



New Year Traditions

In Spain the tradition is to eat twelve grapes at the turn of the year, one for each stroke of the bell. If you manage to eat twelve grapes within the twelve bells, you will bring happiness and good luck to the New Year. In Portugal, they do the same, but with raisins!

In Hungary, roasted pork and kocsonya (pork aspic) are often served due to the belief that pigs root up good luck. On the other hand, chicken, due to birds scratching away success is a dish rarely served. The same rule applies to fish, who are believed to swim away with good fortune.

On the first Sunday of January every year, the French celebrate Epiphanie (Epiphany). On this occasion, we share galette des rois (king cake), a special pastry with small charms baked inside. Galette des rois are filled with frangipane, a cream made from sweet almonds, butter, eggs and sugar.



One of the most interesting New Year's traditions in The Netherlands must be the Nieujaarsduik (also known as the Polar Bear Plunge). Every New Year's Day at 12 pm, over 30,000 people around the country collectively dive into the icy cold waters of the North Sea to start the year afresh. Brrr!

Happy New Year! Bonne année! feliz año nuevo! Gelukkig nieuwjaar! Feliz Ano novo! boldog új évet!

Mrs Dalby - MFL Department



Exams - Non-Taught Languages

If your son or daughter wishes to be entered for a non-taught language exam in the summer please can you contact the Exams Officer, Mrs Edwards, for the relevant forms. Deadline for return of forms is Wednesday 17th January.

cedwards@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

Mrs Edwards - Exams Officer

Leavers

The end of last term saw the school say goodbye to Carolyn Swarbrick who was the Kitchen Manager. The school would like wish Carolyn all the best for her next steps and thank her for all her years of service at the school.

Careers Talks & Post-16 Interviews

Our careers programme for the Autumn term ended on a high note with **Careers Talks** that invited students to explore *The Invisible Universe* and pathways into *Commercial Law*.

On 8th December, Dr Matt Bothwell and Dr Hannah Strathern shared information on the groundbreaking research currently undertaken in space exploration and how their careers have evolved within Cambridge University's Public Astronomy Department. Students discovered how Astrophysicists investigate light waves that cannot be seen by the naked eye to further explore the cosmos, in addition to what happens when galaxies collide. Interestingly, Dr Bothwell had begun studying a Psychology degree before realising his passion lay in Physics and Astrophysics, whilst Dr Strathern completed her PhD in Medieval History. This reinforced students' awareness of how transferable skills can lead us into new fields of work and that a change in career direction can be both possible and desirable.

On 14th December we welcomed back to St. Benedict's our alumnus, Aidan Mayall. Aidan was keen to share his experience of studying Law at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), offering advice about degree subjects to study for a legal career and how to qualify as a Solicitor. He also enlightened us about the rule of law, outlined several interesting examples of cases studied, and explained the Magic Circle and Silver Circle of law firms that most students aspire to work for.

Post-16 Interviews

All Year 11 students have now had at least one Careers interview about their next steps post-16. I am currently catching up on individual reports and will send these to each student and their parent/carer via an email in Arbor once completed.

This term, I look forward to sharing more information about post-16 choices and supporting students with their applications, as well as answering any careers-related questions. We will also be hosting a Careers Fair next month for all students. Details to follow shortly!

Ms Hahn - Careers Adviser



Christmas Creative Writing Competition

In the build up to the Christmas break, many of the school's talented writers embarked on a challenge to see them crowned best of St Benedict's. The Christmas Creative Writing Competition received lots of fantastic entries, but Isadora Edwards' (10P) entry was crowned the winner. Her wonderfully spooky tale, 'Strange Christmas', captured our imaginations with its originality and unnerving twist, whilst also maintaining a high standard of rhythm and great dialogue. Runner up prizes go to Suzie Francis (8L) for her introspective and heartbreaking tale 'A Homeless Christmas', and to Ignacio Torrecillas Saseta (7X) for his brilliantly fun and cheeky poem, 'The Holiday Called Christmas'.

Special mentions also go to: Ella Ferdinand (8C), Emilia Lambillion-Sinclair (8C), Elizabeth Nicholls (8P), and Philippe D'Mello (8P) for their fabulous work.

Well done everyone!

Miss Ketteridge

The winning entry can be found at the end of the news-



GCSEPod

Now that the Y11 Mocks are over and the students are beginning to revise for the summer exams, I just wanted to send out a reminder about GCSEPod.

GCSEPod is a fantastic resource that the school has invested in which provides short videos to help students revise in most subject areas. It is particularly useful for students in Y11 but also for students in Y10 and Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9). Please find a poster at the end of the newsletter which includes details about how students can log in and start using the excellent materials that GCSEPod has to offer.

Mr Murphy

Reporting your child's absence

If your child is unwell or has an appointment e.g. dentist/doctor could you please leave a message by 9.00am including the reason for the absence via:

 Phone: 01284 753512 and Choose option 1:
And then choose option 1 for students in year 7-11
And option 2 for student in the sixth form

OR

 Email: Attendance@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

If you do not telephone us, we will text you at home or at work. Please note the school operates a first-day response to absences.

If, in exceptional circumstances, you need to request permission for your child to be absent from school during term time, you should complete a **leave of absence application form (please see link below)**, at least three weeks in advance, stating the reason why the absence must be taken in term time.

<https://www.st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=74&type=pdf>

Thank you very much.

Mrs Wesley - Attendance Officer

County Cross Country Competition

Thursday 11th January saw the qualifying runners from the RHS competition last year head off to Woodbridge School for the next round of the county competition. After some excellent performances at RHS we were looking forward to seeing how our 31 runners would fare in this next, more competitive round of the competition.

