



St Benedict's Newsletter 309

14 November 2025



Catholic Social Teaching

This week in assemblies, our focus returns to **Solidarity**. This means recognising that we are all part of one human family. It calls us to stand alongside others, especially those who face hardship or injustice, and to work for a world where everyone is treated with respect and love no matter where we happen to be born.

Our assemblies this week have reflected on the phrase **“Life is not fair.”**

It’s something we all experience, moments when things don’t go our way, when others seem to have more, or when we see people treated unfairly. Yet Jesus challenges us not to respond with bitterness or envy, but with empathy and action.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus turns the world’s idea of fairness upside down.

He says: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” – *Matthew 5:3,6*

Jesus asks us to look at life through the eyes of those who have less, less wealth, less opportunity, less comfort and to see them not as unlucky, but as deeply loved by God.

When life feels unfair, Jesus invites us to stand beside those who are hurting and to share in their struggle, not to turn away. This is the heart of solidarity: to see the world through another's eyes and to respond with compassion.

At St Benedict's, we live out solidarity whenever we support one another in lessons, at lunchtime, in friendship groups, and in our wider community. Every time we reach out, include someone, or stand up for what's right, we are helping to build a fairer world.

We can live this out throughout the week in simple ways:

- **Wisdom:** Seeing beyond ourselves, recognising that while life may not always be fair, we can still make choices that bring justice and kindness to others.
- **Compassion:** Being moved by others' difficulties and choosing to act with kindness, offering comfort and hope.
- **Resilience:** Continuing to work for justice and unity even when change feels slow or when unfairness seems too big to tackle. True solidarity is choosing to hope together.

We cannot look the other way when others are suffering. Solidarity means making their pain our own and working together to restore the dignity that belongs to all. In living this way, we make visible the love of Christ, who stood with the poor, the sick, and the excluded, showing that every person matters and every voice deserves to be heard.

This week, take a moment to reflect: Where do I see unfairness in my life or in the lives of others? And how do I react when I notice it, do I ignore it, or do I try to understand? This week, we have been asked Life is unfair so what are you going to do about that!

When we stand together, we bring hope and healing to the world around us.

Prayer

Loving God,

You call us to walk beside one another,
to share each other's burdens,
and to see the world through eyes of love.

When life feels unfair,
teach us to look with compassion,
to act with courage,
and to live in true solidarity.

May our words and actions bring your peace
to those who need it most.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Careers Update

Another year has passed...and the Autumn term Careers Programme moved forward with our annual Careers Fair on Wednesday 12th November. Eleven new organisations joined us for this year's event, adding to an already varied core group of employers, apprenticeship providers and Further Education Colleges.

The format for our Careers Fair this year was altered slightly to focus on students' options choices from Y9 onwards. In practice, this meant that it was aimed at our Year 9-Year 13 cohorts only. (Students in Years 7 and 8 will be enjoying their own exclusive STEM event next week!). The new student carousel proved to be a hit with both students and stand holders. It certainly offered more space and time for in-depth chats about different career roles, training opportunities, and an exploration of the work experience programmes on offer.

Huge thanks go out to those employers who gave up their time and energy again, or for the first time, to inspire our students (and staff!): Beckett Financial Services, The British Army, British Racing School, Cambridgeshire Dental Health Improvement Team, Cambridge

Regional College, Eastern Education Group, Eden Theatre Arts, Ensors Chartered Accountants, Gainsborough's House Museum, HALO (software), Marshall Aerospace, MPCT Military Academies, NHS, the RAF, Royal Navy and Marines, Suffolk Constabulary, West Suffolk College (WSC) and WSC Apprenticeships, West Suffolk Council (Economic Development/Growth) and WindsorPatania (property development/architects).

Feedback from students and staff noted that the Fair was: "inclusive, interesting, life changing and fun". That said, there was a call for "a larger venue/more space and a longer time devoted to the Fair... a true reflection of its popularity and value to our students!

Employers who attended were very positive and impressed by how polite and engaged our students were and said the Fair delivered: "a great selection of companies on the day, was well prepared and organised and had a good vibe, with lots of engaged questions from the students".

