

LOVE-RESPECT-FLOURISH

St. Mary's Catholic School Newsletter

Issue 20 - 16th February 2024



Student Voice—Student Leadership Team

Mr Johnston - Headteacher

I had the pleasure of meeting the Student Leadership Team this week, which included two representatives from each year group as well as the Sixth Form Head Students Team. We had a very productive meeting, establishing our way of working, and listening to their experience of being a part of the school community.



Year 7	Rafaela R	Oliver T
Year 8	Jazmyne J	Olivia B
Year 9	Sophie S	Ife I-I
Year 10	Nicole C	Gene J-L
Year 11	Patricia E	David B
Year 12	Stefan W	Laura M
Head Student Team	Holly M	Conrad L
	Lily S	Demi S
	Niamh G	Joe H

We discussed Objectives 1 and 2 of our School Development Plan (Catholic Life and Teaching and Learning) and had some excellent ideas and feedback that I will take to the staff, or the SLT. Watch this space for 'You Said, We Did' information over the coming weeks and months so they can highlight how their service really is making a difference to our community.

Have a fabulous half term break with your families. God Bless.

Lent at St. Mary's

On Wednesday, Miss McHugh and the Sixth Form Chaplaincy Team led the school community in our Ash Wednesday Liturgy, and distributed ashes (blessed by Fr. Peter) to all students and staff present.

It was wonderful to be able to share this moment of reflection and prayer—and special thanks go to the student leaders who made this so personal and meaningful for their peers.

There are lots of plans for this Lenten period in school, some of these are outlined in the next few pages. God Bless.



ASH WEDNESDAY

"For you are dust and to dust you shall return."
Genesis 3:19



PRAY



FAST



GIVE

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday-Friday
19th-23rd February 2024
HALF TERM
School Ski Trip (during Half Term)
Students Return to School
Monday 26th February 2024

Monday-Friday
26th February-1st March 2024
GCSE & A Level Mock Exams



St Francis of Assisi
CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

FEBRUARY
HALF TERM

May we wish you and your families a very restful and relaxing half term break



Sixth Form Spiritual Leader Inspires!



Name:
Joshua akagha

Home Parish:
St Mary mother of God,
Ponders End

Aspirations:
I aspire to be a leader of
the faith, not just by word
of mouth but by actions



My faith journey so far has helped my life by allowing me to truly understand that to belong to family and a community does not necessarily mean that there must be a blood connection, rather that our common belief is what unites us and makes us one whole.

Being part of St Mary's Catholic School develops and deepens my spiritual growth by allowing me to have an array of opportunities to put into practice the word of God through my own spiritual leadership and ministry, where I hope to inspire other young people to live with faith in their lives, as well as uphold our schools' personal values which I truly believe act as fundamentals that would make me closer to the Lord.

Bible Verse that inspires me the most is....

Psalms 91:9-11

If you say, "The LORD is my refuge,"
and you make the Most High your dwelling,
¹⁰ no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.
¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;

My understanding and interpretation of this is that our God does not let harm come to the people of his flock, so we as followers of Christ should trust in the Lord, though we may face temptation in our day-to-day life we must remain strong in mind and spirit as we are always watched over. The Bible is seen to be metaphoric as it refers to our 'tent' which I understand to be a reference to our lives, as like a tent that is not secured to the ground any small disaster (evil) is able to knock us down and cause us pain, however once we are secured with pegs of belief and trust no disaster will affect us. Further, the angels that he has commanded to guard us in our ways may not necessarily be the heavenly beings but rather the regular people we see in everyday lives; this could be our parents, teachers or even simply a friend whose mission is from God to act as our guardian angel and lead us down the path of light.

We can put this into our daily action by committing ourselves to God to the best of our ability through all our actions as we know that in following him we are protected; therefore we should strive to live a life that is pleasing to him, especially during this Lenten period that started on Ash Wednesday with the words "repent and believe in the gospel" which is the living word of God.



