AUTUMN TERM 2025

Curriculum Newsletter

St Mary's Catholic School



Dear St Mary's Community,

As the festive season commences, I am delighted to share some wonderful moments from our school life that truly capture the spirit of St Mary's Catholic School. This edition of Headlines is a bumper edition to share with you as we celebrate our departments highlights of the Autumn Term. I do hope you enjoy reading about what has been happening this term.

The last week of our Autumn term has been packed with various activities. Our annual Christmas Dinner was an absolute triumph of celebration and community. Aspens, our fantastic school caterers, prepared a magnificent roast Christmas dinner that brought together over 790 staff and students on Tuesday. The atmosphere was electric with joy and camaraderie. A special mention must go to our incredible Sixth Form team and our 30 Santa's little helpers, who were brilliantly adorned in their Santa hats, serving drinks and desserts with such enthusiasm. It really was a wonderful event that embodied the warmth and togetherness of our school community. I encourage everyone to take a look at the photographs, which can be found on our Instagram and Facebook pages.

Another highlight of our recent weeks was our Advent Carol Service, held on Wednesday evening at St Joseph and the English Martyr's Parish. What a spectacular and joyful evening of music and performances it was! Over 100 of our students participated, including readers, musicians, soloists, and choirs. The evening was a true testament to the incredible talent and dedication of our students. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks and praise to Mr Hutchinson, Ms Matthews, Mrs Russell, Dr Bentley, and Ms Wojcik for their exceptional expertise and leadership in making this event so memorable. The service was truly prayerful and joyous, and we are exceptionally proud of our most talented and wonderful students!

I also want to provide some important notices for parents ready for January:

- Monday 5th January 2026 is an INSET day, and school will be closed for pupils.
- The Spring Term will commence for students on Tuesday 6th January 2026, the Feast of the Epiphany at 8.40am.

May I take this opportunity to share with you a prayer for your families this Christmas:

Heavenly Father, fill our hearts with the joy of Christ's birth.
Let our homes be places of laughter, love, and peace.
Teach us to share this joy with everyone we meet, reflecting Your goodness and mercy in our words and deeds.
Christ came into the world as the Light, illuminating our lives with hope, love, and guidance.
By focusing on Christ as our guiding light, we can navigate challenges, remain steadfast in faith, and bring illumination to others through acts of kindness and compassion.
Christmas reminds us that His light is eternal and always present.
Fill our hearts with hope and courage, and let Your light inspire our words and actions.
Help us to reflect Your radiance to all those around us.
Amen

Wishing you all a peaceful and blessed Christmas season.

Deirdre McHugh, Head Teacher

Autumn Term 2025 Highlights

- Art
- Business & Economics
- Computing
- Design Technology
- DT Food and Nutrition
- Drama
- English
- Geography
- History & Politics
- Maths
- Media & Film Studies
- Modern Foreign Languages
- Music
- Physical Education
- Psychology and Health & Social Care
- Religious Education
- Science

ADVENT SERVICE





























ART

Year 12 Make an Impact on St Mary's with Join Mural Project for The Feast Day Mass

We are really proud of Year 12 and 13 who came together to work collaboratively to create a background mural for the very special Feast Day Mass that took place on the 8th December.

The group collaborated with both design and painting, and worked together beautifully to come up with something that was very cohesive and meaningful for the day. It was lovely to see the creative talents of the group come together in the pursuit of something so unique and special to St Mary's Catholic School.





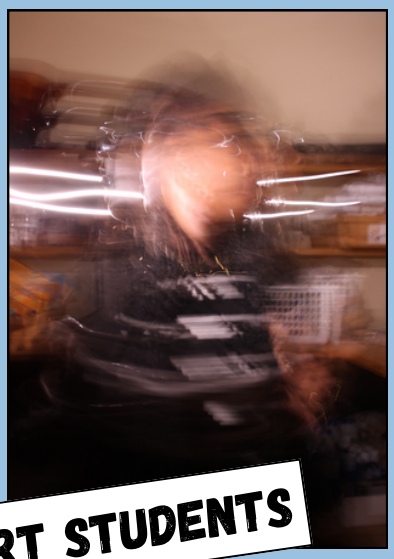


It was wonderful to see Year 12 Artists working on the **pottery throwing wheels** in the department. This 6-hour workshop was led by local ceramicist Sarah Hollis who exhibits widely in the local area. Students thoroughly enjoyed the chance to learn this heritage craft with focus and for an extended period of time.

Pots will be refined and glazed after Christmas, and we very much hope Sarah will come to St Mary's again to work with more of our fantastic Sixth Form students.

We are delighted with the progress and passion displayed by our wonderful A Level Photographers. All students have shown amazing skill with the digital cameras and have been using the new media suite extensively to create breathtaking work. It is wonderful to see such progress in what a new course is offer here at St Mary's and we can't wait to see further progress made over the course of the 2 years!

Here are some student examples capturing 'Drawing with Light'.





INTERVIEWS WITH YEAR 12 ART STUDENTS



Daniel: I am heavily inspired by contemporary artist Phil Maltz...his artworks inspired my GCSE coursework...I successfully finished with a grade 9!



Ciara: I took Art GCSE here at St Mary's as it was my best, and favourite, subject making me want to study it more in A level. When I leave St Mary's I would love to carry on doing something creative either going to Central St Martin's in London or an apprenticeship.



Juliana: If you know you love doing art, don't let others' words or even their artwork make you second-guess YOUR own artwork. Don't let anything/anyone stop you from at least trying because you never know!



Louis: To an aspiring artist who is thinking about doing art for a GCSE or an A-level, I would say that you should try and stay persistent and try practice regularly so you can learn from your mistakes and improve your artistic skills.

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Year 12 Student becomes an entrepreneur - Miko Kwiatkowski



While studying business I noticed how many different businesses there are, which all started with a person and an idea, so I thought to myself, wouldn't it be nice to have a success story like all of them. That's when it hit me, I can. Harry and I created Folded Wisdom with the inspiration of Paul Coelho "One day or day one, you decide".