It will be exciting to share a more extensive and varied line-up next time... watch this space!

Miss Hahn



Remembrance Parade

On Tuesday 11 November, twelve students from Years 7–9 had the honour of taking part in the memorial service held at the War Memorial on Angel Hill. They represented the school beautifully, taking part in wreath laying and performing the Last Post with great respect and skill.

Following the service, the group visited St Mary's Church to view their artwork on display, alongside the collaborative Year 7 clay poppy project.

The event concluded with the presentation of certificates to the competition winners by the Chairman of the Royal British Legion — a proud moment for all involved.

Well done Hosanna Gee, Laura Pastuszak, Neo Ramsamy, Niamh Walsh, Ainslee Breske, Francesca Monteith, Elsie Brandon, Erika Wech, Kora Puidaite, Daisy Farrant, Casper Geernaert and Patrycja Golonka.

Mrs Peasey

They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them. We will remember them.

The Exhortation (RBL)





Speaking Competitions

This has been a busy term when it comes to debating and public speaking, as it is every year.

We began with the first heat of the English Speaking Union's (ESU) sixth form public speaking competition on the evening of the 3rd of November. This was to decide who would go through to represent St Benedict's in the local round. Since Covid, this competition has been wholly on line through Zoom. Our contenders were Annabelle Banthorpe, who propounded the advantages of independent music production for up and coming artistes; Joseph Marris, talking about the benefits of Karate and its philosophy; Naomhan Walker, exploring the societal effects of technological advances, particularly AI, and Anotidaishe Bhanti, who advanced the idea that what we fear most is not our failure but our potential. As you can see,

the topics were wide-ranging and fascinating. Each presentation was five minutes long and followed by questions from the judges. All of them were thoughtfully planned and carefully delivered, giving us all plenty to digest, mentally. The student who has progressed to the local heat is Ano, who will be participating on our behalf on the 25th of November. Our congratulations go to him, and our appreciation to all four.

On the 5th of November, I took our ESU debate team and our reserve, Sebastian Siarkowski (year 10) to St Joseph's College in Ipswich to compete against St Joseph's, The Ipswich School, King Edward VI School and Framlingham College. Our students were, in order of speaking, Lyra Reimann (year 10), Alexis Rose Josy (year 10) and Leona Jose (year 9) and most of their opponents were sixth formers, including the Opposition team they faced, from The Ipswich School. This debate, in which St Benedict's proposed the motion that "This House would ban dating and relationship-based reality TV", was the liveliest of the evening, with plenty of points of information and really proactive speakers on both sides. As a result, both these teams, plus St Joseph's have gone through to the regional heat in the New Year. We are understandably proud of our team, and wish them every success in 2026.

Our Mace Debating Team at St Joseph's College.

Two of these four students also took part in the more complicated ESU Churchill Public Speaking Competition over Zoom on the evening of Monday the 10th. Our team were Alexis Josy, our Chairperson, Skyrah Yarnold Da Silva, our Questioner, and Sebastian Siarkowski, our Speaker. In this format, the Chair and Questioner from one school are paired with a "guest" Speaker from another so Alexis controlled the proceedings and made a warm welcome to the Speaker from Gresham's School and Skyrah posed insightful and searching questions which allowed the Speaker to expand on her topic. Sebastian spoke fluently in his speech and in addressing questions but the complexities of using two different computers, navigating the breakout rooms and dealing with persistent technical issues with other schools made it difficult for the whole team to adjust from the in-person contact they are used to and, sadly, we did not go through to the next round. Nevertheless, this was a useful experience as it is increasingly likely that on-line communications, meetings and interviews et cetera will become the norm in their future lives and only practice can prepare them and develop their versatility and confidence. As always, St Benedict's is immensely proud of the enterprising and courageous attitudes of the young people we serve, and of their propensity for teamwork and peer-support.

