

**Saint George's Church of England
School Secondary Phase
Termly Newsletter
Term 2
Thursday 19th December 2024**



Dear Saint George's Parent,



Thank you once again for your fantastic support during terms 1 and 2 of the academic year. continues to flourish with some notable highlights across all phases of the school since September.

It feels great, for example, to see Wolves class move into Year 6. It makes the school feel complete as they prepare for life in Year 7 and I know that they, along with the rest of our primary phase, are working hard in their lessons. Pupils also enjoy lots of opportunities to do other exciting things provided for them by our great primary based colleagues, including all of the extra-curricular clubs that take place, Forest School, singing, whole class violin lessons, Challenger Troop and lots of other activities, including those that raise money for charity.

Right across the school, our Chaplain has been launching key pupil voice activities which include a whole host of leadership opportunities for pupils from each community; they are working hard to make sure we always offer the very best for everyone and have been instrumental in supporting a number of important worship sessions at the start of the year. Our Year 13 Head students Samantha and Tilly have been joined now by Phoebe and Alex in Year 6 and a whole team of value ambassadors across all year groups. From a Chaplaincy point of view, we also saw the return of Eucharist services for all pupils, an enhanced experience for Remembrance in November, the students launching a Christian Union, and a beautiful carol service last week, supported by our wonderful all-through choir; it really has been a busy but fruitful term.

Within the secondary phase we are working hard to change the way in which we serve food at lunchtime, starting with Year 7 in January, but quickly moving this to other year groups as the term progresses; it feels important that pupils are able to sit and eat properly together, particularly during the winter months. We have also re-launched the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme this year and have 40 Year 9 pupils currently working hard to gain their bronze award; they will be joining forces with another Aletheia Trust secondary school, Knole Academy in Sevenoaks, to carry out their walking and camping expedition later in the year. I expect this to grow each year as more and more pupils benefit from all the award has to offer, so year 8 pupils should look out for announcements about this soon.

Our 6th Form also continues to flourish with students working hard in their studies, leading others as part of student voice activities, working within the primary phase to look after those who access after school club, mentoring Year 10 and 11 through GCSEs and preparing all-important applications to a range of universities and apprenticeships across the country. If advent is a time of preparation and hope, I hope that you can see this in your children and their experiences at Saint George's. This will be further captured tomorrow in our celebration of achievement service, this year at St George's Church in the centre of Gravesend, where students past and present will receive certificates and awards celebrating their academic success and contribution to school life.

It seems fitting to once again to thank all my colleagues for all they continue to do to support pupils and families. I hope that they, and you of course, enjoy a restful and peaceful Christmas.

Best wishes,
Simon Murphy



Chaplain's update:



It has been Also, to begin this new academic year together as part of St George's all-through community.

With a new all-through programme for worship that unites us all each week around themes that connect us as a community, there have been times to reflect, celebrate, and think deeply about our individual and collective values and what it means to live these out, both inside and outside of the classroom.

We have also enjoyed together special church services – Bubbles Blessing Service for our youngest pupils in Reception, starting their St George's journey; and Eucharist services, conducted by Rev Adam for the whole school.

As a school community we took time to mark Armistice Day, with a gathering together of Primary and Year 7 outside, whilst other year groups joined the moment of reflection inside their classrooms – a moment of peace and reflection shared together.

Interfaith Week was marked for the first time this year, with guest speakers and 6th Form led activities reminding us of the value of building good relationships and understanding between people of all faiths and beliefs and celebrating what unites us.

It has been a privilege to establish pupil leadership across the school with our new Y6 Head Students joining their Y13 counterparts, and the new role of Value Ambassador beginning to roll out for all other year groups. We want to equip and encourage pupils to develop leadership and collaborative skills whilst representing their peers and embarking on projects that will be of benefit both to our school and our wider community.

Also, this term, a Christian Union has been established – initiated by two pupils in Year 9, we now have a regular attendance of 18 pupils and our last week of term worship was led by a number of them, sharing why Christmas is special to them.

As we head into this Christmas break, may we be reminded that the story of Christmas is one that tells of the possibility of hope, peace, joy and love - no matter what the circumstances.

My prayer for us all:

May we hold lightly to expectations,

Hold tightly to love;

May we let go of fear and confusion,

Hold tightly to peace.

May we remember the joys of the small things we share,

And hold tightly a hope for the future and goodness for today.

May God bless us with protection and love this Christmas,

And show us that hope, peace, joy and love can be ours.

Amen.



Careers



Last week, Year 3-7 met with 18 employers at our Careers Show to find out what skills they use at work. Using Skills Builder Framework, our students identified the skills they learn at school and investigated with the employers how they use them at work. Students also found out when they use reading and writing skills and what they read and write for their job. One employer said that students “were an absolute credit to the school” with another adding “This is my favourite school to visit, staff and kids are always so nice” Our students were so keen they asked for additional investigation work sheets!

Well done to Mrs Hallam on organising such a brilliant opportunity for our students.