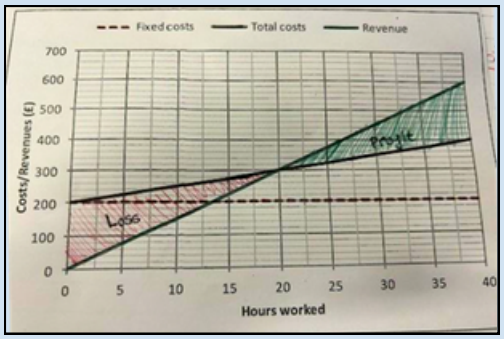
We believe that most modern-day clothing hasn't got any meaning behind it. Therefore, we created Folded Wisdom. Each piece of clothing has a message behind it, which is portrayed through the origami swan.

Website: foldedwisdom.co.uk
Email: Info@foldedwisdom.co.uk

Studying Business has only aided me in my venture as it allows me to understand the theory behind running a business while also applying it.

We pride ourselves in our manufacturing process. The journey begins at our UK based supplier Ralawise, where we order our high-quality plain clothes ready to fabricate your designs. When they arrive at our embroidery and printing facility, we ensure that each stitch and print is completed perfectly to your liking, while also preparing our orders to be delivered to each customer efficiently.

This year at the start of our A-level **Business** course, we have been studying some very interesting topics such as: Liability, Sources of finance, Price and income elasticity, Cashflow, Financial Planning, and Sales forecasting.



The diagram opposite shows a **break-even analysis** of a business – used to visualise the amount of hours (or units) that need to be worked (produced) in order to begin making a profit. The **break-even point** is at 20hrs worked meaning the business has fully covered their total costs, and from each hour worked past 20 hours they will begin making a profit. A breakeven analysis can be used to calculate a business' **margin of safety** (the level of output between actual sales and the break-even point). The **margin of safety** is shown in units, in the diagram above the margin of safety is between 20 and 40 hours worked.

Being an A-level student, classes are often much smaller than at GCSE. This is very beneficial as it allows each student to receive more help from the teacher if they should need it. Each student is also able to get sufficient feedback which then accelerates our learning.

Over this recent term, our class has been learning the ropes of **economics**, studying macroeconomics with Mr. Gitau, and microeconomics with Mr. Palmer. In macro, we have been taught about aggregate demand, the multiplier effect, and trying very hard to wrap our heads around inflation.

In Micro, we have looked at elasticities, including cross price, income, demand, and supply. This was personally my favourite topic, as it taught me what would happen to different products' demand and supply if their prices increased. For example, soft drinks, which are very elastic, would experience a significant drop in demand if their prices increased as there are many other alternatives to choose from.

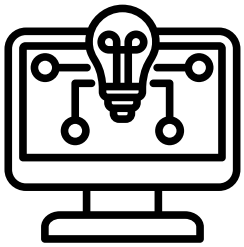
We have also recently looked at misinformation in the sales of products, especially in the increased use of social media. Mr. Palmer tasked us with the creation of a short informercial that contained altered facts and lies to sell our products.



This resulted in the extensive use of AI altered videos and pictures, to demonstrate the ridiculous effects of using our products. For example, Seb and Jayden created an informercial selling quarter zip sweaters, showing that the mere action of wearing one would result in someone instantly becoming an established corporate businessperson. A still from this infomercial can be seen opposite. The task highlighted the use of misinformation in modern media and the market.

COMPUTING

This term, Computing lessons across all key stages have been carefully designed to develop students' digital confidence, technical knowledge and problem-solving skills, while ensuring learning is engaging, relevant and purposeful. From digital literacy in Year 7 through to advanced programming and data concepts at Key Stage 5, students have been challenged to think critically, work creatively and apply their understanding in meaningful contexts.



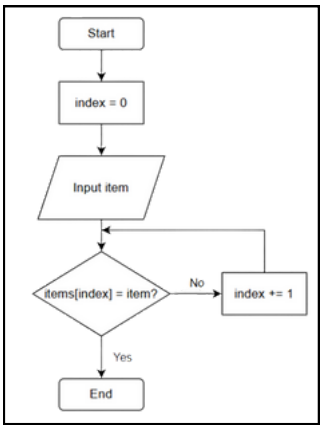
In **Year 7**, students began their Computing journey by developing strong foundations in digital literacy. They learnt how to use the school's computer systems effectively, including logging in securely, managing files and working efficiently within a digital environment. Alongside this, a significant focus was placed on e-safety, with lessons exploring cyberbullying, digital footprint and phishing scams. Students are currently consolidating this learning by creating a PowerPoint presentation on key e-safety issues, demonstrating both their understanding of online safety and their ability to present information clearly and professionally.

Year 8 students continued to deepen their understanding of e-safety, with a particular focus on online grooming. To encourage empathy, critical thinking and creativity, students produced a newspaper front page highlighting the dangers and warning signs associated with this issue. In addition, Year 8 students were introduced to HTML, learning the fundamentals of how web pages are structured. By constructing simple web pages, students gained a practical insight into how the websites they use every day are created.

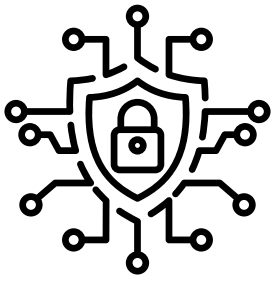
In **Year 9**, students explored the internal components of a computer, learning about the purpose and function of key hardware such as the CPU, RAM and storage devices. Building on this, they studied data representation, developing their understanding of how data is stored and processed by computers. This included converting between binary, denary and hexadecimal, as well as understanding ASCII character representation. These topics provided a strong theoretical foundation for GCSE Computer Science.



At GCSE, **Year 10** students have been developing their programming skills, focusing on the fundamentals of sequential programming, including selection and iteration. These skills have been applied through practical programming tasks that encourage logical thinking and precision. Alongside programming, students have studied data storage, memory and secondary storage devices, linking theory directly to how programs and systems operate in real-world contexts.



Year 11 students have built upon this knowledge by learning how to produce robust programs, considering issues such as validation and testing. They have also studied CPU architecture, gaining a deeper understanding of how instructions are processed, and have recently begun learning about searching and sorting algorithms, an essential component of computational thinking.