Next month our hard-working and dedicated mixed-age Bar Mock Trial Competition team will be spending a Saturday at Ipswich Crown Court, defending and prosecuting two cases – one on drug-possession and the other on using a firearm to intimidate: interesting crimes which will, I have no doubt, lead to absorbing court-time!

Victoria James



1 - L-R seated - Leona Jose (year 9), Alexis Rose Josy (year 10), Lyra Reimann (year 10), and Sebastian Siarkowski (year 10)

Classics Visit to Cambridge

On 11 November, our Year 13 Classicists made the short journey to Cambridge for a guided tour of the Cambridge museum of Classical Archaeology on the Sidgwick site. Whilst there, our students were shown how Greek art, especially statues, had changed over time.

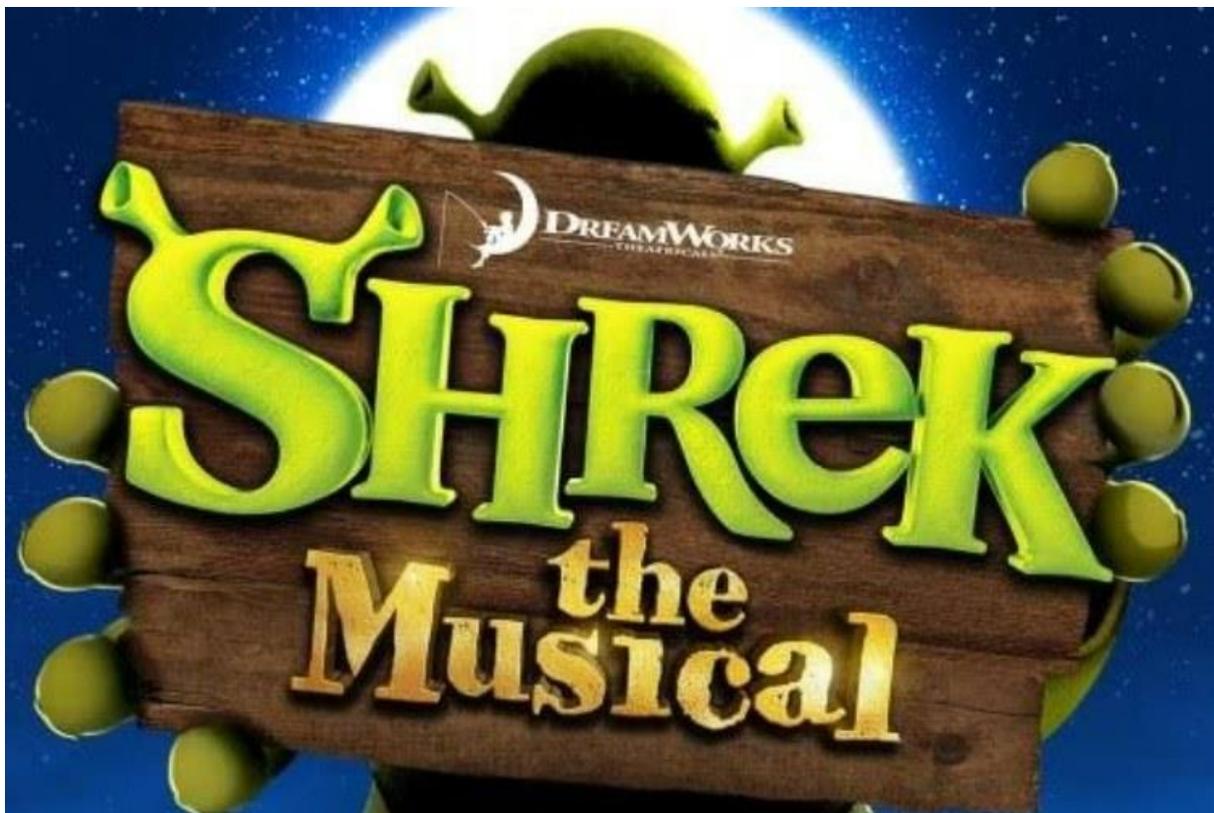
Afterwards we headed to the Fitzwilliam Museum to look for more primary sources to use in their exams. For example we found a vase showing a wife pouring a libation, which is where you pour wine on the floor as an offering to the Gods, and she was clearly asking for the Gods to protect her husband as he leaves for war.