Last Thursday Year 13 Business students met with two apprenticeships to discuss application processes to work in engineering and construction. Emily Lucking in her second year at Mace, an alumni of the school and Kai Filbert from Ingleton Wood, talked and answered questions from two groups of students on their apprenticeship journey and what makes a great apprenticeship application.



Fizzy Drinks

We noticed during term 2 in the secondary phase, that Likewise, pupils purchased fizzy drinks on their way to school. I feel sure that parents would support our decision to **confiscate these and dispose of them as soon as they are seen in school**, not least because we noticed at least two such drinks that boasted 56 grams of sugar in one single 500ml bottle!! These drinks impact on tooth and gum health, general health and can also see pupils' behaviour affected in some circumstances. The drinks sold from the Olive Grove such as Mountain Mist and Juice Burst are school compliant and are of course very much allowed. Likewise, pupils' own water bottles and juice cartons. We'll let pupils know of this change at the start of Term 3, but we'd appreciate you talking to your child and advising them not to purchase such drinks on the way to or from school.



Literacy Update: Year 7 Spelling Bee



In Term 2, a group of 12 Year 7 students, nominated by their English teachers, were put forward for our first ever Year 7 Spelling Bee! Students competed in three exciting rounds.

The first round took place in our school library and students took it in turns to stand and spell out words of varying difficulty. Our original 12 students were whittled down to the most successful 9 students who went through to the second round.

Again, the second round took place in our school library, where students took it in turns to spell a range of tricky words. The 6 students with the highest scores then went through to the Spelling Bee Final.

The Spelling Bee Final took place on Thursday 28th November in the school hall. It consisted of three nail-biting rounds where our 6 finalists competed in front of their parents/carers, our Spelling Bee Runners Up from previous rounds, some teaching staff, our school Librarian, Miss Luchford, our Deputy Head, Mr Baker, and our school chaplain, Louisa. The judging panel consisted of myself (Miss Payne) and our Year 9 Raising Standards Leaders, Miss Sargant.

The first round was a 'Subject Key Terms' round, where students had to spell words they had been taught in Terms 1 and 2 across the school curriculum. Students were each given three different words from three different subjects. The second round was a 'Written' round where students used mini white boards to handwrite tricky words in timed conditions, followed by spelling them out verbally to the judging panel. The tense final round consisted of students spelling as many words correctly as they could within one minute. A huge well done to our Year 7 Spelling Bee runners up: Heloisa Ferrari, Sydney Hallam, Charles Manning, Dylan Moye, Harry Oxley, Megan Perry, Oliver Toma, Zachary Finn (Finalist), Xanthe Hawkins (Finalist).



A special congratulations to our winners:

Joint 3rd place: Dylan Moye and Jake Bacheldor

2nd place: Mangirdas Ferris

1st place: Isla Petherick

A huge thank you to all staff and parents/carers who supported our Year 7s to flourish in the first ever Saint George's Spelling Bee! We plan to run this with Year 8 and Year 9 later this academic year.



Uniform Expectations



Dear Parents/Carers,

As the end of 2024 approaches, we would just like to firstly, thank you for your continued support with the introduction of the new school skirt, and secondly, just to reiterate our uniform policy and expectations especially with the colder spell upon us for the next few months: -

- No fluffy socks on outside of tights
- No leg warmers
- No tight-fitting flared trousers
- No hoodies or sweatshirts/Nike Tech tops
- Blazers must be always worn but jumpers are not mandatory. Students may not wear a jumper instead of a blazer
- Black leather school shoes, no trainers or trainer style shoes
- We have a selection of school skirts for sale should parents require them
- Equipped for school – pencil case, water bottle, scientific calculator, suitable bag

Polite reminder that the rule for mobile phones is 'On site, out of sight'

If you have any queries or concerns around uniform, please do contact your child's Community Leader in the first instance: -

- Mr Henry, Senior Community Leader & **Rochester Community** – HenryH@saintgeorgescofe.kent.sch.uk
- Mrs Neat, **Salisbury Community Leader** – NeatS@saintgeorgescofe.kent.sch.uk
- Mr. Twine, **Canterbury Community Leader** – TwineC@saintgeorgescofe.kent.sch.uk
- Mrs Butler, **York Community Leader** – ButlerP@saintgeorgescofe.kent.sch.uk

Ms. Dadswell, **Winchester Community Leader** – DadswellG@saintgeorgescofe.kent.sch.uk



On behalf of the Community Leader's

“We wish you a Merry Christmas, we wish you a Merry Christmas, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year”

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support to ensure that your child has a positive and successful outcome here at Saint George's and we are always here to support and listen to any concerns or worries that you may have.

