our young people.

<https://parentzone.org.uk/advice/parent-guides>

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/safer-internet-day-2020/safer-internet-day-2020-top-tips>

Digital Parenting (Vodafone)

<https://www.vodafone.co.uk/mobile/digital-parenting/resources-category>

Digital Parenting Magazine

<https://cdn.flipsnack.com/widget/v2/widget.html?hash=fh90zaf97>

Parental Controls (Internet Matters)

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/>

The Best Parental Control Software for 2019

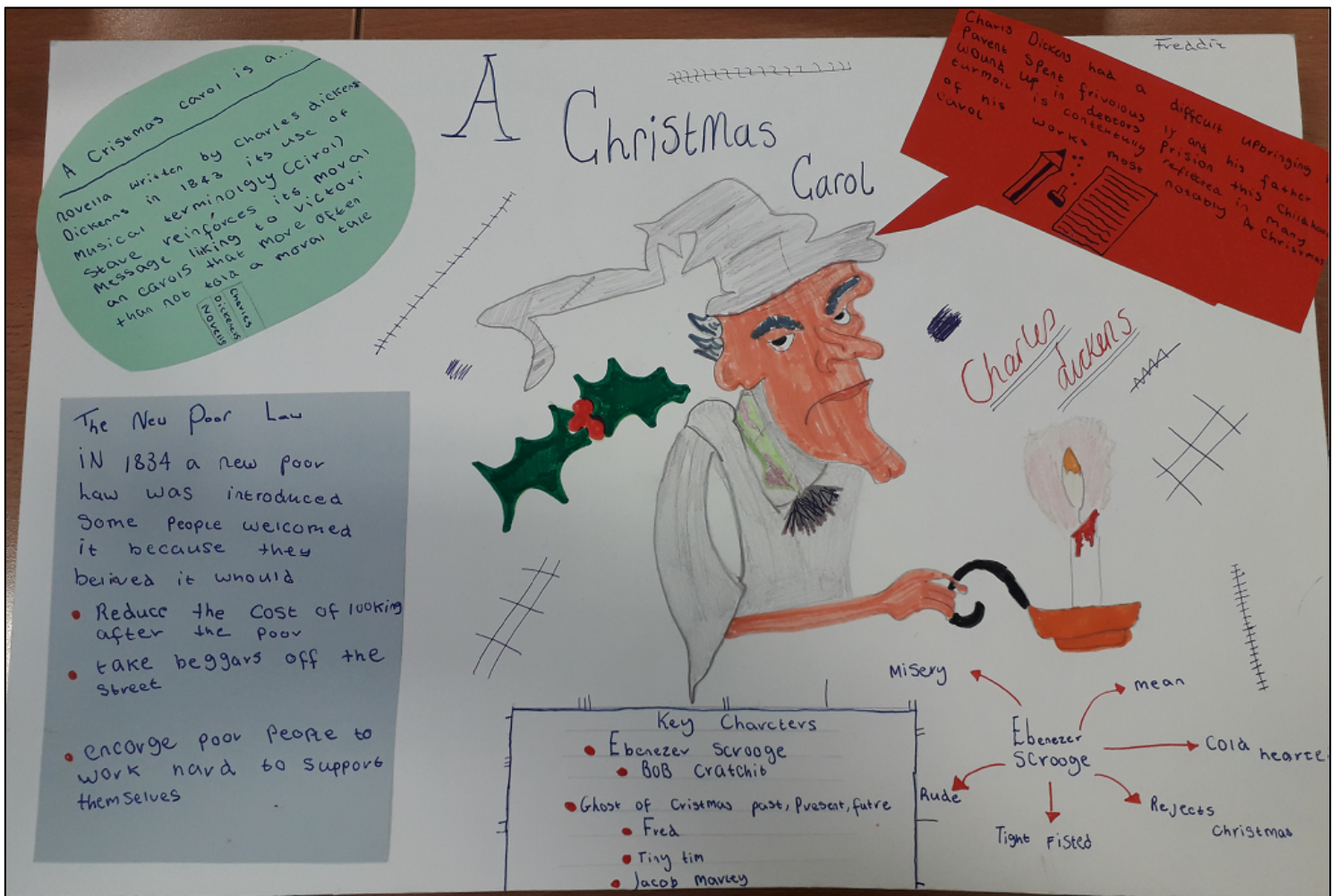
<https://uk.pcmag.com/parental-control-monitoring/67305/the-best-parental-control-software>