At Key Stage 5, **Year 12 IT students** have explored big data, examining how organisations collect, store and use large datasets to support decision-making. They have also studied the data lifecycle and methods of data storage, developing an understanding of data's value in modern businesses. Meanwhile, **Year 12 Computer Science** students have completed their work on procedural programming and are now developing their object-oriented programming skills. They have also studied data representation within computer systems, reinforcing the link between low-level data and high-level programming.

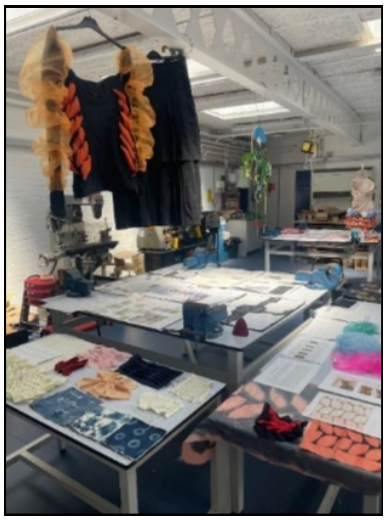
DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

Year 13 Summer 2025

The Design and Technology Department would like to share some highlights from our A-Level course, where students work within the specialisms of Textile Design and Three-Dimensional Design. The projects showcased below focus on fabric manipulation techniques, animal enclosure design, upcycling and work in miniature.

Our Year 13 students have shown great dedication and produced fantastic examples of their abilities for their personal portfolios, in addition to achieving excellent grades. Well done, Year 13!



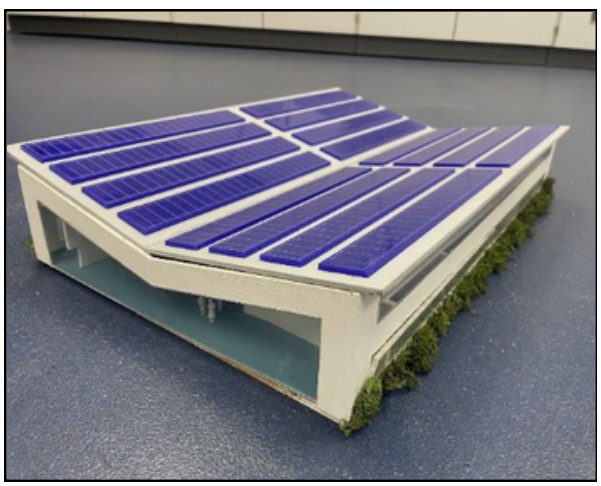




Year 11 Summer 2025

Last summer, we saw a surge in architecture-style projects within GCSE Design and Technology, alongside the more traditional product, fashionwear, and furniture designs. These scale models made excellent use of computer-aided design and manufacture to bring students' concepts to life, demonstrating precision, creativity, and attention to detail.

This growing area of design with GCSE Design and Technology is helping to shape the architects of the future, giving students a valuable insight into architectural thinking and the design process. Many of these projects will form an impressive part of their portfolios as they move on to further education or creative careers.


DT: FOOD AND NUTRITION

The **Year 10** GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition class have been developing their practical skills from KS3 by undertaking a range of new processes. Students pictured below demonstrated great teamwork and communication when making their own pasta, learning how to knead, roll and shape dough from scratch. They also had the exciting opportunity to experience how to make sushi, developing precision and creativity while working with new ingredients and techniques.

This term's practical lessons have helped students build confidence in the kitchen and prepare for the more advanced skills they will explore later in the course.







Sixth Form Food Enrichment

Introduced last year as part of our expanded Sixth Form enrichment programme, this practical cooking option has quickly become a popular choice. Students are supported by Mrs Johnson as they plan and prepare a range of healthy dishes, helping them develop valuable practical skills and confidence in the kitchen.

This enrichment opportunity is particularly beneficial for students who would like more cooking experience before heading off to university or living independently, giving then a strong foundation in nutritious, budget-friendly meal preparation.





DRAMA



Year 7 Drama students have been developing their performance skills and exploring a variety of ways to showcase their learning, including through the fairytale scheme of work. Their confidence is growing noticeably as they experiment with characterisation, voice, and movement.

This term in Drama, **Year 8** have been learning about creating suspense and tension in performance. In the first half term, classes explored this through voice, creating spooky radio plays. This half term we developed our skill set adding physical movement and facial expression culminating in some fantastic interpretations of the scene from A Christmas Carol when the ghost of Jacob Marley appears to Scrooge.



Year 9 have been learning about dramatic style and technique. In September and October we focused on Naturalism and learned about Constantin Stanislavski's approach to creating believable, realistic characters. Students explored his techniques and applied them to short, scripted scenes. More recently, classes have been learning about Bertolt Brecht, who developed a very different performance style using narration, archetype characters and moral/political teaching through drama. At the end of term, students worked in small groups to create an adaptation of a well know fairy tale using Brecht techniques to give it a contemporary twist.



Year 10 have been working on their exam text through a performance of ‘The IT’ by Vivienne Franzmann. They performed this piece to a select audience of Year 9 students to give them an insight into what GCSE Drama looks like and what they can expect from the course

Year 11 have spent this term re-visiting the set text 'The It' ahead of their mock exam in October. Since half term, the students have been splitting their time between exploring texts for their component 2 performance exam in the spring term and developing analysis and evaluation of live theatre in preparation for section B of the written paper.





