St Benedict's News

As we approach the end of term of this very strange term I am so very grateful to everyone who 'keeps the wheels on' in school. Our students are happy, engaged and it is wonderful to see them making the most of their time in school. As I included in my email home this week, I would encourage everyone in the school community to keep following the rules as fully and completely as possible and not let the final week in school impact on a well-deserved Christmas break.

Despite all of the COVID measures and Christmas sequins that preoccupy us at the moment, I know that there are still members of our community facing extreme challenges at this time: illness, bereavement and other significant difficulties that layer on top of the strangeness of our current situation. Please know that the school is always here to support where we can and as a community you are in our thoughts and prayers. We have included a message in the newsletter from Fr David at St Edmund KM regarding Christmas Masses and we hope that our continued Advent journey in school will reflect the special nature of this season to us as a Catholic school.

As always thank you for your support, both personal and practical.

Yours in Christ,

Imogen Senior

A big 'Thank you'

we received two 'Teacher and Pupil Appreciation Packs' from BIC this week which we will share within school. The packs were sent from BIC as a thank you following a nomination from a BIC employee. We don't know who nominated us, but we are very grateful, thank you!

CAFOD facemasks.

Thank you for all your support with the fabric Christmas facemasks. So far these have raised over £90 in aid of CAFOD. There are a few left in stock, available from reception.

Christmas Masses at St Edmund's Church Bury St Edmunds

To book places at one of our Christmas Masses visit www.stedmundkm.org.uk If booking for a family then please book two places which means you have booked a bench. Phone bookings can be made on 01284 754358. Please bring face coverings with you. Other parishes will be operating a similar system, just check their website or give them a call. We look forward to seeing you this Christmas.

Many thanks,

Fr David

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas…

A very special thank you to Blackthorpe Barn for our wonderful tree! Kevin Kappes, Store Manager at Asda, let us fill up a huge trolley with decorations and generously donated it all to the school. Meanwhile Community Champion, Julie Bailey at Tesco set aside a box of beautiful decorations for us too. The dining hall has been transformed to give our students and staff a magical Advent at St. Benedict's!

Public Speaking

On Thursday 10th December, Dermot Gray will be representing St Benedict's Sixth Form in the English Speaking Union's Sixth Form Public Speaking Competition against Colchester County High School for Girls, King Edward VI Grammar School (Chelmsford), The Sandon School (Chelmsford), Bedford Modern, and The Perse School (Cambridge). He is going to be speaking about the benefits of nuclear energy outweighing its hazards. We wish him every success as he participates in the competition via Zoom, and feel assured that it will be a very entertaining and instructive contest.

Year 11 and 13 Mock Examinations

Please be aware that we are changing the dates for the Year 11 Mock examinations and these will now run on the following dates:

Year 11 Mock Examinations 22nd February to the 5th March

We are making this change due to concern over current Covid case numbers and also due to the decision by the government to hold exams a bit later this year. If your son or daughter is in Year 11 please look out for a letter providing more detail on our plans for the mock examinations.

Please note that the dates for the Year 13 mock examinations remain unchanged:

Year 13 Mock Examinations 29th January to the 11th February

John D'Mello

Operation Bletchley

If you are up for a bit of Challenge over the Christmas holiday both physically and mentally why not try.....

Operation Bletchley – Your virtual Code Breaking Challenge

(A fund raising challenge run by the Army's National Charity)

24 MILES: 12 CODES: 12 DAYS

26 December - 6 January

Calling all Secret Agents... Operation Bletchley: Christmas in Berlin is your virtual codebreaking challenge. Your mission is to cover 24 miles on foot through Soviet territory, decrypt vital intelligence about the blockade, cracking codes as you go and help bring our stranded contacts back to HQ. Do you have what it takes to accomplish your mission and deliver the final message before time runs out?

The 12 days of Christmas but not as you know it. Your mission begins on 26 December and you must complete, and deliver the final message by midnight on 6 January 2021.

With three levels of codes to choose from; junior, codebreaker and cypher expert, get the whole family together this Christmas - you have 12 days and one chance to break the Soviet blockade.

How it works

Operation Bletchley: Christmas in Berlin is a virtual event that you can take part in anywhere in the world. Here's how it works...