Ash Wednesday Liturgies

Dear Parents/Carers

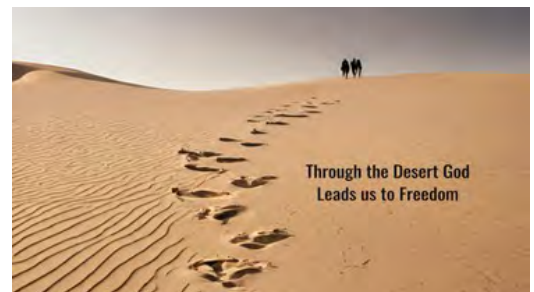
This week we celebrated our Ash Wednesday Liturgies, where we came together as a school community to pause, pray and praise as we enter our Lenten season. Our Sixth Form Chaplaincy team planned and led the most poignant and reverent service as we all came forward to receive the ashes on our forehead and were reminded of our instruction to "Repent, and believe in the Gospel".



As parents and carers and indeed the primary educators of our children, it is important we work with you in helping you develop your child with their spirituality as they navigate their way through the teenage years. In the choice and commitment you made as parents in selecting a Catholic school for your child was ensuring your child is taught the Gospel values and grow in their faith each and every day. You will find attached to the Headlines a guide which has been written with the help and support of Sophie Sullivan, Catechetical Coordinator for the Catholic Parish of Bishop's Stortford to help parents in teaching and modelling prayer as a family during Lent. I hope you find this useful and supportive.

With the first Sunday of Lent we pray together:

*Lord God,
you who breathed the spirit of life within me.
Draw out of me the light and life you created.
Help me to find my way back to you.
Help me to use my life to reflect your glory
and to serve others
as your son Jesus did.*



DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

In the words of Pope Francis

- Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
- Fast from worries and have trust in God.
- Fast from complaints; contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness; fill your hearts with joy.
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Fast from words; be silent and listen.



'SiLent'



In order to help with prayer during Lent we have introduced 'SiLent' - a two minute silence at midday, each day at school during Lent.

At this time we stop whatever we are doing and have time, individually, for prayer and reflection.

There will also be lots of other activities in the Chapel such as meditation on Thursdays for students and Stations of the Cross on Fridays.



Piano Recital



Do you play the piano or keyboard?

We have our yearly Piano Recital coming up on 12th March and there are some spaces still available if you would like to perform a piece.

Please see Miss Matthews or Mrs Cox to put your name down or drop them an email at j.matthews@stmarys.net or a.cox@stmarys.net



'SiLent'

Opportunity
every day for
prayer and
reflection

Si-Lent

Every day during Lent 12.00pm to 12.02pm

We pause, We pray, We praise!

St Francis of Assisi
CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

Chapel During Lent

Open every
day for
prayer and
reflection

**School Chapel
Lent 2024**

Morning Registration: Form Group Prayer on rotation

Lunchtime Prayer Activities:

	Early Lunch	Late Lunch
Monday		
Tuesday	The Power of Prayer@ 12.50pm	The Power of Prayer@ 1.50pm
Wednesday		
Thursday	Guided Meditation Prayer	Guided Meditation Prayer
Friday	Stations of the Cross	Stations of the Cross

St Francis of Assisi
CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST



Mental Health Information Workshop

Reminder to parents

Mental Health Information Workshop for Parents/Guardians

As a school we are committed to providing our pupils with opportunities to learn the skills they need for a happy, healthy life. This includes essential education on wider social issues that is age appropriate and part of the Curriculum. Whilst this is important a consistent approach from home and school is invaluable in helping us understand and respond to national issues.



This is why we would like to invite **ALL parents/carers** to a talk from Daniel Sarginson a highly regarded guest speaker on Mental Health Awareness on **Wednesday 28th February 2024 7.00pm to 8.30pm in the Hume Theatre.**

Daniel will be leading PSHEE sessions with Year 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 students during the school day. We would like to extend this offer to help support parents in the role of mental health education. Educating parents is a key part of our shared responsibility in safeguarding our young people, and like all good schools we wish to ensure we have leading specialists to help inform you. Daniel Sarginson will be leading student workshops with different year groups on the day and it is vital we provide the opportunity to share information with our parents/carers to ensure we can educate our young people and know how to keep them safe. I look forward to seeing you there.

