

This is a bumper edition of our newsletter and I would like to start by thanking everyone who has provided and offered support in any way over this term. Our testing programme worked seamlessly and whilst Nationally only 31% of Secondary students were in school on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March, at St Benedict's we had 96.5% attendance on that day. This was only possible because of the high levels of testing that took place before 8<sup>th</sup> March, so that we did not need to stagger students back in order to test them. It has been really fantastic to see how well students have responded to being back in school and how well they have supported the testing and control measures like facemasks. Our students are a credit to themselves and their families and the smooth restart has been fantastic.

It seems incredibly odd to be looking ahead to the Easter break which will be upon us only in a week's time, but as the days become longer and the sun shines a little more, it really does feel a lot more bright and hope-filled.

*Yours in Christ, Imogen Senior*

## Staffing updates:

We have some staffing changes over Easter. Mr Beaumont, our Head of Computing is leaving us for pastures new and we wish him well in his new school. He has been with us for almost three years and has really helped students to engage with Computing. We are delighted that we were able to successfully appoint a new Head of Computing from Easter. Ms Woodruff is joining us from the start of the summer term. As an experienced, qualified Computer Science teacher she will lead the department and we are really excited to welcome her to the staff team. Mr Howell, our IT Network Manager has been working at St. Benedict's since 2012 and will be taking up a new post in another school in April. We are very grateful to him for the years of service that he has provided to the school and again wish him well in his new role.

I would also like to make parents aware that as some of you may know, Miss Law is currently not in school due to health reasons. Unfortunately, although we had all hoped that her illness would be managed swiftly, it is now clear that she will need a longer course of treatment and is unlikely to be able to return to school in either the summer or autumn terms. As a staff we all continue to send our love and prayers to and for her and I am sure that many parents will want to join in wishing her a speedy recovery. We look forward to working with her again as soon as she is well.

## Looking ahead, buildings and facilities

As you may have seen our new build is now finished and in use. There are a few elements of snagging to complete, but it is wonderful to have these classrooms in use.

We are delighted to inform parents that the school is now in a good sustainable position in terms of our funding and student numbers. This means that the Governing body and senior team are looking at ways in which we can invest in the school in the coming years to ensure that we provide the very best we can to our students. We have already committed in our budget this year to invest in the IT infrastructure in the school. This has been an area in need of attention for several years and we know that improving this will enable all elements of the school to function more effectively. We are also keen to invest where we can in areas that have not kept pace with the growth of the school. Currently under review are Sixth Form spaces and facilities, sports provision, in particular the MUGA which needs attention and chapel. We are looking at our options in how we take this forward but we look forward to keeping parents informed about our plans as these emerge.

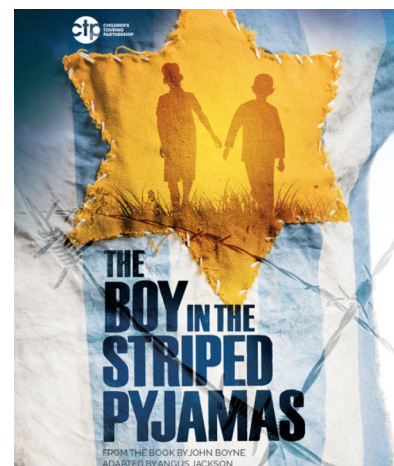
## Parking and drop-off

Can we please remind all parents and carers that students should not be dropped off or picked up from either the front or rear school car parks. (Excepting those students legitimately using disabled access points.) Dropping students in these carparks leads to dangerous congestion on the main road as well as in the carparks and prevents staff from parking leading to delays and disruption to the school day. This also means students are moving in areas not designed for pedestrian access to the school and this is unsafe.

## Auditions

Auditions for a Year 8 only small production of the *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas*

Lunchtime in the Drama studio Tuesday 23.3.21 and Wednesday 24.3.21



## Imagination – By Alexandra Krennek

I have lived on the moon,  
Explored in the trees,  
Bounced like a balloon,  
Flown with the bees,  
But my only limitation,  
Was my imagination.

I have swum deep in the sea,  
Lied flat on the grass,  
Met mermaids who were free,  
Sat on a chair made of glass,  
But my only limitation,  
Was my imagination.

I have been to the Olympics,  
Flown an aeroplane,  
Met gymnasts who I mimicked,  
Danced in the rain,  
But my only limitation,  
Was my imagination.