Best parental control apps for Android and iPhone 2020

<https://www.tomsguide.com/uk/us/best-parental-control-apps,review-2258.html>



## Literary Legends



Freddie Year 7

## Chaplain's Corner

It is enlightening to find out what issues genuinely trouble our young people. I think they worry about the world around them far more than perhaps we realise, and we could all use a reminder to listen to them more! These are some prayers we had at our Year 9 Mass recently that were inspired by some of the students who said these were real concerns for them and others of their age:

- As young people suffer so much stress and mental health issues, we pray that adults have a better understanding of the pressures we face with exams, social media and family life. We pray for peace and hope in our hearts and the strength to face obstacles in our lives.
- As young people in Gravesend we feel unsafe on the streets, we pray that police and other authorities step up their efforts to fight county lines gangs and knife crime. We pray for peace and hope in our community and the strength to resist the temptations and threats we face.
- As young people see the present generation of world leaders destroying the environment for our generation, we pray for more young leaders like Greta Thunberg and that world leaders listen to the voice of the young rather than their own agendas and self-interest. We pray that we all are moved to do our bit to reduce global warming and pollution.
- We pray for an end to hatred and conflict between countries and different cultures, especially between America and Iran. We pray for all those innocent people caught up in terrible situations, those made homeless, those injured and those whose loved ones have been killed. We pray the light of hope and peace will overcome the darkness of war.



I don't know about you but for me it seems Christmas has no sooner finished then Lent is upon us. At the heart of Lent is our relationship with God and unless our Lenten exercises are genuinely about love of God they are fruitless; a waste of time. It is tempting for us to give up chocolate, alcohol, smoking or whatever, without linking it to the whole point with prayer and charity.

- Fasting is the concrete expression of our determination to value God more than chocolate, alcohol, mobile phones, computer games, channel hopping TV or whatever has taken over centre stage in our lives in the place of God.
- Prayer is not about using God as a cosmic vending machine, it should be our love relationship with God and it is our experience of his love that changes us.
- Charity is the fruits of that relationship without which faith is lifeless.



The Church calls us to do all three together: prayer, fasting and charity; leave one out and the whole thing is reduced to a charade.



Inspired by  
Christ

Service to  
Others

Excellence for  
All

$E=mc^2$

Lastly I thought I'd mention our recent Section 48 Inspection, which is the Church & Diocese looking at how we are doing spiritually as a Catholic school. Though we have done rather well, 'outstanding' in all review categories, I just want to make the point that the spiritual life of our school is the single quality that no other senior school offers and our motive is not getting great results from inspectors, though welcome, rather both we and the inspectors are focused on genuinely serving our young people by nurturing the whole person. We do

exceedingly well academically, but at the end of the day GCSEs and degrees will not get us into heaven. Speaking as a father and grandfather, my prayer is for our young people to grow in their relationship with God and their love of each other as brothers and sisters, and in due time enter that eternal paradise with God we call Heaven. When my children were young we didn't consider anything but our local Catholic senior school.

I'll leave you with a prayer:

Lent reminds us to put love into action ... actions speak louder than words.  
If we all do something kind each day it becomes infectious ... we spread love!

Heavenly Father, help us to be kind, forgiving and generous to each other, and help us to do at least one kind thing each day this Lent so that we spread love not hate in the world. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**AMEN**

*Stay blessed*

*Deacon Michael*

#### Key Dates for Term 4

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 – Performing Arts Showcase – Woodville Halls

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020 – Year 10 Parents Evening - 4pm – 6:30pm.

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020 – Year 7 Parents Evening - 4pm – 6:30pm.

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April – Last Day of Term.