*Kindest regards
Miss D McHugh*



Year 10 Trip to Cambridge



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Year 10 Visit to Gonville and Caius College Cambridge Thursday 8th Feb 2024



Our ten lucky Year 10 students were not going to let the most atrocious weather dampen their spirits as we trudged through Cambridge in the cold and the rain! We were one of four Hertfordshire schools visiting for a special day just for Year 10s from Hertfordshire schools.

The admissions talk helped us all to realise that Year 10 is certainly not too early to start thinking about university courses, reading around subjects of interest, listening to podcasts, finding out which A Levels you might need, (for example, students expect you need Biology for Medicine, but in fact the compulsory science is Chemistry).

They also impressed upon students the importance of a really strong set of GCSEs. Top universities are looking for students who can motivate themselves to work really hard at ALL of their subjects and who can show commitment to their education over an extended period of time.

After lunch in the Harry Potter-style College dining hall, complete with large portrait of Stephen Hawking (who apparently insisted his had to be the largest!), we went to the Whipple Museum where we had workshop sessions which involved activities ranging from handling 450 year old medical books, through to giving ourselves minor electric shocks! For students like ours, studying Medicine Through Time as part of their GCSE History, this visit could not have been more apt, and it comes highly recommended to other interested Year 10 Historians, perhaps as a day trip over half term.



Student Report by Ryan K, Year 10

The trip was a great experience. I learnt a lot about how both college and university works, as well as gaining more knowledge about my options after my GCSEs and A Levels. Not to mention how interesting and fun it was! I highly recommend it.





Accelerated Reader

Accelerated Reader totals – well done KS3!

The total word count for the whole of KS3 is an amazing 64,595,750.

The word counts represent all quizzes passed on Accelerated Reader (books and articles) since September 2023, up to 14th February 2024.

Looking at the top ten AR groups, there has been a change in the number one spot, with 8B moving up from third, to overtake the Year 7 classes!

We have two more Year 8 classes in the top ten now, along with two Year 9 groups.

This is a great effort from our older students, and means that there is all to play for in the second half of this year. The SMCS Reading Cup is presented to the top AR class in each of Years 7, 8 and 9 in July.



1st	8B	6,717,391
2nd	7C	6,295,076
3rd	7D	6,156,898
4th	7A	5,775,972
5th	9F	4,126,993
6th	8D	4,114,310
7th	8E	3,917,336
8th	7E	3,873,615
9th	9B	3,645,950
10th	7F	2,954,039

Please remind children to keep reading and quizzing over half term!





Visit to Bishops Stortford College Literacy Festival



Author Matt Goodfellow with Year 7 students

This week two groups of Year 7 students visited Bishop's Stortford College to attend talks by award-winning authors. Many thanks to the College Library staff for inviting us!

Student Report by Shay, Matilda and Julia

Yesterday we went to Bishop's Stortford College to meet Matt Goodfellow... We learned that he had a difficult childhood and that poetry was a way of venting his feelings.

Matt Goodfellow is from Manchester and when he was 13 he wanted to become a rock star, but he became a Primary School teacher for 10 years instead. Then he started writing verse novels. We asked questions at the end of the speech and we enjoyed listening to his poems. Matt told us about his thoughts on SSE (Standard Spoken English) and he said everyone should be able to speak how they want, in their own way.

One student, Charlotte, wrote about the visit in the style of Matt's verse novel 'The Final Year' (copies available in the library):

13th of February 2024, we went to see an author who went by the name of Matt Goodfellow. He talked about poetry, and what he did for a living, the poems and stories he wrote and where his ideas come from.

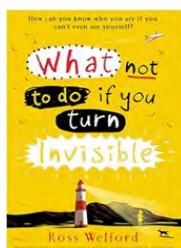
He taught us about SSE, Standard Spoken English, how he disagreed with it, and what poetry can do.

Soon it was question time, and we asked away, about many different things, though soon it was time to go.

I will always remember the day, when Matt Goodfellow came to talk.



A second group of students met Ross Welford on Friday. Ross writes funny, interesting fiction, often with a time travel or Science theme.



