

St Mary's C of E Primary School

Whole School Newsletter Friday 10th January 2025



Dear families,

Welcome back! We hope you had a wonderful festive period with your families and that your new year has got off to a healthy and happy start. We have loved welcoming the children back into school this week. It has been wonderful to see them comfortably slip back into their routines and approach their learning with a positive attitude. The staff, as always, have spent a lot of time planning some exciting learning opportunities for the children - we look forward to an action-packed term!

January and February can sometimes feel tricky. With dark mornings and evenings, colder weather and the excitement of Christmas behind us, it is easy to feel a little lost or empty. Let's all ensure that we are looking after ourselves and asking for help if we need to. The door at St Mary's is always open.



The Action for Happiness calendar for January can be downloaded [here](#).

Below are some upcoming dates for your diaries.

Key dates:

Monday 13th January - Year 6 visit to Horiman Museum

Monday 20th January - Year 2 cake sale

Thursday 23rd January - Year 6 at Southborough school for "Well Fest"

Monday 3rd February - Year 2 class assembly (2:4 -3:15pm)

- Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

Wednesday 5th February - Choir at Young Voices

Friday 7th Feb - NSPCC national number day (more information to follow)

Friday 7th Feb - Year 3 trip to the Natural History Museum

Monday 10th February - Year 1 cake sale

Welcome Mrs Horne



We would like to start by officially welcoming our new Reception teacher, Mrs Horne, to the team. In order to ensure a smooth transition, she had already started working a couple of days a week in Reception before we broke up for Christmas, and is now a full-time member of the team. She has years of experience working with children in the Early Years and lots of creative ideas. If you see her around school, please say a big hello and make her feel welcome.

Positive Play Project

During our INSET training day on Monday, the staff looked at how we can further improve our playtimes for the children. Our Educational Psychologist delivered a brilliant session about purposeful outdoor play opportunities. Play has many benefits, including

- Reducing stress
- Improving health
- Developing social skills
- Broadening vocabulary
- Providing opportunities for learning about problem solving, teamwork and resilience

Not only is it beneficial for children, it is also enshrined within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

Children today live in a world full of technology and toys which often don't require them to be creative. Sometimes, when they don't have technology and toys, they don't know how to "just play". We are hoping to address this through our positive play project by providing them with lots of open ended resources to spark their imaginations, encourage teamwork and make our playtimes a calmer environment. It is early days, but we have been blown away with how positively our children responded to this already. It has been wonderful seeing them playing so purposefully and collaboratively.





As we continue our work to improve playtimes across the rest of the year, we will be talking regularly with the children about what is working well and what we would like to introduce next. We will be putting together a 'wish list' of items that would be helpful to support our positive play project which we will share with you in due course. Look out for further details!

Church School



One of the things we are very keen to strengthen in 2025, is our link with St Mary's Church and our status as a Church School. We are, and always have been, a school which warmly welcomes children and families from all religious backgrounds and walks of life. We value and celebrate the differences between our pupils and feel fortunate to be a school enriched by a multitude of languages, faiths and ideologies. As we work on establishing ourselves as a church school, we will be guided by the love shown in the Bible, which is a love for all people.

Each week in our newsletters, we will give you a brief summary of what we have been learning in our time of Collective worship, which you will see later in this letter. We hope this gives you an insight into our assembly times.

As will see, at the bottom of this letter, we have quoted a verse from the Bible. Each week, we want to share a verse with the children for them to reflect upon in the week to come. As a church school, we want the children to see what the Bible says and how it can offer support and guidance in their lives. They are entitled to respond to these verses however they wish. For some children, this might be reading with no further action and our hope is that for some children these verses will be a source of encouragement.

Keeping children safe online



Some of the children may have received new devices over the Christmas period. Promoting computer literacy is fantastic and a skill the children will need to develop as they navigate a world of technology in the future. However, as you will be aware, there are many dangers around children using computers and other devices. We would like to direct you to the NSPCC guidance which gives wonderful ideas on how you can keep children of different ages safe.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/access-to-technology-for-different-ages/>

ASD support group



On Wednesday 12th February, an ASD support group is being held at Grand Avenue Primary School, 9:30-11. This is open to all parents and carers who have, or believe they have a child with autism. The theme of the session is "Supporting independence", but is also a time to chat with other families in a similar situation (and have a cup of tea and biscuit too!)

If you would like to attend, please fill in the follow google form: <https://forms.gle/zahaTQ9gndF9nSBr6>

Or alternatively, email Jane Pidduck, jpiddle2@grandavenue.kingston.sch.uk

Collective worship

This week in Collective Worship, we started our new unit prepared for us by Guildford Diocese. It is called, "Songs of the heart". Monday 6th January marked the official end of the Christmas period, known as Epiphany, Twelfth Night or Three Kings' Day. We reminded ourselves about the gifts that the kings brought for baby Jesus and thought about some of the gifts we have given and received. At the beginning of our time together, we reflected on the words from a famous Christmas Carol, "In the bleak midwinter". One of the verses says:

'What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb. If I were a wise man, I would do my part. Yet what I can I give him, Give my heart.'



We discussed what that means and thought about the good gifts that God has given us. During the week, the children have been writing examples of gifts they are grateful for and have added them to our collective worship display.

As always, thanks for your ongoing support.

Kind regards,
The St Mary's Team

***"Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him."
Jeremiah 17 v 7***