All in all, a lovely day out with lots of new sources gathered!

Mr Elmer



Shrek the Musical



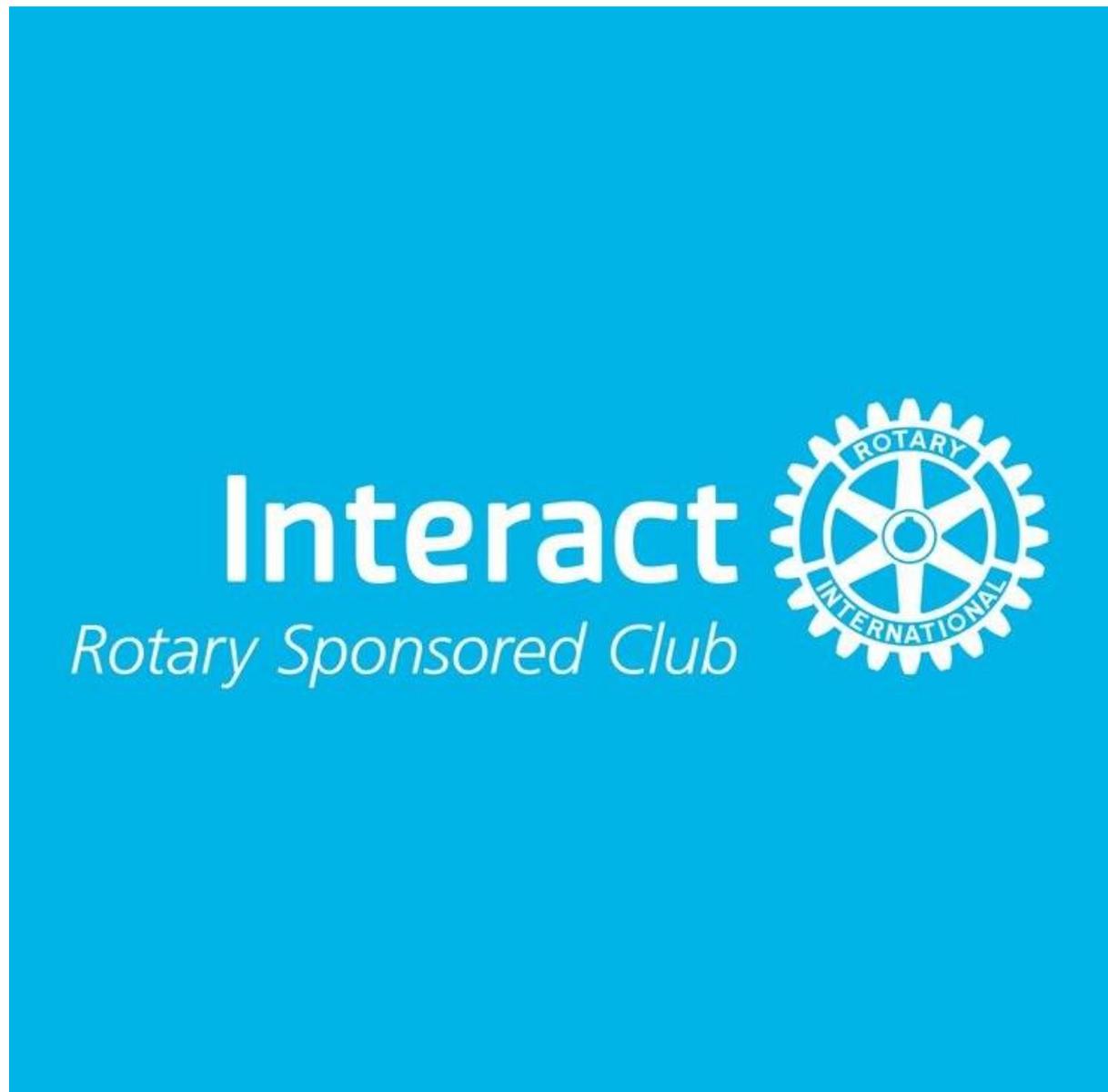
Exciting News about Shrek!