All these books are available in the library.



Mathematics Department Competition

This week we have two classes who have 100% completion rate in their homework.
Please join me in congratulating

10Ma1 and 9Y1

for a fantastic end to the school term.



Each half term we choose our star students who have excelled our expectations within our maths lessons.

This term are students are

KS3

Kio C – For his enthusiasm and consistency in lessons and his eagerness to learn more every day.
Orla M – For her endless enthusiasm in lessons and consistency in her work.

KS4

Sophia M – For her outstanding resilience as well as eagerness to learn and be challenged
Greyson N - For his enthusiasm and consistency in every lesson.

KS5

Evan J - For his outstanding dedication to his mathematical studies, for his eagerness to learn more and extend himself and his willingness to support those around him.
Mateusz N - For his integrity within his studies and his resilience that shines through whenever he reaches an area of difficulty.

Well done to our St Marys Stars of the term!

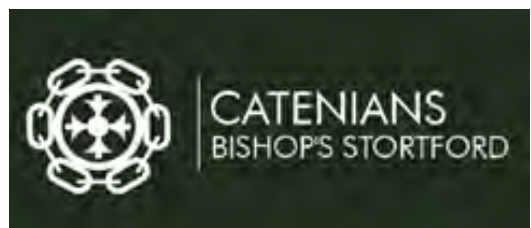


Save the date!



St Patricks Day Event
Friday 15th March 2024, 7pm

The Bishop's Stortford Catenians in association with
St Mary's Catholic School in aid of CAFOD





Year 7 Excel with Animation Nation

A huge well done to the wonderful Year 7 students who participated in the Animation Nation workshop held on Thursday 15th February.

The entire group worked with incredible focus, creativity and perseverance to make eight brilliant short films. Students learned the basics of stop motion animation, as well as postproduction editing; students had to produce around 400 still images to capture their film as they were working with 12 frames per second!

As ever, we could not be more proud of each student who was a credit to the school in terms of application, attitude and behaviour. The short films will be available to download very soon and I will send all parents of students involved a link in due course.



Here are some photographs from a fun and creative day of making.



Thank you also to our wonderful parents whose positive response to this event was phenomenal, we so much appreciate your support of enrichment and the Arts here at St Mary's Catholic School.

Well done Year 7!

Miss Nairn





Spring Internal Mock Examinations

EXAMS

Start
SOON

The November progress exams were an important milestone, allowing the students to gain valuable information about their achievement and learning at that point, and more importantly, areas they could continue to develop to realise additional examination success. The **February/March internal mock examinations** offer the same opportunities; that of gauging progress and preparing for the final push towards May. As you will be aware, May 2024 is the beginning of the summer examination series and the culmination of five years of study at St. Mary's.






In order to best support your son/daughter, each subject will be providing lists of helpful topics that would be worth revising prior to the examinations, so that they can show the progress they have made and have confidence that they can replicate this in examination conditions. It is also worth remembering that these examinations, while they are important and will yield valuable information, are a stepping stone on the way to the final examinations in the summer. Fully prepared, students will feel they can manage their time, some of the stresses, the balance between work and rest as well as ensuring they show themselves to the best of their ability. Preparation can include having the correct equipment, knowing timetables, being on time and feeling that they are ready to do their best as they have revised. All students will gain confidence from showing they have progressed, and all students will feel prepared for the summer if they manage these mocks well.

To this end we ask for your support; please ensure that your son/daughter has a place to revise, help them with their time management, a sensible sleep schedule and help ensure they have their equipment. Each morning, please remind them that we want them to show their best – if together they can achieve these things, the feedback they get will be especially valuable.

It is important to remember the parable of the talents in the Gospel of St. Matthew 25:14-30; we would like to see all of our students make the most of their talents and succeed where we know they can, so we encourage them to not bury any talents until the final 'real' examinations.

Tips for Managing Exam Stress



-  Stay organised with to-do lists and study timetables
-  Take regular study breaks
-  Have a dedicated study space
-  Get as much sleep as possible
-  Remember your health: eat well and stay active





Upcoming Events from the Parish



"The JOY of the Lord is our strength"
Nehemiah 8:10

Birmingham, 21-22 Sept. 2024

Family Event – Celebrate Joy!