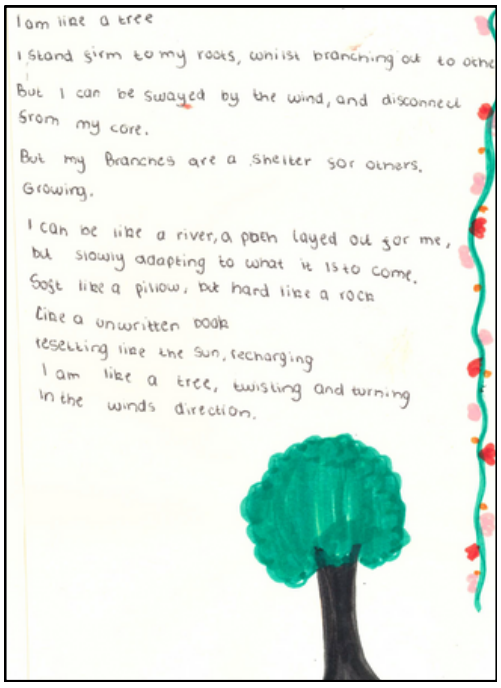
ENGLISH

The English department at St Mary's Catholic School has had an inspiring term, with students across Key Stage 3 engaging in thoughtful, imaginative, and expressive work that showcases their growing confidence and creativity.

Our **Year 7** students began their journey at St Mary's with the unit 'Memories and Moments', an introduction to English that encouraged them to reflect on their lives as a journey. Through the creation of personal 'road maps', students explored their identities, aspirations, and experiences. These visual pieces are rich with symbolism: winding roads, steep hills and scenic routes that represent the highs and lows of growing up. This unit was not only a chance for students to share their stories with teachers and new classmates, but also a meaningful way to begin thinking about who they are and who they want to become. It's a wonderful way to start their time at St Mary's, and the results have been both moving and memorable.



In our poetry work, KS3 students have been experimenting with metaphor and voice. One standout piece, 'I Am Like a Tree', demonstrates a student's skill in extending metaphor across a whole poem. The writer carefully chose language to reflect growth, resilience, and change.



I am like a tree

I stand firm to my roots, whilst branching out to othe

But I can be swayed by the wind, and disconnect from my core.

But my Branches are a shelter for others.

Growing.

I can be like a river, a poem layed out for me,

but slowly adapting to what it is to come.

Soft like a pillow, but hard like a rock

Like a unwritten book

resetting like the sun, recharging

I am like a tree, twisting and turning

in the winds direction.

Another exceptional poem, 'Home Sweet Home', was a written response to James Berry's 'Childhood Tracks'. As part of our unit exploring identity through poetry, the poem captures the sights and senses, and the complexity, of what 'home' means. This poem is a beautiful example of how students are learning to express personal experience through poetic form.

Home Sweet Home by Jewel J (7B)

Eating Indian rose apple, freshly picked from the garden,
Eating tender coconut with 'pong' inside.
Eating passion fruit with sugar mixed inside
Drinking fresh water from the well – cool and refreshing.

Smelling he tropical, pristine air
Smelling the blooming jasmines, dancing in the air
Smelling raw milk waiting to be taken.

Hearing the dawn chorus of birds,
Hearing the chickens getting fed as they chirped,
Hearing the lovely lakes and babbling brooks.

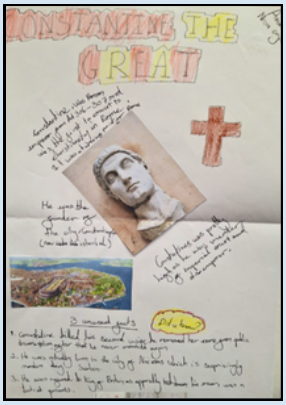
Seeing the newspaper boy accurately aiming at out doorsteps.
Seeing the dragonflies gliding across the courtyard,
Seeing my neighbour reading the newspaper.

We are thrilled to celebrate the achievements of five **Year 9** students whose creative writing has been selected for publication by Young Writers. Having entered the 'I Have a Dream' competition earlier this year, their work will be published in a forthcoming anthology. This is a remarkable accomplishment - being published is no small feat, and it speaks volumes about their imagination, dedication, and talent. The anthology will be available in the school library from January 2026, and we encourage everyone to take a look and celebrate the voices of our young writers. We have a weekly Young Writers Club, meeting in B1 on Wednesdays after school. All are welcome.

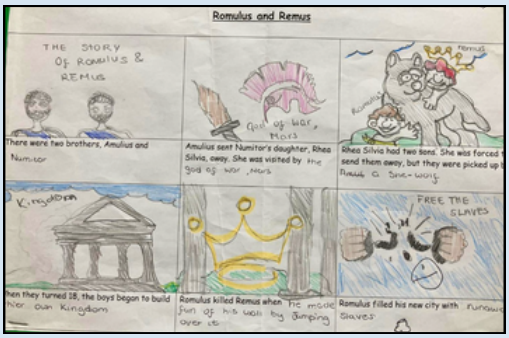
Congratulations to:
Deajay G C (9B) – 'Joyful and Colourful'
Estia K (9A) – 'I Want'
Ethan McS (9T)– 'Life is Like a Tree',
Harry M (9A) – 'The Shapeshifter'
Julia N (9A) - Anything is Possible'

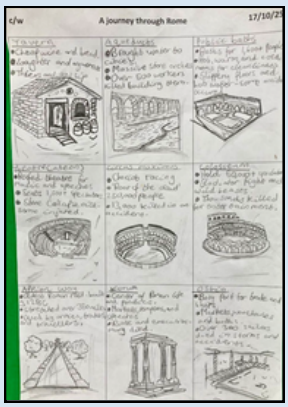
From reflective road maps to published poetry, this term has been a celebration of student voice, creativity, and growth. We are incredibly proud of the work being produced in the English department and look forward to seeing what our students will create next.

HISTORY & POLITICS



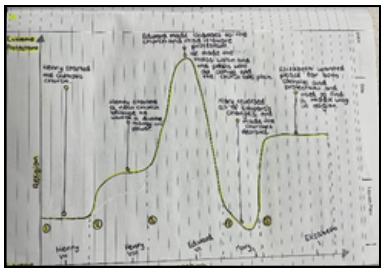
Year 7s have been learning about the Roman Empire this term, including topics such as the Roman invasion of Britain in 43A.D. and Boudicca's Revolt in 61 A.D. They have been developing their skills in using sources.