Do you want to be part of our school musical Shrek?

If so, you need to attend a pre-audition at lunchtime on either Tuesday 25th or Wednesday 26th November in G1. In the pre-auditions you will be taught the content for the auditions which take place the following week. If you would like to attend a pre audition you must sign up on the sign-up sheets for the day you wish to attend. The sign-up sheets will be outside of G1. All the information about the auditions will be given at the pre auditions!!

Any questions regarding the pre-auditions then speak to Mrs Roughley.

Interact Club



The student Rotary-linked Interact Club launches its first competition this week. The competition is open to students aged 11-17. To participate, email up to 3 photographs to dhamilton@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

The theme for the photography is 'Happiness in Nature'. The student Interact Club will judge and award prizes for entries in school and select the best of these to be sent off to the Rotary Club's Young Photographer competition.

DEADLINE: 5th December

Images should be at least 1500pixels on longest edge but not exceed 15Mb in size.

Interact Updates

Interact have organised refreshments for Parents at the Year 8 Parents' Evening on 11 November and will continue to do so at future Parents' Evenings. The year 8 evening was raising money for CAFOD.

Upcoming Events

20 November - Interact members will be working with Rotary members to plant crocuses in school to raise awareness of Polio. The purple blooms should come up in February.

5th December - Photography Competition - Happiness in Nature

Student magazine with Miss Whittingdale every Tuesday lunch time in H1 everyone welcome.

Mrs Hamilton

Photography competition
Deadline: Friday 5th of December



Interact 

Theme: happiness in nature
email entries to: Dhamilton@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

Include your full name, Form group, and age. You may submit up to 3 photographs. Two age categories 11-13 and 14-17. Prizes available for both categories!!! Winners will be submitted to a further Rotary Club competition!
COMPETITION run by Student club - Interact
Images should be at least 1500pixels on longest edge but not exceed 15Mb in size.

December Non-Uniform Days

As in previous years, and shared at the start of the year, each Friday in December is offered as a non-uniform day in aid of charity.

We ask that students donate a minimum of £1 through parent pay or by bringing in cash to hand in on the gate.

Whilst there are themes for each Friday we do urge families not to consider any theme as an expectation for additional cost- i.e please do not feel that you need to buy a Christmas jumper, but we hope that students can enter into the spirit of the days, perhaps by adding some festive cheer (tinsel?) to an existing outfit.

The themes and causes this year are:

Friday 5 December- Christmas jumpers/ Festive - Donations in aid of St Nicholas Hospice

Friday 12 December- PJs/ Onesies- Donations in aid of Cafod

Friday 19 December- Sparkly/ Festive- Donations in aid of Children and Families in Need in Zimbabwe.

We hope that these planned days give an opportunity as a community to raise funds for good causes. We ask that students dress appropriately for a school environment and leave this to parents' good judgement. Any item worn to school should be inoffensive in terms of images and slogans and mindful of the variety of experience and diversity of our school community.



Reading Week

Our first Reading Week of this year took place from 3rd to 7th November. Our theme for this week was Relationships, with a particular focus on poetry. Alongside the focus on reading in class, we ran a wide range of activities and competitions in the library.

The highlight of the week was the poetry reading competition, which took place on Thursday lunch time in the library. We were delighted with the strength and number of entries. Mr Gregory once again set the tone with a rousing recital of part of the Rime of the Ancient

Mariner. Then students delivered a fantastic range of poems about relationships, many of which were written by the students themselves. A selection of the students' own poems follows this article.

As the field was so strong, we decided to split the awards into two categories: reading a published poem and reading an original poem (written by the student).