This is a weekend coming up that is for the whole family and should be a glimpse into the wider church beyond the four walls of your local parish. "Celebrate" is a family gathering organised by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal – which is a movement in the church of Catholics seeking a greater awareness of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The events are usually very family friendly and joyful! We think you'd enjoy it and it is a wonderful way to renew your faith, in fellowship with many other families seeking the Lord! A family ticket is about £200. Do take a look at the website and feel free to contact Sophie, the Catechetical Coordinator at St Joseph's, should you want to know more: <https://www.celebratetrust.org/joy>

Flame 2025

Calling all young people of the parish (aged 14 +): On Saturday 15th March 2025 the next Flame youth conference takes place! The title of next year's event is "Unstoppable" and it is the largest Catholic youth event in England and Wales.

It is a day which promises inspiring speakers, incredible live music, and prayer & adoration and will be sure to give your Catholic Faith a boost - it is an event not to be missed! So, can I invite you, firstly, to put the date in your diary? And, secondly, to invite your friends to consider coming? The more, the merrier. There is the possibility of getting early bird tickets. Therefore, please email Sophie at:

bstortfordcatechist@rcdow.org.uk to register your interest.



Catholic Parish of Bishop's Stortford Youth Nights

Our Youth Nights are for all those of secondary school age. So everyone from school years 7-13 are welcome. The aim is to create a safe and comfortable space, where you can explore your relationship with God and make friends with others in the community. All youth nights start at 6.30pm and finish at 8.30pm.

A full list of dates for 2024 is available on our parish website:

<https://rcstortford.org.uk/rcstortford-youth-nights-come-and-see/>

Please also be aware, if coming for the first time, there will be a short consent form for your parents to fill in, when they drop you off. We do need to ensure that an adult responsible for you knows where you are!

Finally, each Youth Night will be slightly different every month. We like to offer some variety, but all evening will have a social and a prayerful element. Previous Youth nights include: Games, Advent Art, Movie Night, Prayer & Pizza, Station of the Cross, Sports Night, Adoration Prayer, Praise & Worship and a Quiz Night.

Big Church Festival



Why are we so excited about going to Big Church Festival, which takes place from 25th and 26th May 2024? Here's some info... Join with over 30,000 people from across the UK and beyond to worship together in the jaw-dropping surroundings of the Wiston Estate, Sussex, in the company of some of the best Christian music artists in the world. Each year at Big Church, 500+ CELEBRATORS come together to enjoy fellowship, Mass, and the amazing church festival that is Big Church. As well as hosting Mass each day, the weekend includes community, activities and fun for all ages. From the Big Church Kids Tent and the Fun-filled Fête to the relaxing Tea Tent nestled in the beautiful gardens, to campsite community gatherings, there's something for everyone.

As CELEBRATE'S Pippa Baker said: "Big Church Day Out is just what it says on the tin - it's the beautiful big body of Christ meeting to have a load of fun together, and to worship Jesus, in whom we have all put our hope. It's not just another get together, and these connections aren't superfluous; it's food for the journey of faith!"

<https://www.bigchurchfestival.com/>

For details of all of the above, please contact Sophie Sullivan, Catechetical Coordinator for the Catholic Parish of Bishop's Stortford, at: bstortfordcatechist@rcdow.org.uk



LOVE-RESPECT-FLOURISH

#DedicatedtoExcellence



**Herts Parent
Carer Involvement**

Following our participation in the Autism in Schools project, we are hosting a webinar on Wednesday 13th March 10am-12.30pm.

contact@hertsparentcarers.org.uk



Herts Parent Carer Involvement
www.hertsparentcarers.org.uk







Find out about the 'Autism in Schools' (AIS) project

Hear what our guest speakers can offer you!

Click here to register



HPCI AIS Parent Carer Webinar

Wednesday 13th March 2024 - 10.00am-12.30pm

We are hiring!



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Click Here For Latest Vacancy Information

<https://www.stmarys.net/vacancies>