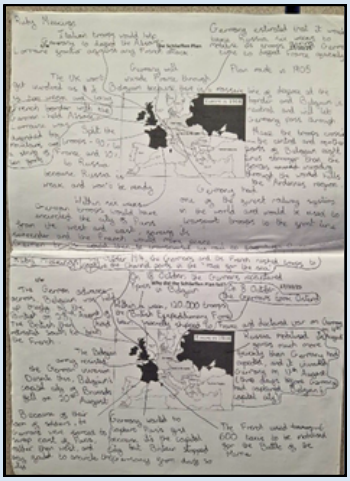




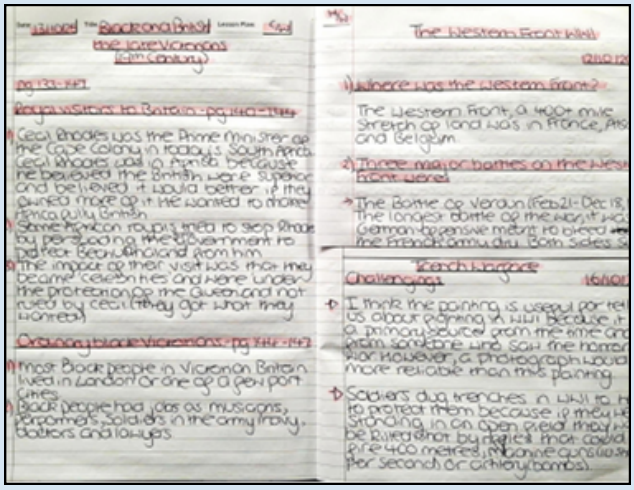


Year 8s have been learning all about the Tudors. They started the year by studying the reasons why Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church, before studying the reigns of Edward VI, Mary I and a detailed study of Elizabeth I: how she changed the Church of England, why she never married and how she led England to victory over the Spanish Armada.





Year 9s have spent this term learning about the First World War. They started by studying its complex set of causes, before looking at the war itself, including the horrendous Battle of the Somme and the reasons why the Allies won in 1918. They have completed a detailed study of Douglas Haig, focusing on how his role has been interpreted and why opinions of him have changed over time.



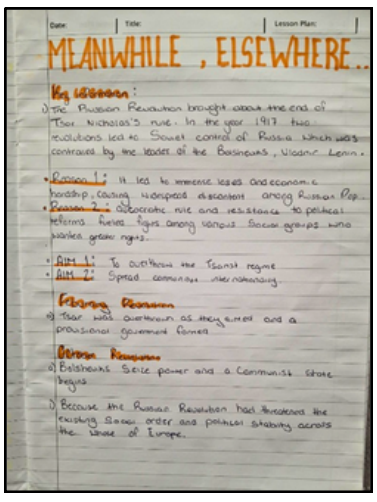
Broadening Horizons

All years at **Key Stage Three** have been using the brilliant book *Black and British* by David Olusoga in lessons to go alongside the topics they have studied. This has allowed them to engage with an aspect of History which had been downplayed or ignored entirely in History curriculums of the past.

They have also been completing **Meanwhile, elsewhere**... tasks for homework, which allow the students to learn about major events, individuals and developments which occurred at the same time as the events they have studied in class, but in other parts of the world.

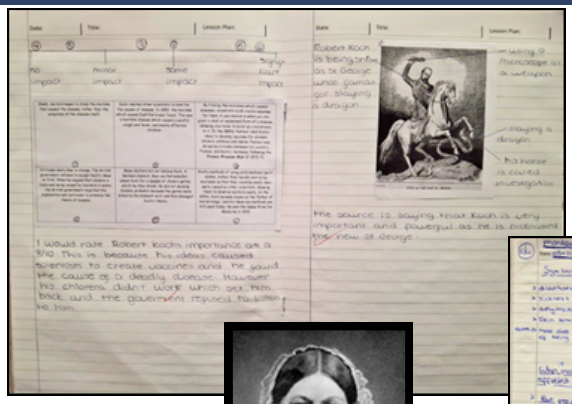




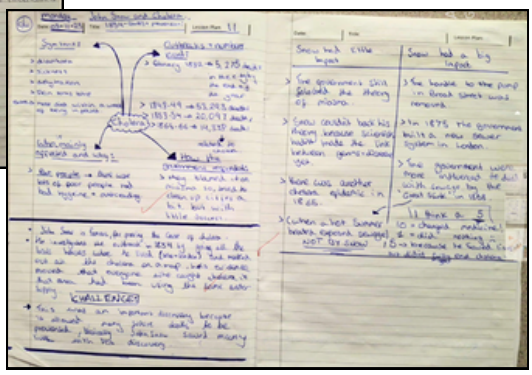


HISTORY & POLITICS

Year 10s have begun their study of GCSE History with the topic **Medicine in Britain, c1250-the present day**. They have learned about the key features of Medieval, Renaissance and Early Modern Medicine, including what was believed about the causes of disease and how it has been treated and prevented. The students have been considering the reasons for change and continuity in these areas, including the role of new technology such as the printing press, and the role of key individuals such as Florence Nightingale.









Year 11s have continued their GCSE studies with the topic of **Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918-1939**. They have looked at the problems in Germany after the First World War and the important question of why a group like the Nazis were able to take over in an educated, advanced society like Germany. 29 of our Year 11 students are looking forward to the **trip to Berlin** in January, which will enrich their understanding of the Germany topic, as well as their later study of the **Cold War**.



Year 12 and 13 have been learning about **the French Revolution** this term. Almost two hundred years after it occurred, the Chinese politician Zhou Enlai observed that it was still "too early to say" what the French Revolution's legacy was. Arguably, this is still the case, as the Year 13s have found by getting to grips with this messy, bloody and momentous period in History. In the **Britain 1930-1997** topic, the students have been learning about the key figure of Winston Churchill, who was voted the 'Greatest Ever Briton' back in 2002. With last year marking the 150th anniversary of Churchill's birth, his undoubtedly important, but also controversial, legacy is under more focus than ever.



Year 13 students acting out the trial of King Louis XVI

Year 12 Politics students have embarked on an exciting journey through UK politics, tackling fundamental topics such as the Constitution, Political Participation, and Political Parties. From debates over constitutional reform to pressing discussions on democratic participation, students have had ample opportunities to see the relevance of political theory in the world around them. This dynamic approach ensures that students not only grasp the academic content but also critically engage with the politics shaping their daily lives and society as a whole.