The winners for reading a published poem were:

1st place = Ruby Smith 8C

2nd place = Teisha Roughley 9P

3rd place = Tavy Scamponi-Grey 13L

The winners for reading an original poem were:

1st place = Gray Bervig 7P

2nd place = Layna Hammett 7X

3rd place = Hosannah Gee 8X

On the final day of Reading Week students took part in the Reading Quest. The winner of this challenge was Brock Coleman-Miles 8X.

Away from the library, tutor groups were invited to take up the challenge of writing a haiku about family. We were delighted with quality and inventiveness of the responses, making it very difficult to judge an overall winner.

The honour goes to 8X with this haiku which was inspired by the idea of family trees:

Family Tree

Tree of love and hope

Connected through time and space

Family brings that

Runners-up were 7X and 9L.

We thoroughly enjoyed this opportunity to celebrate poetry and hope students did too!

Mrs Oakes and Mrs Hayter-Gare

Original poem by Hosannah Gee 8X

This is my Sol:

A bundle of laughs,

A cheeky grin.

A 'let's annoy daddy!'

In a mischievous whisper

That really, is quite loud!

But there's more to my Sol than that:

A 'how's your day?'

A 'how was band?'

A 'Hosannah let's play!'

With eager anticipation

Of his adoring sister's response.

But I know even more, and believe me I do!

A nonsensical insult

A 'write poo on it!'

A switch off the bathroom light

While I'm in there!

The classic annoying younger sibling.

But underneath it all, I know my Solomon:

The sweet little boy from a few years back,

The willing play fellow of my preschool years,

The little brother who still needs so much sisterly love

Even though he has grown so big.

That is my Sol.

Original poem by Miriam Thomas 7P:

I wish

I wish they were here in my times of grief

I wish they were here in my times of trouble

I wish they would understand who I am

I wish they would let me fly

If you were here

I'd be ok

If you were here

I could fly

If you here

I wouldn't be struggling

If you were here

I wouldn't be a bird in a cage

I wish we could fly away to a truly distant place

I wish we could fly away from everyone who ever judged us

But you're not here by my side

No matter how much I wish you were

So come soon

And when you do

I will be ready for you

Original poem by Layna Hammett 7X:

Her

When I look in the mirror, I see her,
She tells me I'm not good enough,
I believe her.

She follows me wherever I go,
Her weakness is rain, so I wish for rain every day,
But it doesn't work.

During school she's there willing me to fail,
She only sees the bad in things,
She hates happiness.

I try to tell people about her,
But she disappears and I am happy,
But when they've gone, she comes back.

I seek help,
But whatever someone does,
I feel further and further away from everybody.
Her name, well, it's me.

Original poem by Catherine Cunningham 8L:

Friendship is like waves at the peak there is much happiness at the crashing, there can be sadness, but even if the tide goes out, it will come back in stronger than ever before.

Friendship is also like the sky. It can be clear and sunny, but it can also be dark and stormy, but at the end of the day the clouds and the storm pass showing a beautiful night sky.

Friendship is like a mighty mountain, standing tall and fast in the skyline. but it can also be like a pothole in the road unexpected and accidental.

Friendship can be like fire where it is all consuming, but it can also be like a spark, giving you just enough hope to carry on with the day.

In the end, friends help us through the hard times and make joyous moments even better. I can't imagine a life without my friends.

Christmas Concert

A reminder of the wonderful opportunity to participate in our school Christmas Concert on Sunday 14th December. This will be a collaboration with the Bury St Edmunds Youth Band, directed by Rob Head.

The time of this is 4:00PM-5:00PM with students arriving for a final rehearsal at 2:00PM. It will involve a variety of Christmas songs and carols, audience participation, followed by mince pies, drinks and a raffle!

Rehearsals are Monday lunch times in the Music Room, plus an extended rehearsal on Wednesday 3rd December 6:45-8:15PM.

If your child would like to participate, please confirm via the Microsoft Form link contained within the email you will have been sent or below. Please also feel free to contact Mrs Hamilton for any further information on dhamilton@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk.

Microsoft Form link: [Microsoft Form](#)

Mrs Hamilton




Christmas Concert
Sunday 14th December
4 -5PM

St Benedict's Catholic School
 Join us for an afternoon of
 festive music with the
Bury St Edmunds Youth Concert Band
 conducted by Rob Head

It will be a chance to sing with a live band !

