



St Benedict's Newsletter 316

23 January 2026



1 - Year 7 summer camp clay models

Catholic Social Teaching

This week our focus within Catholic Social Teaching has once again been **Dignity**, the belief that every human person is precious, created by God, and worthy of respect. Dignity is not

something we earn through success or perfection; it is something we are given simply because we are made by God.

In our assemblies, we reflected on how we often recognise beauty in the world around us while overlooking the imperfections that lead to it. We admire sunsets, autumn leaves, and even rare pink diamonds, yet all of these are beautiful *because* of their irregularities. Their colours, shapes, and patterns come from flaws, change, decay, pressure, and time. If we can recognise beauty in nature that is not flawless, why do we so often struggle to see beauty in ourselves?

We live in a world that often celebrates perfection, perfect grades, perfect appearances, perfect lives presented on social media. But the truth is, no one is perfect. Every one of us has moments we wish were different: mistakes, worries, scars, weaknesses, and things we cannot easily fix. God does not look at these and see failure. He sees *our story*. Scripture reminds us that from the very beginning, our dignity is rooted in God's love: *"God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."* Genesis 1:26–27

Our worth does not depend on how polished or successful we appear. It comes from being made in God's image, fully known and fully loved.

St Paul speaks honestly about human weakness in his Second Letter to the Corinthians. Instead of hiding imperfection, he learns to trust God within it: *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly in my weakness, so the power of Christ may rest on me"* 2 Corinthians 12:9

This scripture reminds us that God often works most powerfully not through perfection, but through humility, vulnerability, and honesty. Like light shining through cracks, God's grace can be most visible in the places we feel least confident.

We are called to recognise dignity not only in ourselves, but in one another. This week we can live this out in our daily school life:

- **Wisdom:** Recognising that everyone has strengths and struggles. Seeing beyond surface-level judgments and understand that growth comes through challenge, not perfection.
- **Compassion:** Being kind to ourselves and others when mistakes are made.
- **Resilience:** Accepting imperfection and continuing to grow. Learning from mistakes, believing we are more than our flaws, and trusting that we are still becoming who God calls us to be.

As we move through the week, we should reflect and ask ourselves: Where do I focus more on my flaws than my gifts? How can I speak more kindly to myself and others? Can I notice

beauty, in nature, in people, and especially in myself, even when it isn't perfect? When we learn to see ourselves as God sees us, we begin to live with confidence, humility, and peace.

Loving God,

You created us in your image

and call us good, even in our weakness.

Help us to see ourselves as you see us —

with love, patience, and hope.

Teach us to recognise beauty beyond perfection,

to show compassion to ourselves and others,

and to grow with resilience when we fall.

May we honour the dignity you have placed within every person

and let your light shine through us, just as we are.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

[Holocaust Memorial Day Live Broadcast](#)

On Thursday 22 January 2026, Year 9 students took part in the Holocaust Education Trust's Survivor Webcast to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

This year's theme, 'Bridging Generations', was especially meaningful as the webcast was presented by Holocaust survivor Paul Sved BEM alongside his son, Richard. The theme encourages us to reflect on our responsibility to listen to survivors' testimonies and to remember the generations destroyed during the Holocaust.

Paul was born in February 1938 in Budapest, Hungary, and grew up as an only child in a middle-class household. His father died of a heart attack in 1942, and Paul was raised by his mother. As his family were not practising Jews, Paul was initially unaware of his Jewish heritage. However, this changed as the Hungarian government introduced increasing restrictions on Jewish people.

Life became significantly more dangerous in 1944 when Germany invaded Hungary during Operation Margarethe. Paul described being forced to wear the yellow Star of David, marking him out as Jewish. In order to survive, his mother obtained false identity papers for them, giving them new names and dates of birth. Their new identities included pretending to be Roman Catholic, and Paul said that he still remembers the Catholic prayers he learnt.

Later that year, Paul and his mother returned to Budapest and moved between several locations using their false papers to avoid detection. On one occasion, Paul was overheard questioning why he no longer had to wear a yellow star, forcing them to move again. With the help of Paul's uncle, they spent time hiding in a cellar before conditions became unbearable. They were eventually given refuge in a Swiss-protected house; tragically, Paul's uncle was later killed during a bombing raid.

During the winter of 1944, Paul and his mother found shelter with a non-Jewish family in the hills outside Buda. As the Soviet army advanced into Hungary, its presence offered some protection. After the liberation of Budapest, they returned to the city despite ongoing fighting. Paul shared a powerful story of a frightened young German soldier entering their home; although he feared for his life, Paul realised the soldier was crying. The soldier left without harming them but was killed by a Soviet soldier as he ran out of the front door. Paul remembered the dead man's boots staring back at him from the doorstep. He said that he has often thought of the young soldier and feels saddened by the fact that the soldier's mum would never know that his actions had spared them.

After the war, Paul and his mother were reunited with his grandparents. However, life remained difficult, and after 1947 the family were labelled as "class enemies" under the new regime. Following the Hungarian Uprising in 1956, Paul was finally able to leave Hungary and settle in Britain, where he continued his education and later studied at Leeds University.

