

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to this Christmas edition of our Newsletter and to have the chance to share with you just some of the experiences that our students have enjoyed since the start of this new academic year.

One of the most heartening benefits of emerging from the pandemic, is to be able once again to offer our pupils the breadth of experiences that they so richly deserve. As such, since September, our students have enjoyed a wide variety of opportunities outside of the classroom, to compliment the excellent provision that our dedicated staff continue to offer at St John's during their regular curriculum time. Across this newsletter you will hopefully find a flavour of the additional experiences that we provide our students and, having seen the calendar for after Christmas, I am delighted to say that our teachers have already been planning a wide range of additional experiences for the New Year.

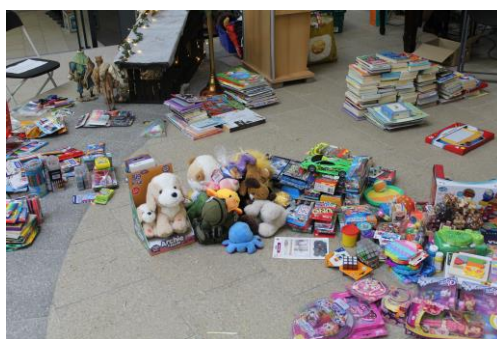
An aspect of our Catholic School that sets us apart from a number of other non-faith schools, is our mission to support those less fortunate than ourselves through our values of 'Service to Others' and 'Inspired by Christ'. Recently, this has been extremely evident through our school council-inspired Christmas Shoe Box appeal, where students of all ages generously donated items such as books, toys, games, stationary & clothes, to those less fortunate than themselves. Our contact from the Salvation Army was visibly moved when she saw the incredible kindness of our students (and parents!), as we were able to collect enough items to fill 77 shoe boxes, which our 6<sup>th</sup> formers lovingly filled and decorated. Congratulations & thanks to everyone who played their part with this fantastic cause.



**Mr Walton, Amelia & Shubhpreet**



**Memuna & Fahmida**



**A selection of the donated gifts**

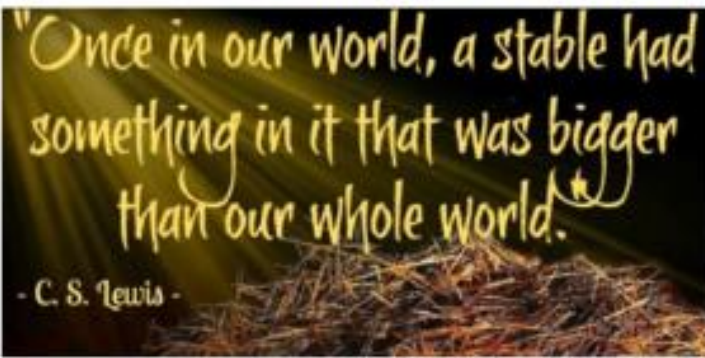
Furthermore, just in these last two weeks alone, we raised over £1000 for MIND, the Anti-Bullying Alliance & the Normandy Memorial Trust through our non-uniform days, as well as over £1000 through our Sixth Form led Christmas Fayre – raising money for St Philomena's School in Kenya, as well as the Normandy Memorial Trust. Our Sixth Form students had specifically asked for money to go to the Normandy Memorial Trust as this cause was championed by Mr Murphy at St John's, and he was also the driving force behind our Christmas Fayre each year. We all miss Mr Murphy an incredible amount – he really was a remarkable man and an inspirational teacher.

Finally, thank you once again for all of your wonderful support throughout these last 12 months, and let me take this opportunity to wish you all the very best for this Christmas period; I sincerely hope that you and your loved ones are able to make the most of this very special time of year.

Merry Christmas & very best wishes for the New Year.

Matt Barron  
Headteacher

## Our Christmas Service



The whole school gathered on Tuesday morning of this week to take a sneak peek ahead to Christmas and the invitation that the Christmas narratives holds for each person. Christmas will mean different things to our families. For some it will be a time of joy and connection, others loneliness. For some it will be a time of plenty, for others hardship and an ever-present worry about warmth and food. For some it will be a time to be surrounded by those loved and cherished. For some, a time when they are reminded of those who are no longer close for one reason or another.

We took time to reflect on how God finds so many ways to come close to us. We listened to the prophets of the Old Testament tell of a future where a woman would bear a son who would transform the world and, potentially, transform us too.

In Bethlehem in a manger, perhaps the most unlikely of places for it to happen, God comes within touching distance of humanity. In the words of the Gospel of our Patron St John's, 'The Word was made flesh and loved among us'.