2024 Christmas Card Designs



Thank you to all the students who entered a design for the 2024 Saint George's and Trust Christmas Cards. It was fantastic that students took the time to carefully consider and design a card for the school and Trust to send to Governors, Trustees, other local schools and local partners. There were so many wonderful designs to choose from and after careful consideration by Mr Murphy and Mr Carey the winning designs are:

Saint George's Christmas cards



Annie Barnes Year 2



Ronnie Wenban Year 12

Trust Christmas Cards



Trinity Weston Year 8



Jasmine Dhiman Year 12



Safeguarding Christmas Bulletin



Dear Parents and Carers,

We know that sometimes, the festive season can provide additional challenges and as a result we are including the attached link of additional support networks should you need them: -

[Useful Contacts December 2024.docx](#)

[Parents' Guide to Looking After Your Mental Health | Young Minds](#)

Looking after yourself

- Be gentle and patient with yourself. It might help to think about what is best for your wellbeing during Christmas and prioritise what you need.
- Remind yourself that it won't last forever. You could set a 'start' and 'finish' time for what you count as Christmas.
- Set your boundaries. Try to say no to things that aren't helpful for you.
- Let yourself experience your own feelings. Even if they don't match what's going on around you, they're still valid. For example, if you don't feel like celebrating Christmas when everyone else does.
- Take time out. Do something to forget that it's Christmas or distract yourself. For example, you could watch a film or read a book that's set in the summer. Or you could try learning a new skill.
- Let yourself have the things you need. For example, if you need to take a break instead of doing an activity or need a little bit of quiet time.

“I don't really celebrate Christmas and always enjoy taking the day as time just for me, a whole day of self-care and selfishness!”

Managing Relationships

- Think about how to end difficult conversations. It's ok to tell someone you don't want to talk about something, or to change the subject. It might help to practise what you'll say.
- Suggest an activity or an easy way to move on if you want to help end an unwanted conversation. For example, this could be playing a game or taking a screen break if you're on a video call.
- Talk about your plans. It might help to agree on things such as budgets or timings beforehand. For example, you could agree not to give presents this year or decide a set amount to spend.
- If other people don't seem to understand how you're feeling, you could share this information with them. You could also think about writing down how you're feeling and sharing this with them if conversations are difficult.
- It's ok if there are people you don't want to see at Christmas. If you can't avoid spending time with them, try to think of ways to keep a distance while you're there.





Coping with money worries

It can be tough to cope with the financial pressures of Christmas. This can be especially difficult if you're already struggling with money and for many of us, rises in the cost of living will have made things even harder. How you cope with the costs of Christmas will depend on your circumstances. You might not find all these tips realistic, but it may help to try some of them:

- Access financial support. You could use the [Turn2Us benefits calculator](#) to work out what support you're entitled to. Citizens Advice has information on [how to get help if you're struggling to pay your bills](#). And you could call [Trussell Trust's free helpline](#) for advice on accessing financial support.
- Make lists, plans, or a budget. Noting things down can make them feel a bit more manageable or help you think more clearly. Creating a budget could also help you feel more in control of what you can spend.
- Be open with others. It can be hard to talk about money. But being honest with others can help. You may be able to agree ways to make Christmas plans free or low cost. Or they might be able to offer other kinds of support. [Step Change's festive support](#) has information on talking to other people about money worries.
- Look for local offers or events. Local organisations, such as charities and community centres, may have free or low-cost events for Christmas. Or they may be able to offer support with things like gifts or food.
- Look for free or low-cost items online. You may be able to find free items to use as gifts or decorations online, for example through websites like [Freecycle](#)
- Try to avoid comparisons with the Christmas you see in adverts and social media. These often do not reflect reality and can make us feel bad about ourselves. It may help to take breaks from social media.
- Be kind to yourself. Money worries can have a big impact on our mental health. They might make us feel concerned, embarrassed, or angry. And they can affect our self-esteem. Try not to blame yourself for your situation or how you're feeling about it.

Getting support

If you're struggling this Christmas, you may want to find support for your mental health. There are a few ways that you can do this:

- Call [Samaritans](#) on [116 123](#) (freephone). Their English language line is always open. They have a [Welsh language line](#) too, which is open daily from 7pm to 11pm.
- Text SHOUT to [85258](#). This is a free 24/7 crisis text service run by [Shout](#).
- Visit our [useful contacts](#) page for a list of organisations who can support your mental health or help with practical problems.
- If you need any additional support around food supplies, then please see local support that is available to people in Gravesend and Northfleet.
- Mobile Foodbanks (anyone can attend, no proof needed). You can select up to 10 items of food and 2 toiletries

Mondays: 10:30 - 11:30 hrs - Rose Street, Northfleet DA11 9EQ

Saturdays: 14:00 – 15:00 hrs - Old Taxi Rank, Church Street, Gravesend DA11 0DJ

- Hive Hope (proof of benefit/email from school/email from Early Help or Social Services/Unemployment Letter) If you need larger quantities of supplies and can provide the necessary proof, this is for 4 weeks before a new referral is needed

Wednesdays: 11:00 – 13:00 hrs - St. Botolph's Church, Northfleet DA11 9EU

For Immediate Safeguarding Concerns: -



- Please call The Front Door Team if you are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a young person 03000 411111 or 03000 419191 (out of hours)
- Call 101 if you suspect a crime
- Call 999 if there is a danger to life
- Call 111 option 2 for mental health crisis



We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