I have ridden on a dragon,  
Sat on the sun,  
Had hundreds call me 'madam',  
Felt honey on my tongue,  
But my only limitation,  
Was my imagination.

I have slept in the clouds,  
Talked to a lion,  
Performed in a circus full of crowds,  
Hugged a dandelion,  
But my only limitation,  
Was my imagination,

I am a child,  
Let my thoughts run wild,  
Let me dream of what I want to dream,  
Let me see the unseen,  
I will not let your clarification,  
Limit my imagination.

## Thank you, Year 7.

Firstly, thank you to all our Year 7 parents for their support in helping the students return to school so successfully. It has been delightful to watch them unite with friends and mix with each other over the last week. One of the most notable things for the year 7 teachers is that the students seem to have grown so much over the past few months!

We have seen many positive behaviours from the students, talking and supporting one another to make sure that everyone feels that sense of belonging which is so important. We have given them all the opportunity to let us know how they are feeling but if you think your son or daughter is not quite themselves please do contact their form tutor or myself so we can put in a little more support when and where needed. Mrs Bourne is our Pastoral Support specialist who is also available to talk with you or your child.

I know that your child will be tired at the end of the week – I certainly am and need to get to my bed earlier than usual. Please do encourage them to rest over the weekend so they are ready for Monday morning.

One small task for some of them is to check they have the basic equipment needed to participate in lessons. A black pen is essential as is a pencil and a few other bits which help to make lessons run smoothly. We are not meant to be lending pencil case items at the moment. Thank you for your understanding and support with this.

Have a peaceful weekend,

Mrs Smart and the year 7 team.

## Intermediate Maths Challenge Success 2021

The IMC is a 1 hour, multiple-choice competition aimed at high ability Maths students across the UK. It encourages mathematical reasoning, precision of thought, and fluency in using basic mathematical techniques to solve interesting problems.

We are delighted to announce that students at St Benedict's achieved 3 golds, 5 silvers and 8 bronzes in this year's IMC! Our 3 students who achieved gold were invited to complete a further round in the Pink Kangaroo paper, which is for the top 20% of students in the country. They did the test this week and we look forward to seeing how well they performed. Please see below for those who secured certificates!

Gold— Alex Cooper, Adam John, Leonel Jose

Silver — Toby Coogan, Arvin George, Fionnghuala Leighton-Scott, Rhian Li, Thomas Roy

Bronze- Helena Blayney, Catherine Dunn, Oscar Lyons, Bridget Martyn, Thomas Prosser, Adrian Smith-Delgado, Darragh Thacker, John Whittingdale

We are very proud and elated that our students took part in the competition during the lockdown and congratulate those mentioned above. Here is a chance to test your logical thinking with one of the questions from the exam.

The day before the day before yesterday was two days after the day before my birthday.

Today is Thursday. On what day was my birthday?

Mr Jogee

## British Science Week

Year 9 are taking part in British Science Week #BSW21 hosted by @adastralpark in Computing lessons. Today's topic, Cyber Security, was introduced by experts from @bt\_uk and @UniofBath. Adrian and Zuzanna decrypted secret codes using Caesar Ciphers.



## Parent Pay

Please note that due to end of year financial procedures, ParentPay will be unavailable from 4pm on Tuesday 16th March until Wednesday 31st March.

The cash revaluation unit in the hall will still be available. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

# History Talk

## 'England's Other Countrymen'

A talk delivered to Y12 History students by Dr Nubia from Nottingham University



While watching a history documentary, *'Skeletons of the Mary Rose'*, Mr Steward had a eureka moment, knowing that the History department were looking for outside speakers to enrich the curriculum, and e-mailed one of the presenters, Dr Onyeka Nubia from Nottingham University, to ask him if he would talk to our Year 12 students via Microsoft Teams during the last lockdown.

So, on Monday 1st March Dr Nubia joined 12B/Hi1 and presented a fascinating lecture titled 'England's Other Countrymen: Rethinking and Understanding Tudor Society'. He began his talk by challenging the notion of 'Englishness' explaining that Henry VII, the first Tudor King of England wasn't from an English family but a Welsh one; and that the Stuart kings were from Scotland and stressed that it is important to remember that there wasn't a Britain until 1707.