There are no limits to God's love for us. God chooses us. Love chooses us. The question we are left with is 'How will we respond?'

**Mrs S Ward – Assistant Headteacher, Head of RE**

## History Department

### Remembrance

As always, students of St John's took a leading role in remembrance services across Gravesham this November. The pupils involved represented the school with great reverence befitting of the occasion. Pictured, are students at the Denton War Memorial. A vast number of students also undertook leading roles at the Windmill Hill memorial on Remembrance Sunday. Thank you to all those who represented St John's so well during these sombre occasions.



### Rewards Trip

Some 22 pupils visited the Battle of Britain memorial in Capel-le-Ferne as part of a rewards trip. The students were able to gain a place on a rewards trip by assisting with our Charity Dinner/Charity Auction back in July. The pupils found this experience very enjoyable indeed and gained a great deal of new knowledge about our RAF during WWII as a result.



### Book Launch

BASH ON REGARDLESS, the biography of the WWII veteran Gordon Prime, was launched in Pembroke Dock with a number of St John's staff in attendance. 6<sup>th</sup> Formers worked on the layout, presentation, historical fact-checking and information gathering for the biography. We were all delighted to meet Ted Owens there as well.



## College St Louis, Cabourg



Some 22 students, accompanied by the Mayor of Gravesham, Cllr Peter Scollard and other local dignitaries, visited Normandy for four days in Term 1. Among the highlights of this trip to Normandy was visiting College St Louis, Cabourg. The College proved to be delightful hosts and we were made to feel extremely welcome. In addition to visiting the school, we also visited the British Normandy Memorial (which the school has been raising a great deal of money for) and had an educational talk there. We are extremely hopeful that the College St Louis will be visiting us next May!



**Staff & Students in Krakow – Half Term 2022**



*In loving memory of Mr Colm Murphy*

## Business and Finance Department

This term we were extremely fortunate to have a visit from David Anderson from the London Institute of Banking and Finance (LIBF). David came in to discuss with our students the various university pathways available through the LIBF, particularly those pupils interested in Banking and Finance. A very insightful talk indeed.

The other reason for David's visit was to award some of our student's scholarship offers from the University. Student's had earned these scholarships through achieving a top grade (A or above) in their Certificate or Diploma. In total, scholarships were awarded to 18 Sixth Form students from St. John's.

Two students from the cohort achieved grades in the **top 1% of the country** and have now taken up their scholarship offers to study at the London Institute of Banking and Finance, a fantastic achievement. We wish those students all the success on their chosen pathway.

A big well done to all pupils who achieved scholarship offers in Finance across these last 12 months.



***Mr Karnovski. Head of Business and Finance.***

## Art and Photography

GCSE Art and Photography students enjoyed visiting the Cornelia Parker exhibition at the Tate Britain on 5<sup>th</sup> October.







Photography students exploring the Bankside before visiting the Tate Modern on 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

## Science

### Biology Field Trip

At Epping Forest, our 6<sup>th</sup> Form Biology & Applied Science groups, with the help of the trained staff on site, were able to carry out one of the required practicals needed to achieve the requirements of our Biology course. Firstly, we had the opportunity of learning about the various pieces of scientific equipment that they used on site, and this was followed by conducting our own experiments in the afternoon where we looked at the effect of trampling on the distribution of Sorrel. A thoroughly enjoyable experience.



### *T Gibbons Year 13*

## Physical Education

### Gymnastics

On Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December, St John's Gymnastics Squad travelled to Tormead School in Guildford to compete at the South East Regional Team Trio competition. St John's entered 4 teams, and competed in each round across the 11-hour long day! Success was enjoyed by all gymnasts, who achieved the following results:

Under 19 Mixed – 1<sup>st</sup> place – Erikas, Fabio, Eva, Ayla

Under 16 Mixed – 1<sup>st</sup> place – Leo, Molly, Diana

Under 13A Mixed – 1<sup>st</sup> place – David, Mya, Nadia

Under 13B Mixed – 2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Hassan, Kaden, Hannah, Laicee



The Under 19, Under 16 and Under 13A teams have all qualified to represent the South East Region at the National Finals, which are held in Stoke-on-Trent in March 2023.

Their next competition – Regional Team Floor and Vault - takes place on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at St John's School.

Well done gymnasts, and good luck for the next one!

***Mrs L Weller. Assistant Headteacher (Teaching and Learning)***

### Football

Congratulations to the Year 11 Football team who made it to Round 3 of the U16 Kent Cup beating Radnor School from Sevenoaks 3-2. Scorers were Emmanuel, Oliver and John.