The webcast provided Year 9 students with a deeply moving insight into the realities of the Holocaust and reinforced the importance of remembrance, understanding, and learning from the past.

Mr Murphy



Careers Update

Kicking off our Sixth Form Alumni Mentoring Programme!

We are extremely fortunate at St Benedict's to have a vibrant and engaged Alumni, a community that grows each year as our Year 13 leavers reconnect with us to support the students who are following in their wake. Our Sixth Form Alumni Mentoring Programme is one of the ways in which our current students are able to benefit from this support.

Year 12 students who signed up for this year's Programme have already been matched with their Alumni Mentors and are planning a first meeting to discuss areas to work on and goals to aim for. All Mentors have received training on their role (from me) and on Safeguarding Children in Education (from Mrs. Berry, our Designated Safeguarding Lead). Their career expertise ranges from accountancy and finance, arboriculture, business management and design and fashion, to engineering, politics, medicine, social media and urban planning! As well as offering insights into their careers, our Mentors are able to provide guidance for their Mentees on A Level studies and revision, applications to university, interview technique and work experience.

Our Year 12 Mentees are expected to ace their next steps!

And on the subject of **Next Steps**...



Year 10

On Monday 19 January, I delivered a Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) assembly to our Year 10 cohort, focused on *their* Next Steps. In just 9 months' time our Year 10 students will begin applying for their chosen post-16 destinations - application portals usually open at the beginning of October - and making well informed choices is vital to their future progression.

During the assembly, we looked at four main options available to our students after Year 11:

- [A Levels](#)
- [T Levels](#)
- [Vocational \(job/career-related\) courses](#) and

- [Apprenticeships](#)

I explained the meaning of different levels of qualification (Levels 1-7) and the grades needed to access Levels 1-3 in post-16 education, training and employment (apprenticeships). I also encouraged students to book their places (online) for Open Events at post-16 destinations **NOW** (see individual college websites for details). Remember to look out for St Benedict's Sixth Form Open Evening in the third week in October (date tbc)!

Did you know:

- that **GCSE** stands for **General Certificate of Secondary Education**
- that GCSEs are Level 2 qualifications
- that Level 2 is achieved if students gain a GCSE grade from 4-9
- that apprenticeships start from Level 2 and are offered up to Level 7 (Masters degree)
- that you are also paid for your study/training day on an apprenticeship?

Note: if you have any questions about Next Steps, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Year 7

Over the next two weeks, I will be visiting our Year 7 students during their PSHE Careers lessons to introduce myself and our Careers Programme. I will also invite our Year 7 students to share their interests and dream careers with me. As in previous years, I am sure this will prove to be both insightful and inspiring!

Miss Hahn

Year 11 Tate Galleries Visit

The Year 11 GCSE Art and Textiles students recently enjoyed an inspiring trip to London, visiting both Tate Modern and Tate Britain to support their work for the Externally Set Assignment (ESA), which began earlier this month.

The purpose of the visit was to help students research artists, materials, and ideas linked to the exam board themes - such as: *nature*, *time*, and *movement*. Experiencing artworks first-hand allowed students to deepen their understanding and gather meaningful visual research for their sketchbooks.

We began the day travelling by coach into London, arriving near St Paul's Cathedral — once the tallest structure in the city — before walking across the Millennium Bridge into the iconic Turbine Hall at Tate Modern. Tate Modern is home to many internationally renowned modern and contemporary artworks, including works by artists such as Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol, Mark Rothko, and David Hockney.

Students were then given time to independently explore the galleries, taking photographs of artworks that interested them and producing sketches and written notes to support their coursework. This independent exploration encouraged personal engagement and creative thinking.

After regrouping, we walked to Bankside Pier to board the 'Tate Boat'. Travelling westbound along the River Thames provided fantastic views of London landmarks, including the Houses of Parliament and the London Eye, before arriving at Millbank Pier for our visit to Tate Britain.

Tate Britain showcases an extensive collection of British art, including works by J.M.W. Turner, Barbara Hepworth, and the Pre-Raphaelite artists. Many students were particularly captivated by the rich colours, intricate details, and strong narratives found within the Pre-Raphaelite paintings.

We returned to Bury St Edmunds with tired feet but plenty of photographs, sketches, and ideas to take forward into the ESA. The Year 11 students behaved impeccably throughout the day — so much so that members of the public commented on how respectful and well-mannered they were.

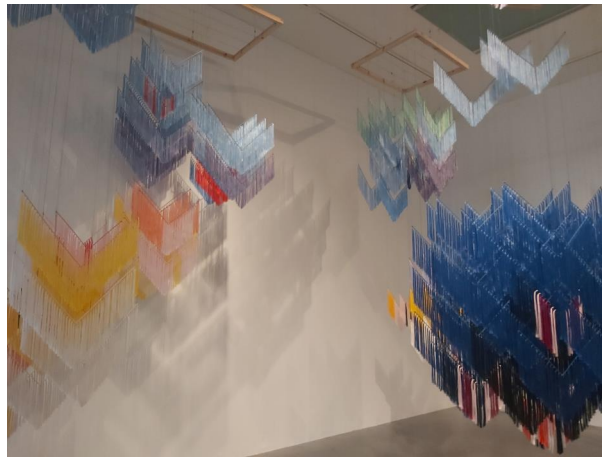
We hope this valuable experience of visiting London and engaging with world-famous artworks will support students' GCSE outcomes as well as contribute positively to their wider personal development.