He then explained a little bit about historiography and that the lecture would focus on revisionist history by reviewing and, in a way, usurping established narratives to try and critically analyse our perception of history with what the evidence says. To illustrate his point, he showed a picture of Elizabeth II at her coronation and explained that we would never look at the image as the finite and definite representation of ethnicity, culture or class within the Britain that the monarch ruled, but would see it as the image of Queen Elizabeth II and ringfence and limit its impact accordingly.

Dr Nubia then linked this back to the Tudor period and explained that we shouldn't do that same thing and simply look at the image of the monarch as the definite image of the people of those times, it merely represents the image of the monarch. If we don't follow who actually lived in England we can end up with 'Sacred white spaces' - spaces that are devoid of ethnic diversity, which claim to be supported by evidence but are in fact not supported by evidence and are in fact political spaces that claim that there was a time when Britain was mono-ethnically white, when in fact there has never been a time when Britain has been mono-ethnically white.

To emphasise this point, he then showed the image of the Mona Lisa (1503-06) by Leonardo da Vinci and compared it with an image of a servant of African descent called Katharina (1521) by Albrecht Durer and that we find it difficult to relate the two images being drawn at a similar time, although there are many images like this which show people of African descent constantly present throughout Europe. Dr Nubia supported this by showing a picture of six Renaissance artists including Higiemonte Indianer (1600s) who was of African descent but was clearly an equal with the five European artists, he wasn't 'othered' or 'strange' but part

of Europeans  
cultural renaissance and not the only one.

Dr Nubia then explained that Moors settled in the Iberian peninsula from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and were often scholars who were paid to translate Greek and Roman works which had been preserved during the Dark Ages in Arabic back into Latin and then English: and provided examples including works by Ptolemy and Aristotle. He pointed out that the distance between the Iberian peninsula and Africa is much shorter than the distance between England and France, and that there was constant contact between people from the two continents.

He then explained that this contact wasn't always peaceful and was sometimes violent such as the Moravids who invaded Europe and whose battles have been recorded in European paintings and iconography.

Dr Nubia then focused on depictions of St Maurice (the leader of the legendary Theban legion in the Roman army - a 3<sup>rd</sup> century Christian martyr), who became the patron saint of knights, who knights adopted as representations of themselves in Western Europe (including England) and Eastern Europe: and stressed that he was a more popular patron saint than St George. His feast day was celebrated in April and some Morris dancing is linked to St Maurice. Other common representations of people of African descent in Europe included depictions of the Queen of Sheba and Bathazar, one of the three wise men, who was often depicted a youthful young man who was often adopted by the reforming churches of the East and West.

Dr Nubia then explained that these images mirrored the actual representation of Africans in Tudor and Stuart England, such as kings and potentates like Dederi Jaquoah who was recorded in the St Mildred Poultry register in London and Walter Anberey who was baptized in All Hallows, Tottenham in 1610/11.

In sixteenth-century Scotland there were Black Lady Days in which James IV, the King of Scotland dressed as a 'Black Knight' and serenaded African women such as 'Elen More' and 'Black Margret' who were engaged to play the 'Black Lady' symbolising beauty and divinity. These events were planned by Peter the Moryan (who was named after Morien who was a black knight and a part of King Arthur's round table).

Dr Nubia went on to explain that before the 17<sup>th</sup> century the English were reticent to say who the original inhabitants of the country were, and that Britain has been diverse for at least two thousand years, such as Africans from North Africa who came with the Kelts from 800BCE - 450CE, Africans who came with the Romans to England from 55BCE -475CE, Africans who came with the Vandals from North Africa from 450CE onwards and Africans amongst the Viking and Danish Raiders from 700CE onwards and African knights in the medieval period.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century there is evidence of William Harrison a famous needle maker who refused to teach anybody his art to any; and John Blanke 'the black trumpeteer' who probably came to England as one of the African attendants of Catherine of Aragon in 1501, was paid 8 pence per day by King Henry VII and is depicted twice in the 1511 Westminster Tournament Roll.



During the 17<sup>th</sup> century Africans lived throughout England such as James Curres in London, Helene, daughter of '*Cristian the negrosynt to Richard Sheere*' in Plymouth, '*Joane Pontying the wife of Thomas Pontying being a Blackamoore*', in Bristol. These were not the records of slaves but free people, who were part of their communities and part and parcel of English society. This is symbolised in the paintings of the time such as '*Three Boys*' by Bartolome Esteban Murillo which shows the friendship between children of African and European descent and '*Daughter of Florence Poulette & Thomas Smyth* by Gilbert Jackson in 1640.