***S Ward. PE Teacher***

## Food and Nutrition



Christmas comes but once a year . . . so when it does, what better way to prepare for the festivities than some great homemade bakes! Our Year 9 enrichment class have been busy learning about seasonality and food provenance, and have had the opportunity to undertake some traditional seasonal cooks. In recent weeks they have made individual Christmas cakes, a Terry's Chocolate Orange Cheesecake, and some cinnamon spiced Christmas Biscuits. Delicious!!!



Our BTEC Level 1 group have been busy planning and preparing for our Community and Parish Afternoon Tea with traditional savoury bakes of Sausage rolls, Quiche, and sweet Winter Berry Tarts. Additionally, our BTEC Level 2 students made snow-topped Apple, Sultana and Cinnamon Strudel Tart and Ginger Blondies with Christmas toppings. They also made Chocolate Christmas Brownies, but they were so delicious they ate them all before we could even get the camera out!



Next term the two BTEC classes will be focusing on their practical exam units. BTEC Level 1 will be starting to plan their Breakfast dish for their assessment and BTEC Level 2 will be preparing for their final practical unit, comprising of a two-course meal from a cuisine of their own personal choice. Students have already come up with some initial ideas, including dishes from Jamaica, India, Italy, and Poland. We are really looking forward to the students showcasing their practical skills and having the opportunity to try out some new dishes!



We wish you all A Very Merry Christmas from the Food Department.

***S Gosling – Co-Leader of the Food and Nutrition Department***

## **Performing Arts**

### **Dance KS4**

BTEC and GCSE students took part in a workshop led by ZooNation Dance Company this term and, as always, represented the school extremely well indeed. The workshop was particularly challenging and in a style that many students had not studied before. Despite this, they put in 100% effort and had a positive attitude throughout. They built skills in versatility, confidence and style during the workshop which will greatly support their progress in future lessons.

### **Dance KS3**

Selected students have been invited to take part in an exciting opportunity in January where they will participate in a Hip Hop workshop with a professional dancer visiting the school. The dance artist comes from Elementz Dance Company and is experienced in a number of styles and he has taken part in many professional performances. This will be an excellent opportunity for these students to gain further skills to support them next year should they choose to pursue one of our dance courses at Key Stage 4.

***Mrs R Steadman - Dance Teacher/Teaching & Learning Leader***



### **Former Student, Nadia Coppola, nominated for film award**

A former student of St John's has been nominated for the Circa Economy Film Prize. Nadia Coppola, along with 30 finalists, has been selected to have her work exhibited in London (Piccadilly Circus), Berlin (Limes, Kurfürstendamm), Melbourne (Fed Square) and Seoul (COEX K-Pop Square). Since leaving St John's in 2014, Nadia graduated with a First Class Degree in BA Fine Art from Goldsmith's College in 2021. She has since gone on to work for Film artist Nina Danino and LUX film video archive. The St John's community are very proud of all her achievements and we wish her all the best in the future.



### **London Philharmonic Orchestra**

On Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December, our GCSE Music students went on a trip to the Royal Festival Hall to hear the London Philharmonic Orchestra perform in a "Bright Sparks" Concert. These annual concerts are aimed at Key Stages 3–5, offering the opportunity for students to experience an orchestral concert – live! These immersive concerts are an excellent revision source as they cover some of the exam set-works, with a presenter providing a detailed lecture-analysis to accompany the performances. Our students were a credit to the school and, despite the cold weather, both staff and students had a most enjoyable day.



### ***Mr S Farrelly Head of Music***



## Transition

One of our Year 7 Transition classes visited the Royal Observatory in Greenwich as part of their science topic on planets. The students had an amazing time and staff working at the Observatory commented on what a wonderful group of students they all were.

***Mrs H Burgess - Transition Teacher***

## Careers

### Skills London 2022

In November, we took 100 students from Years 11, 12, and 13 to Skills London. This is the UK's largest jobs and careers event held at the ExCel Centre, supported by the Mayor of London. There were exhibitions from Universities, Further Education Colleges, and some of the UK's largest employers including; Sky, Amazon, KPMG, Nestle and the emergency services. This visit enabled students to talk directly to employers as well as higher and further educators about potential pathways for their futures.



## Celebrating Excellence in KS3 :Top Achievers for Term 1







## Safeguarding

On the 12th of October, the Wellbeing ambassadors went to Detling to participate in the 'Big Mental Health Conversation'. This event was organised by KCC and there were schools from all over Kent at the event. As part of this experience, the pupils had to choose a workshop that they wanted to take part in.