This term, our **Year 13 Politics** students have delved into the fascinating world of U.S. politics. This has been brought vividly to life with real-world case studies, including the recent November U.S. elections, which provided an excellent lens for analysing electoral processes in action. Engaging discussions have ranged from the significance of constitutional amendments to the dynamics of modern political campaigns, ensuring students not only understand the theory but also its relevance in shaping the world's leading democracy today.



MATHS

Maths in Baking Competition

The start of the academic year saw our infamous 'Maths in Baking' competition for Year 7 and Year 8. This much-loved event brought together creativity and plenty of delicious treats.

We were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of our student bakers, receiving nearly 60 beautifully crafted entries. Each bake demonstrated wonderful effort and imaginative links to mathematical ideas.

A huge congratulations to our proud winners: Emanuelle R. M., Isla C., Joshua F., Joshua T., Lisa N-D., Mariella G., Neriah C., Sandro I., Sienna B-T., and Sienna P.

The creations impressed us with both their mathematical flair and baking skill.

Thank you to everyone who took part and helped make this event such a success. We look forward to seeing even more fantastic mathematical bakes next year!



Success in the Senior Mathematical Challenges and Mathematics Competitions for Girls

We are delighted to celebrate the outstanding achievements of our students in this year's online Senior Mathematical Challenge. Their hard work and problem-solving skills have earned an impressive 13 Bronze, 8 Silver, and 1 Gold certificate.

Special congratulations go to Thomas G (Year 11) and Liam G (Year 12), who each achieved Best in Year for their exceptional performances.

A further highlight includes Marie S. (Year 13), who not only achieved Best in Year and Best in School, but also secured an invitation to the prestigious Andrew Jobbings Senior Kangaroo follow-on round. This is a remarkable accomplishment that reflects her dedication and mathematical talent.

In addition to the Senior Challenge results, our Year 11 girls excelled in the Mathematics Competition for Girls, earning 10 Merit awards. We are especially proud of Khloe D. B. and Leanita G. C., who both achieved Distinction for their outstanding work.

We also congratulate Madeline S., our highest achiever in the Mathematical Olympiad for Girls, who was awarded a Distinction—a tremendous accomplishment in this challenging national competition.

Well done to all students who participated. We are extremely proud of your achievements and look forward to seeing your continued success in future competitions.



On Friday 5th December at 5pm, 5 of our Year 12 Mathematicians were still hard at work in the Sixth Form study room, working on the finals of the very challenging team maths competition, Ritangle.

They are working as a true team, sharing out questions according to their strengths in problem solving, coding etc. They planned to stay until school closed at 6pm and we wish them all the very best against incredibly stiff national competition.

MEDIA AND FILM STUDIES

It's been an excited start to this academic year in Media and Film - we have a new Media suite in the Sixth Form Centre! The students are enjoying learning how to use the industry standard Adobe Creative Suite software, such as Photoshop and Premier, to edit their short film and magazine productions.

We have also continued to arrange inspiring visits to production studios as well as talks with industry professionals. At the end of this term we also have an exciting opportunity to attend a tour and production workshop at Sky Studios in Elstree.













MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Joyeux Noel! Buon Natale! Feliz Navidad! to all our French, Spanish and Italian students. We look forward to seeing you in the New Year! Have a fun and relaxing Christmas break.

Key Stage 3

In **Year 7**, students have been learning the present tense, describing likes and dislikes, telling the time, describing their personality, school uniform, daily routine, and free-time and leisure activities. In Italian, students have been learning about school life, including school subjects, telling the time and describing a typical school day. In Spanish, students have been learning to describe free time activites and the weather and giving opinions.

Year 8 have continued to build on their knowledge of the present tense, focusing on irregular verbs and to use the past perfect tense. In French, students have been learning to describe a visit to a theme park and learning about French festivals, traditions and celebratory meals in Francophone countries. In Italian, students have been learning to describe holidays, countries, transport, accommodation and activities. In Spanish, students have been learning to describe what they use phones for, what time of music they like/dislike, TV programmes and what they did yesterday.

In **Year 9**, MFL students have continued to build on their knowledge of the present, near and simple future and perfect tenses, including reflexive and modal verbs. In French, students have been learning how to describe birthday celebrations, discussing how to earn money and plans for the future. They have also explored what things could be like in the future and inventions. In Italian, students have been learning to describe festivals and traditions, including recipes and meals. In Spanish, students have been learning to describe jobs, duties and work, and saying what they want to do in the future.

Key Stage 4

Year 10 and 11 French and Spanish students are coping very well with the rigours of a new GCSE specification where the focus is on mastering grammar in order to be able to manipulate the language. Students have also been learning phonics in order to ensure that they can pronounce the language accurately to achieve well in the new read aloud section of the oral exam and in the dictation. **Year 10 and 11 Italian students** have been making excellent progress with the old specification.









MUSIC

The Carol Service at St Joseph & The English Martyrs Church was a truly unforgettable evening, filled with prayer, music and 120 students participating. Every student involved should feel immensely proud of the generosity, commitment and confidence they showed in offering their gifts in worship.

The standard of music throughout the evening was exceptional, reflecting weeks of dedication and teamwork across all year groups. A particular highlight was the stunning marimba solo performed by Alice Pagliaroli in Year 8 accompanied by the percussion group, whose focus and musicality captivated the congregation and earned well-deserved admiration. Another deeply moving moment came from the Year 9 Worship Band, whose heartfelt performance of 'Mary Did You Know' created a powerful space for reflection and reminded us of the wonder at the heart of the Christmas story. Another highlight of the evening was a choir of fifty Year 7s all singing 'A Christmas Hallelujah by Kristina Schell accompanied by a fantastic Year 7 rock band who performed together for the first time.

From the many choirs and instrumental ensembles to the fantastic soloists and readers, the students led the congregation beautifully through music and prayer, helping everyone to prepare their hearts for Christmas. The enthusiasm, confidence and joy shown by our young people was inspiring and a true testament to their faith, talent and hard work.