1. Sign up for just £10 and link your phone or fitness tracker to your fundraising page (you can also record your miles manually if you prefer)
2. Start walking at your own pace (from 26 December 2020)
3. Receive updates and codes to crack after every two miles completed - three levels are available - Junior, Codebreaker or Cypher Expert
4. Codes will be delivered straight to your inbox and you can select your level then
5. Solve the codes to decipher the hidden message

Complete the journey and deliver the message by the midnight on 6 January 2021.
For more details do to the website https://events.soldierscharity.org/event/operation-bletchley?utm_medium=email&utm_source=sprint&utm_campaign=912&utm_content=text

Astronomy News For Christmas – The Star of Bethlehem

Regular readers will know that at this time of year the Science Department ponders two remarkable phenomena that surround our Christmas festivities: the 'Santa Claus phenomenon' and 'Flying Reindeer'. With no significant updates to report for this year, the Department's Astronomy Group is looking at another aspect of the Christmas story: the 'Star of Bethlehem' and the 'Three Wise Men', or Magi.

Although the Star of Bethlehem has become a permanent fixture in the modern Christmas story, it only receives a very brief mention in the nativity story according to the Gospel of Matthew. The three Magi are apparently guided by a 'star' in the east and arrive in Jerusalem where they seek King Herod:

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." [Matthew 2:1-2]

There are various astronomical options that have been examined over the years in an attempt to explain a possible sighting in the night sky around the time of Jesus' birth. Unfortunately, we do not know the exact year of Jesus' birth, with scholars putting it at anything between 7BC and 1BC, thanks to a clerical error by monk in the 6th century charged with compiling a Christian calendar. The most obvious astronomical event would be the appearance of a supernova (literally a 'new star'); or there may have been a comet; or perhaps another significant, visible occurrence such as a celestial alignment. In other words, Matthew may have been using some poetic license when describing a 'star', and it may have been a combination of objects.

It is the latter that is most interesting: in 6BC there would have been a close alignment in the sky of the **Moon**, **Jupiter** and **Saturn**, in the constellation of **Aries**. To Babylonian astronomers, whom we think the Magi were, it would indeed have been a significant event, possibly foretelling an important, regal birth in the land of Judea.

By coincidence, we have our own, similar significant celestial alignment happening right now, low in the south-western sky: the close conjunction of **Jupiter** and **Saturn**, which will reach their closest alignment on December 21 (also, coincidentally, the Winter Solstice). It is being called the Great Conjunction, as it will be the closest in over 400 years.

One thing is certain about the Star of Bethlehem, however, and that is that neither science, contemporary history nor the scriptures can accurately explain Matthew's mention of it. So is it just a myth? Or perhaps there are things in our Universe that we are simply destined to ponder, but never solve. Of course, it may also be the case that Matthew was right all along.

Year 11 into 6th Form Day

On Friday 4th December, the large majority of Year 11 students were given a taste of sixth form. They participated in sample A level lessons and had the opportunity to interact with staff, who many of them lead the A level courses. As they look forward to the future and start to make decisions about what they would like to study, this was a great opportunity to give them a real flavour of what it is like at A level. It was a delight to see our Year 11 students engage so much during the lessons. For those who are deciding a different path post-16, Mrs Senior and Mr Steward organised a day for students keen on attending college where they had presentations and activities courtesy from West Suffolk College.

Thank you to all our students who conducted themselves admirably throughout the day and a huge thank you to all the staff who helped with the running of the taster day.

Please note that the deadline for applications to St Benedict's Sixth Form is Thursday 17th December. Applications can be made online and I will hand out paper applications in tutor time next week. We will be conducting Sixth Form interviews with Year 11 students early in the New Year but should you have any questions relating to applying to sixth form, please don't hesitate to contact me.

In the meantime, I wish you all a very happy festive holiday.

Best wishes,

Mr Richmond

CyberFirst Competition for Year 8 Girls

The CyberFirst Girls Competition provides a fun but challenging environment to inspire the next generation of young women to consider a career in cyber security.

The competition is a team event, with each one made up of 4 female students from Year 8. The school can enter more than team and registration is open now. The online qualifying round begins on 25th January 2021. Why not try some of the Test challenges... https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/cyberfirst/girls-competition-online-round

We can enter as many teams as we want so, if you are interested in taking part, please speak to me or send me an email jbeaumont@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

Mr Beaumont