Aidan and Anaya took part in 'West African Drumming Workshop' and this is what they had to say:

We enjoyed our time at the African drumming. Richard Latham was extremely encouraging and a good teacher. He helped improve our drumming skills by showing us different techniques that we could use. He was a very happy person and very friendly. It was fun, enjoyable and a good experience overall. We would recommend African drumming to everyone even those who are not into music, as it can help to calm you and pass the time; an excellent reliever of stress!

Belle and Charlie took part in the LGBTQ+ gameshow workshop:

This was a great workshop as it involved a 'BeYouAwesome' game show which put our knowledge of LGBTQ+ to the test. It also enabled us to learn new knowledge of LGBTQ+ which will help us in our roles of St John's Wellbeing Ambassadors.

Ciara and Stephanie went to the Craft and Chat workshop:

This workshop was fun and creative. We were provided with pens, paints, stickers and other materials which we used to decorate a rock and journal. The people there were chatty and lovely, and made the experience really enjoyable. By doing something creative it was easier to chat and talk to them. They also allowed us to take home our creations.

Anais and Gabby went to the Mindfulness with Alpacas:

Within this workshop we had a chance to feed and bond with multiple alpacas. In doing so the group felt relaxed and reconnected thought the animals and their actions. As well as this we did a mindfulness task where we challenged ourselves to focus more on our surroundings rather than what was in our minds. We were able to feel somewhat at peace and focus on the small things in the environment. Overall this was a tremendous workshop as not only did we think of mindfulness but also got to spend time with the adorable alpacas!

They also listened to talks on mental health and the youth of KCC have designed a booklet for pupils aged 13 to 16; we would encourage you to have a look at the information below and the accompanying booklet. The Mental Health Campaign group of Kent Youth County Council (KYCC) decided to create The Mental Health Friends handbook, which you can view by clicking this link! While there are some good training resources for young people, many of them are targeted at over 16s and we recognised that young people often needed information much earlier than that.

Please find below some Online safety information that might be helpful with Christmas approaching. Advice by age: Younger children need different advice and guidance than older children. Older children need different advice and guidance than teens. It can be really difficult keeping up with everything that is online and what risks and issues may affect children of different ages, so on these pages there is some age-related advice and guidance



for parents and carers: 11 - 13 year olds - <https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/11-13/> 14 plus - <https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/14plus/>

Setting up devices: It can be difficult knowing all the different settings that are available on different devices to help protect children, this includes allowing or disallowing chat, friends, spending money, content filters and much more. On these pages you will find the details, as well as non-technical instructions, which will help you understand what is available to you and how to set up your child's devices.

**Gaming consoles and devices** - <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/gaming-consoles/>

**Smartphones** - <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/smartphones-and-other-devices/>

**Broadband and mobile networks** - <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/broadband-mobile/>

**Entertainment and search engines** - <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/entertainment-search-engines/>

**Safety/privacy settings on social media:** With many children and young people using social media it is important to understand what features are available to you to help protect your children. This is also important because for the most part, all privacy settings are default off when a new account is created, but also because some social media providers change their features quite frequently, e.g. TikTok. Take a look at this link to see what is available to you and how to set up your child's social media. We would also advise doing this with your child so that you can discuss the features together. <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/social-media/>

Useful new features on YouTube and YouTube Kids YouTube are hugely popular with all age groups but historically parents haven't had a lot of control over what their children can/cannot watch. But things have changed and YouTube now gives parents a greater degree of control. It isn't perfect but it is a step in the right direction. Take a look at the page below where you will see a few short videos of newer features that can help you on YouTube and YouTube Kids. <https://www.esafety-adviser.com/youtube-parental-restrictions/>

**Gaming** - Finding good games, as well as knowing what is appropriate for the age of the child isn't easy, particularly when there can be lots of peer pressure to play the more popular games which are not always appropriate. Taming Gaming is a great resource for parents to find new games for children as well as lots of advice about content and suitability. <https://www.taminggaming.com/>

***Mrs O Kelham - Senior Assistant Headteacher (Safeguarding & Child Protection)***



## CONNECT

Why not host a fake 'Snowball Fight' in your classroom to help pupils connect? Have each pupil write their name and a question on a sheet of paper. Have them scrunch the paper up into a 'snowball' and then have a 'snowball fight' for 30-45 seconds. When the time is up, ask pupils to pick up a snowball, find the person who wrote it and answer the question. Do the same again.