The Woodbridge course is known for its very steep hill, which most of the athletes need to run up more than once, but despite the home runners having the advantage of training on this hill they weren't able to dominate in every race.

The St Benedict's students ran brilliantly with each of them giving it 100% of their effort. There were some excellent individual performances and we are hoping that around 7 of our students have got through to the Anglian School's Race, at Burghley on 3rd February. A special mention has to go to Sophie Bolton (year 7) who won the minor girls race in spectacular fashion, well done Sophie.

Mrs Wright

Kasper Koldziej	31	Molly Murphy	6
Gregory Slater	12	Eleanor Slater	25
Alexander Balmer	71	Lucy Murphy	12
Sophie Bolton	1	Amelia Smith	35
Beatrice Harpur-Davies	44	Alanna Evans	42
Tallulah Roberts	70	Imogen Grove	65
Megan Balchin	88	Sophia Rivera	81
Nathaniel Senior	93	Thabo Nyambe	74
David Lupsa	7	Charlie Oxborrow	11
Noah Wilkinson	23	Eva Torfinn	23
William Glover	18	Violette Davy	31
Oliver Lamas Nakagawa	37	Daisy Constant	73
Jake McConnell	27	Emma Payne	49
George Wightman	53	Faith Hawes	72
Aiden Cameron	43	Taylor Valach	25
Marcel Wiewiora	68		



Sophie Bolton setting the pace.



Strange Christmas

Isadora (Dora) Edwards, 10P

"Well," Grandpa yelled over the music, "Merry Christmas everybody!"

This was out of character for him. He hated anything to do with Christmas and was the most miserable old Scrooge since I could remember. Until...today, I guess. His smile was wide, plastered permanently on his face, and he was cutting the turkey at the table head.

"Merry Christmas," the others mumbled back. This was out of character for them too. My parents loved Christmas, as did my siblings, so much I often joked they loved it more than me!

Mother had cooked the Christmas dinner, as she usually did, yet it didn't taste quite right. Everything tasted metallic, bloody, almost. I decided only the turkey was safe.

"Eat up, Opal, aren't you hungry?"

Father was looking at me, in fact staring at me, rather intently. They all were. Their eyes were somehow darker, rounder than usual. Or maybe I just needed to sleep more.

"I-I'm not hungry anymore."

Mother looked offended. Father angry. Grandpa was still smiling that wide smile.

"I mean, I was hungry, the food was good and that, but I'm not hungry now."

"Fine," Mother said, her eyes still on me, unblinking, lifeless, "It's time for presents anyways."

She clicked the 'off' button on the radio, which was playing some remix of 'All I Want For Christmas Is You' and it sounded slightly uncanny. I noticed my mother's nails. Abnormally long acrylics. She never wore acrylics.

Gift giving was almost as uncomfortable as dinner time. My parents were silent, staring, my grandfather still grinning. He didn't seem human. My siblings didn't seem human either, I'd never seen them so...calm...about their gifts, or Christmas in general.

Things were strange. It was a strange Christmas.

"I'm going upstairs for a moment," I told my family.

"No, you're not, Opal," Mother told me, "You're not leaving, not yet."

"Not until we watch a Christmas movie!" Grandpa didn't make matters any better. He was still grinning from literally ear to ear. It was as if someone, somebody had snuck into the house at night and replaced my family members.

If this was like other Christmases, around this time of night grandpa would be sleeping, mother and father almost collapsed on the sofa, my siblings begging for hot chocolate. But everybody was wide awake, and silent. No soft snoring from Grandpa, no begging from my younger siblings. Instead, their eyes were glued to the screen, with Grandpa still grinning.

I began to get bored so I took another look around the room, my gaze on the door, the tree, everywhere except the television. Finally, I looked at my mother, sitting next to me. Her eyes fixed on the screen, lighting up an oddly pale face, dark circles under her eyes as if from a year of being sleep

deprived, her hair flat and straggly as if it hadn't been washed in days. She tapped on her glass of wine with the manicure which, come to think about it, she definitely didn't wear yesterday. There was no way she went and got her nails done the night before, even if she did decide she liked acrylics. She was wearing an off-white jumper and a golden necklace and that's when I noticed it - a zipper on her neck, wound into her flesh.

A zipper on my mother, my father, my grandfather and my siblings' necks.

I needed to get out of the house. And fast.

Support your child on the path to success

Your child's school has invested in the award winning resource, **GCSEPod**, to help your child reach their goals!

Join the thousands of parents/carers encouraging their children to use GCSEPod to support learning, homework and revision throughout their secondary school journey.



The correlation between success and failure was made almost 100% clear with the use of GCSEPod.

Head of MFL at Yateley School

I found GCSEPod especially useful to compliment my knowledge and i'm certain it helped me secure the grades that I have been so happy to receive.

Student

My daughter used GCSEPod for her GCSEs and was very successful with her results, she absolutely loved the Pods and this style of revising.

Parent



- 30+ GCSE subjects
- 4 KS3 subjects
- Available online and offline
- Audio visual learning
- Builds confidence
- Revision & learning videos
- Knowledge checkers to test understanding

Want to find out how you can support your child with GCSEPod?

Join one of our **free webinars** by visiting:

<https://www.theaccessgroup.com/en-gb/education/resources/gcsepod-teacher-parent-and-student-webinars/>



Student Activation

Please follow these instructions if your child has not yet activated their GCSEPod account:

1. Go to GCSEPod.com and click '**LOG IN**'
2. Click '**New to GCSEPod? Get Started**'
3. Enter your child's details and confirm the name of the school they attend
4. Create a username and password