We are incredibly proud of all our students and grateful to every member of staff who supported them so tirelessly.





On the 11th December we took 50 students from Junior Choir and Concert Band to perform at the **St Francis of Assisi Trust Carol Service**. All eight of the Trust primary schools came with their choirs, to St Augustine's Church in Hoddesdon to perform together. This was the first time St Mary's had been involved with the event and it was a real joy for many of our students to see their old primary school teachers again and also to hear a wide variety of choirs singing some Christmas carols. The concert band performed a medley of 'Deck the Halls', 'Away in a Manger' and 'God rest ye merry gentlemen' and the Junior Choir sang a beautiful version of 'Do you hear what I hear' by Gloria Shayne and Noel Regney.

At the end of the service over 200 students performed 'Calypso Carol' together with some added percussion which was really joyous. The students all sat and had lunch together and then performed to a packed church in the afternoon. A fantastic performance opportunity for our students and a chance for all the primary school pupils to see what music at secondary school is like.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

As we come to the end of a busy and exciting term, we are delighted to share the outstanding progress and achievements your children have made in Physical Education. This has been a packed half-term filled with commitment, teamwork, and determination—both within curriculum lessons and across our thriving extra-curricular programme.

Key Stage 3

Key Stage 3 students have embraced a wide range of sports designed to develop their fundamental movement skills, teamwork, and enjoyment of physical activity.

Boys: This term focused on rugby, basketball and cross country, giving students the opportunity to develop tactical awareness, resilience, and cardiovascular fitness. Their enthusiasm and effort in both team and endurance-based activities have been excellent.

Girls: Girls took part in football, fitness, rugby and cross country, working hard to strengthen their technical abilities, tactical understanding, and confidence in competitive situations. Their progress and positive attitude have been a real highlight this term.

Key Stage 4

Students in Key Stage 4 have enjoyed a more varied programme, exploring a wider range of sports and physical activities. They have taken part in a selection including Trampolining, Rugby, Football, Fitness training and Table tennis Across these activities, students have developed sport-specific skills, improved their physical conditioning, and demonstrated maturity in applying tactics and techniques during lessons.

Inter-House Sport

Our Interhouse competitions remain a much-loved part of school life and have once again been a fantastic success. This term we held:

- Boys' Rugby Inter-House
- Girls' Football Inter-House
- The annual Whole-School Cross Country Inter-House

All events saw exceptional participation, competitive spirit, and support among students. We are incredibly proud of the effort and sportsmanship shown across every year group in particular Year 7 and 8.

Extra-Curricular Sport

After-school sport continues to thrive, with outstanding attendance and commitment from students.
Highlights include:

- Boys' Rugby and Basketball Clubs—with strong weekly participation and impressive wins for all age groups at local schools
- Girls' Football Club—continuing to grow in numbers, confidence, and match performance with victories across all year groups.
- Senior Volleyball (KS4)—a new initiative this year that has quickly become a huge success, with the club going from strength to strength as students develop advanced skills and leadership giving them a much needed let out for Year 11 exam pressures.

The enthusiasm and dedication students bring to these sessions are truly commendable.

Looking Ahead

With this excellent start to the year, we are excited for what lies ahead in the next term. Students can look forward to new activities, further inter-house competitions, and more opportunities to get involved in sport beyond the classroom.

Thank you for your continued support of our PE programme and for encouraging your children to lead active, healthy lifestyles. We look forward to building on this positive momentum as the year progresses.











PSYCHOLOGY
and
HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

Year 13 Psychology and Health & Social Care students did St Mary's proud when they attended the Tutor2U Grade Booster workshops at Westfield, Stratford. The event saw Tutor2U take over the Vue Cinema with each subject adopting a screen to provide fully interactive revision workshops.

Our students enjoyed competing against other schools to answer questions and came away with prizes for their excellent contributions. To top it off, their conduct was exemplary and everyone left with boosted confidence ready to excel in their upcoming exams.











RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Students in RE have been studying a range of topics during this term.

Our **Year 7** students have been focusing on the creation narratives, scientific responses, the history and structure of the Bible. They have produced some beautiful creative projects to show their understanding and knowledge of these topics.

Year 8 students have been revisiting the creation narratives with a focus on the Fall and the importance of God's commands. They have also expanded their knowledge of the Old Testament by studying the role and work of prophets.

In **Year 9** we launched a new curriculum. Students have been learning about the importance of human life and dignity. And they have then looked at the role of women in the Bible, in particular Hannah and Our Lady.

Our **GCSE** students are busy studying Catholic teachings and theology with units such as Kingdom of God, Incarnation, Redemption and Triune God. We have only one more unit to study in Year 11 before the course is complete so there will be a focus on revision and preparing for exams for the second half of the Spring term.

We have 15 students pursuing the **A-Level** Religious Studies course. They have been studying life after death and the problem of evil most recently. The students love a debate and we have had the opportunity to put both classes together to argue about the existence of God!

In the **Sixth Form** all students have one period of Core RE per week. These lessons are an opportunity to look at religious issues and developments worldwide. Much of the material we cover helps to support students in other areas of learning. This term we have been looking at new religious movements such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons in Year 13. Our Year 12 students have been examining the causes of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, the Black Lives Matter movement and the rise of fundamentalist Christianity and Islam. Next term the topics will include war, pacifism, capital punishment, animal rights and Catholic Social Teaching.