Inspired by [Sunshine Parenting](#)



## TAKE NOTICE

Encourage families to go on a festive walk and have a look at the Christmas lights in their local area. They can take note of: **FIVE** things they see, **FOUR** things they hear, **THREE** things they feel, **TWO** things they smell and **ONE** thing they can taste.

It could be turned into a scavenger hunt, with children looking out for reindeer, Santa Clauses, icicle lights etc.



## GIVE

Make your school's festive community activities more active:

- Add movements to festive songs
- Walk to a local nursing home and encourage older residents to join in with movements
- Walk and carry collected items to a local foodbank
- Offer to put up festive decorations in a local community building



## KEEP LEARNING

Give your pupils the opportunity to learn about Christmas around the world. You could dedicate lessons exploring different festivals and their traditions, engage your pupils in creative activities and incorporate movement if you can – perhaps you could play musical chairs to traditional songs. Here are some webpages for inspiration:

- [Christmas traditions around the world](#)
- [Christmas - the stories behind our traditions](#)
- [Ten European Christmas traditions you may not know](#)



Ho, Ho, Ho!

This term the **Emotional**

**Wellbeing and Emotional Support Teams**

have run lots of workshops for primary school pupils exploring the Five Ways to Wellbeing. Researched by the New Economic Foundation, these are five actions we can take to improve our personal wellbeing. We want to give all schools the chance to get involved in the Five Ways to Wellbeing. In this issue, we have teamed up with **Active Kent and Medway** as exercise and physical activity is an important part of wellbeing. Regular activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. Together we have come up with five ways you could support your pupils in improving their wellbeing – with a festive twist.

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## BE ACTIVE

Run a movement activity for each of the Twelve Days of Christmas:

- Do **ONE** minute reindeer skips
  - Do **TWO** triceps dips
  - Do **THREE** ski jumpers
  - Do **FOUR** Christmas smiles
  - Climb **FIVE** mountains high
  - Do **SIX** Christmas hugs
  - Do **SEVEN** pass the presents
- Visit [Energise Me](#) to see the rest.



If you have any questions, please contact the Emotional Wellbeing and Emotional Support Teams on: [ewtandestenquiries@nelft.nhs.uk](mailto:ewtandestenquiries@nelft.nhs.uk)







## Chaplain's Corner

The countdown to Christmas is upon us. I am sure we are all looking forward to a few days of relaxation.

I always look forward to winding down with a Christmas film. I don't just look forward to them, I engulf myself in the cheesy, saccharin-filled sentiment of these films. I can barely wait for December to arrive to begin the Christmas film fest.

I do have a few favourites. Not the classics. *Nativity One and Two*, *Elf*. Both films portray characters who are lost, without hope, peace, or joy. Then their Buddy and Mr Poppy reintroduce love, peace, and joy to lives of those they meet.

My ultimate favourite festive film is *Love Actually*.

The opening scene sets the tone. Heathrow Airport. Families and friends embracing each other following a time apart.

For me it's the story of the many characters we encounter. They experience loss, betrayal, fear, the feeling of helplessness in trying to care for loved ones. Along with Hugh Grant's 'dad' dancing and the line about lobsters present at the birth of Christ, it's a must see for me.

For many of us, 2022 has been a difficult year. We may have experienced similar struggles to those in the above films. Christmas may feel like a test of endurance. Our world is troubled. War, famine, and violence scream out of media outlets. We yearn for peace, joy, hope and love for our world, families, and our own hearts.

The birth of Jesus brings us the peace, joy, hope and love that is sometimes missing in our lives. Despite giving birth in difficult circumstances, Mary is filled with love and joy as she holds her son in her arms. Joseph at peace knowing he kept Mary and Jesus safe. The hope felt by all who visited the Holy Family that night, seeing the Light of the world with their own eyes.

Christ provides us with a light that will never be darkened. Peace and Joy to comfort our hearts and unending love.

### **A prayer for ourselves this Christmas**

Lord Jesus Christ.

May Your peace, joy, hope, and love fall upon me this Christmas.

As I recall the challenges of this year, help me to know your love has guided and protected me.

May I always share in the joy of others, always look for peace in my relationships and never lose hope in You.

I ask for Your joy, peace, hope, joy, and love to shine on my life and our world this Christmas.

I look to the year ahead with joyful hope.

Amen



This Christmas, sing with joy like Buddy the Elf, enjoy the childlike hope of Mr Poppy and 'Dad' dance like Hugh Grant.

God Bless you all.

**Susanne – St John's School Chaplain**