At the end of this fascinating talk D Nubia invited questions from the students which revealed that his area of research is constantly revealing insights as more records of people of African descent in Tudor and Stuart England are being discovered and that DNA evidence is also beginning to reveal new evidence. The students found the talk interesting and thought provoking and left eager to find out more and to share what they had learned with their friends, families and the wider school community. We would like to thank Dr Nubia for being so generous in giving us his time and delivering such a fantastic talk. It was a pleasure and a privilege to welcome such an eminent historian into our virtual classroom!

Mr Murphy

## Women's Day

This year March 8<sup>th</sup>, International Women's Day, falls coincidentally on the same day that school children across England will be returning to their classrooms after the UK lockdown due to the covid-19 pandemic. Women's day historically has been a day to recognise and reflect on the effects gender inequality has on women globally; and whilst this year looks different for many of us in many ways, I believe it is still imperative to discuss not only women's rights but the disparity the pandemic is causing across gender, and how it is affecting women globally in unseen ways which are reversing the forward movement of women's rights across the last few decades. It is inarguably fundamental for the solution for the world, and its recovery from covid-19 that the affects the pandemic is having on women specifically are not forgotten or ignored.

The covid-19 pandemic is threatening the steps of progress that have been taken towards gender equality and is gradually pushing women back into traditional roles. Zinthiya Ganeshpanchan, a 'Disadvantaged Women's Charity' leader going as far as to say that - "this is going to take women 10 years back" due to the increased responsibility of women as primary care givers in the home. Before the pandemic parenthood and its role in the lives of women and men already had hugely disproportionate effects on each of the parents careers respectively, often negatively affecting women, in regard to pay and promotion, whilst benefitting men. This effect, sighted as the 'mummy track', was already a huge cause of the pay gap between men and women. The pandemic has reversed any progress that was being made. Many women are being forced into a decision between childcare and career, due to the closing of schools. This choice is practically impossible for mothers from less privileged homes who cannot afford to give up jobs, but also need to now care for young children. The university of Sheffield reports that the percentage of mothers responsible for

most childcare in a home has increased for 27% to 45%. This is not just a problem in the UK but globally.

In addition, more women are at economic risk in the pandemic. Women are more likely to lose their jobs than men- worldwide around 40% of all employed women work in industries hardest hit by covid-19. The 'Institute for Fiscal studies' states that in a household with two opposite gender parents, mothers are more likely to have quit/lost their job and are spending less time on paid work - this is a direct effect of how women are more likely to hold jobs where they are underpaid, unprotected, or paid by the hour; leading to higher levels of unemployment for women, which in some countries can mean loss of access to healthcare. This all contributes to women, on average, being more severely economically affected than men globally - especially women from less privileged backgrounds, with less financial support. When planning economic recovery paths these effects need to be considered; as well as the fact that socially the pandemic has highlighted how social expectations still trap women in a place of disadvantage, when more gender cooperation in areas such as childcare is proven to be advantageous.

Furthermore, the pandemic has also led to the increased endangerment of women through careers they are more likely to have- such as in the health care sector (globally 70% of healthcare workers are women). Through jobs in which they are more likely to come into dangerous contact with the virus whilst being inadequately protected, this is especially dangerous for minority women, who are often effected by racial bias, as well as the fact that there has been hypothesis of the virus being more severe in certain ethnicities. Lockdown itself has also led to an increase of violence against women. The UN going as far as to call the increase in domestic abuse the 'shadow pandemic'. It is further predicted that numbers of child marriage and genital mutilation surgeries have increased globally. The pandemic has also harmed women in respect to a decline in access to maternal health services, and essential health care - the pandemic often being cited as an excuse to not provide these services. Not only is this pandemic already unequivocally dangerous for pregnant women, but these services are simply not being sustained at the same level under the current health service strain. In addition, globally people who menstruate are experiencing a lack of period products or increased prices, this is simply an unacceptable issue for people already in the grips of a pandemic, and is an issue that is vastly ignored, leading to devastating effects for women's health and safety.

It is disheartening that more women are not being entrusted with leadership positions, and that more of these issues are not being highlighted; especially when countries who do have female leaders are doing comparatively well to countries lead by their male counterparts- often having a quicker enacted, and more effective response. Though this does demonstrate the ongoing necessity of Women's Day as a day to highlight and reflect on the ongoing issues women face, to hopefully cause thought provocation and awareness that can lead to a safer future for all.

Bethinn Feeley Year 11