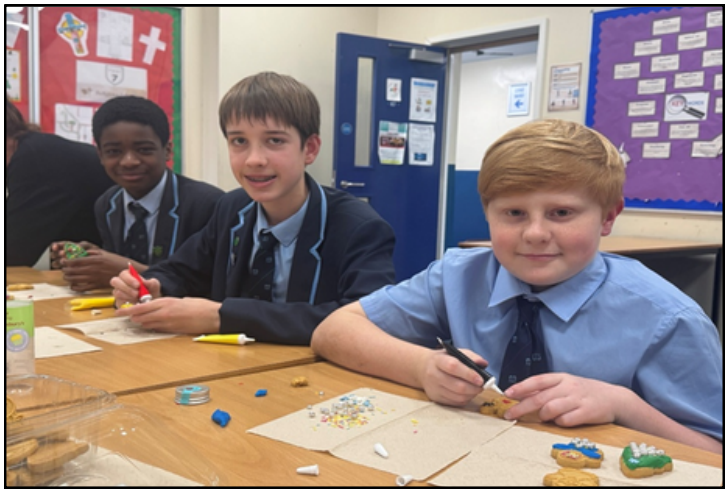
In addition to delivering the normal curriculum, the RE department has also been involved in extra curricular activities. We have been running a chaplaincy group after school on Wednesdays where we have enjoyed a range of activities from discussing 'big questions' to making Christmas gingerbread decorations, all while munching on chocolate biscuits! We have also had a design a Christmas card competition which had many beautiful entries. Currently there is a writing competition run by the Columbans for KS4 and 5 with some impressive prizes.

In the new year our **KS3 students** will be studying various aspects of the life of Jesus and our Year 10 students will be looking at religion, relationships and families – a unit that gives lots of opportunity for discussion and personal reflection. We often organise a re-enactment of a Catholic marriage service so nominations for the bride and groom are very welcome 😊. Our **KS5 students** will be looking at Church history and considering whether religious people are more moral than those with no religion.

The RE department would like to thank all our students and their families for their hard work and support this term. We are very proud of the work our students do and the contributions they make in lessons with their enthusiasm and willingness to share their faith experiences.

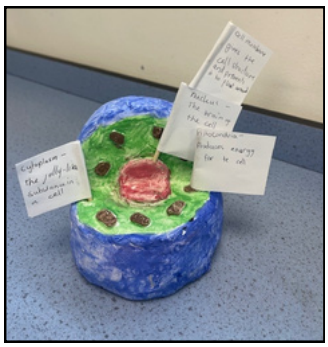
We would like to wish you all a wonderful Christmas and a New Year filled with blessings.





SCIENCE

In **Year 7** science, students have been learning about one of the most important building blocks of life: the cell. To help them understand how cells are structured and how each part functions, the class created their own 3D cell models.



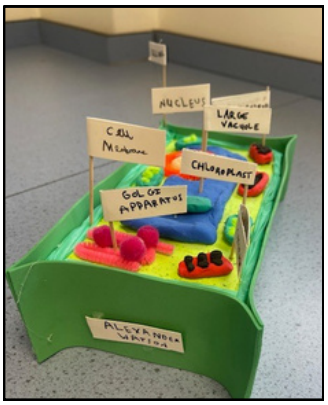
Students chose to make either an animal cell or a plant cell, then selected materials such as clay, foam, cardboard, jelly, or playdough to bring their ideas to life. Each part of the cell, like the nucleus, cell membrane, cytoplasm, and mitochondria, was carefully shaped and labelled. Those who made plant cells also included features like the cell wall, chloroplasts, and a large vacuole.

The activity encouraged creativity, teamwork, and problem-solving. Many students experimented with different materials to find the best way to represent each organelle.

Overall, making cell models helped Year 7 students deepen their understanding of cells in a fun and memorable way, turning a tricky science topic into a hands-on learning experience.







In **Year 10** science, students have been building their practical chemistry skills by completing two key experiments: making copper sulfate crystals and performing an acid–alkali titration. These activities not only link to the GCSE chemistry curriculum but also help students develop accuracy, confidence, and a deeper understanding of chemical reactions.



Both practicals helped students improve their measurement, observation, and analytical skills. They also gained experience handling laboratory equipment safely and effectively, skills that are vital for further study in science.

Overall, the experiments were a valuable and enjoyable learning experience. Year 10 not only created striking copper sulfate crystals but also mastered one of the core techniques of analytical chemistry.









SCIENCE

Year 13 chemistry pupils recently carried out a series of qualitative tests on a range of organic compounds, applying their understanding of functional groups and characteristic reactions. Working systematically, they used reagents such as bromine water, acidified potassium dichromate silver nitrate and ethanol to distinguish between alkenes, alcohols, aldehydes, and ketones. Careful observation of colour changes, precipitates, and reaction rates allowed them to infer the identity of each compound and link experimental evidence to theoretical knowledge. The activity not only strengthened their analytical skills and confidence in laboratory techniques but also helped them appreciate how qualitative testing forms an essential part of organic chemical analysis.





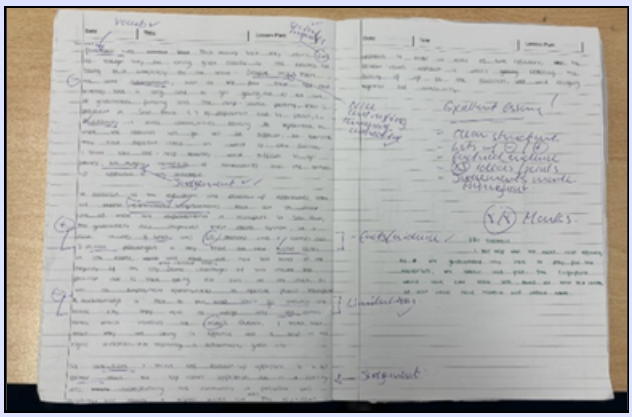


GEOGRAPHY

Curriculum updates: This term we have been studying the following aspects from our Programme of Study:

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13
Topic	Exploring the World	Population	Plastic Pollution	UK Changing Landscapes - Coasts	Global Development / Weather Hazards & Climate Change	Earth's Life Support Systems/ Changing Spaces Making Places	Hazardous Earth / Climate Change

Year 10 students completed a mid-topic assessment task of writing an essay to assess the effectiveness of various government schemes to improve quality of life for residents in Sao Paulo. The general standard of the quality of extended written responses was impressive. The students were proud of their work and they engaged positively with their response to teacher feedback in their Green Pen editing.

Our **Year 13** students have also been simultaneously working hard to complete their independent investigations (NEA fieldwork). This is worth 20% of their final overall grade. They have covered 3 out of the 6 sections and so they are over half-way to securing as many of the 60 marks available for their final submission in February 2026.