Rehearsals every Monday
 Lunchtime in G1 at 1PM

Want to get involved?
See Mrs Hamilton for more information

Christmas Card Competition

CHRISTMAS CARD HOUSE COMPETITION

WE WANT TO SEE YOUR BEST CARD DESIGNS!



ENTRIES CAN BE IN ANY MEDIA, BUT MUST REPRESENT THE SCHOOLS CATHOLIC VALUES TO THOSE RECEIVING IT. WE ASK THAT ALL ENTRIES DISPLAY RELIGIOUS IMAGERY REPRESENTING PART OF A CATHOLIC CHRISTMAS.

HOUSE COMPETITION PRIZES

THERE WILL BE A FIRST, SECOND & THIRD PLACE FOR EACH YEAR GROUP !

-  **WINNER: 100 HOUSE POINTS & ART PACK PRIZE**
-  **SECOND: 60 HOUSE POINTS & MINI ART PACK PRIZE**
-  **THIRD: 40 HOUSE POINTS & MINI ART PACK PRIZE**

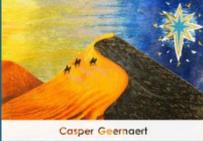
HOUSE POINTS ARE ADDED TO WHOLE HOUSE TOTAL ACROSS EACH YEAR GROUP (7, 8 AND 9).

WHAT MAKES A GOOD ENTRY?

- Imagery reflecting a Catholic Christmas (choose part of the Christmas story to represent).
- Care taken with your chosen materials and presentation & name written clearly on back.

WINNING SUBMISSION NEEDS TO BE EASILY SCANNED OR PHOTOGRAPHED FOR PRINTING

LAST YEAR'S WINNER!



Casper's artwork
Casper's beautiful scene was created using oil pastel and collage. The outcome is magical and showcases precision, skill and imagination.

Casper Greenaert

SECOND PLACE



Alexis Rose-Joy

THIRD PLACE



Sophie Nolan

FOURTH PLACE



Fenny Newcombe

YOU CAN ENTER OUTCOMES MADE ON A5 OR A4 MATERIAL

Collage

Oil Painting

Paper cutting

Watercolour

Colour Pencil

Acrylic Painting

November 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

DEADLINE 24TH NOVEMBER!

- Deliver completed entry to the Art Department
- Or
- Email: CToms@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

Data Collection Sheet Updates

It is important that the information we hold about your child is kept up-to-date.

Please remember that as a parent/guardian/carer, you can check, amend and update most of your child's information on Arbor, including changing your mobile number and address or adding information such as religion, family contacts, medical information and transport method.

If you are struggling to do this please email Arbor@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk where we will be able to help you.

Thanks

Mrs Defew

Reporting Absences

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 students in the sixth form

OR

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

For information on what to do if your child has COVID-like symptoms please see the following link for NHS guidance:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

Just a reminder that if you do not inform us by 9.00am or use the above phone/email address, you will receive an email requesting the reason for your child's absence. All unexplained absences will be marked as unauthorised and there will be a follow-up phone call from the Attendance Officer. 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. Please note that the Fixed Penalty Fine is now £80 per legal guardian for unauthorised absences of 10 sessions (5 days) or more.

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

Thank you very much.

Mrs Wesley - Attendance Officer

Dates for your Diary



18 November - BAE Systems Presentation for years 7 & 8

26 November - Year 13 Parents Evening

27 November - Lunchtime Careers Talk: "A journey in Nursing" All welcome

27 November - Sixth Form Trip to London

28 November - PD Day

5 December - Non-Uniform, Christmas Jumper Day in aid of St Nicholas Hospice

12 December - Non-Uniform, Pyjama Day in aid of Cafod

19 December - Non-Uniform, Sparkly/Festive Day in aid of Children and Families in Need in Zimbabwe

[Term Dates](#)

[Contact Us](#)



St Benedict's Catholic School

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