Mrs Coldwell









Sports Hall Athletics

On Thursday 15th January, our Year 8 students took part in the Sportshall Athletics competition hosted at Newmarket School. Both the boys' and girls' teams represented St Benedict's with outstanding determination, teamwork, and sportsmanship.

Throughout the competition, every student contributed impressively across a full range of challenging events, including obstacle races, relays, distance runs, and field events such as the shot put, long jump, and triple jump. Their performances were excellent—but just as impressive was their positive attitude, effort, and the encouragement they offered one another from start to finish.

Although we left the venue unsure of the final standings, we knew both teams had competed superbly. This was confirmed when the results arrived:

- Girls' Team: 3rd place with 125 points, just 15 points behind winners Newmarket.
- Boys' Team: 1st place with 137 points, narrowly beating Newmarket, who finished on 134 points.

A huge congratulations to both teams for their hard work and brilliant performances. We are especially proud to announce that the boys' team will now go on to represent West Suffolk in the regional finals in Ipswich on Friday 6th February. Well done to all involved!

Mr Taylor



Creativity and Clay at Claire's House

Our year 12 Art A level students enjoyed a two-hour taster session throwing pots on the wheel at Claire's House this week. The students were guided by expert tutor Henry who was on hand to support us in understanding the basic throwing techniques and developing our skills. Lots of fun was had as we learnt the basics of how to cone, pull and shape our own range of clay vessels, and lots of mess was also made as we experimented with this ancient craft. We look forward to seeing the pots when they return glazed later this term.

Thank you for an excellent session Claire and I hope we have inspired some more potential potters in the process!

If you would like to find out more about the courses and sessions run at this great local enterprise, have a look online to book at:

[Claire's House Website](#)

Ms Chacksfield







Language Assistant

Hello everyone! My name is Marie, I'm 21 years old and I'm the French language assistant from November until March. I'm from a village in the countryside near Versailles. I studied French literature at university for 3 years.

I work with year 13 and 12 to prepare for their A level in French, we practice the photocards, and for fun we read a famous French comic : Asterix. I'm also helping the year 12 for their French debate. In the near future, we will also have fun with the Year 12 and 13 during a

quiz game about French culture! I also have one to one sessions with year 11 to help them prepare for their French GCSE.

I love reading books and listening to music. I like to do watercolour and embroidery. When I arrived in the UK I was worried if I'd like the food here (since I'm used to the exquisite French gastronomy). It turns out that what I love the most about English food is the variety of sponge cake, and tea!



World Record Success for Year 8 Student

We are incredibly proud to share that Clara Martinez in Year 8 has achieved an amazing sporting accomplishment by becoming a world record holder.

Clara set a new record for the longest time walking on a giant ball in the 10–12 year old age division, successfully balancing and moving on the ball for an impressive 2 minutes. This remarkable feat required exceptional balance, focus, and determination.

Mr Murphy

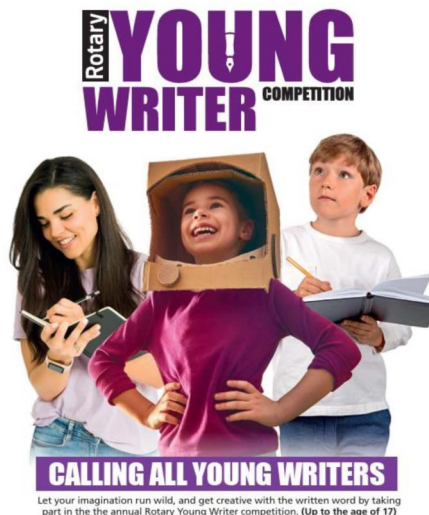


Interact - Writing Competition

Please see the poster for information about a new competition being launched by the Interact Club, the deadline for entries is next Friday.

If you have any questions about the competition please speak to Mrs Hamilton.

Mrs Hamilton



Young Writer Competition!

Theme Happiness in Nature

A Piece of Prose or Short Story up to 550 words, or a Poem up to 40 Lines

Age Categories 11-13 and 14-17 (Age on 31st August)

Closing Date 29th January

Entries to be emailed to: dhamilton@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

or a hard copy, named and with age and tutor group to either

Mrs Hamilton or Naomhan Walker (Year 12)

Interact
St Benedict's Catholic School

Choir Visit to Care home

On Thursday 11 December, the year 7 and 8 school choir members departed for the Grace and Compassion Benedictines Montana Care Home, Great Barton. The choir traditionally

does an annual carol service at the St Edmund King and Martyr Catholic church and a concert in the school hall, so the visit to Montana Care Home was a first time for the us!

However, it is hopefully not to be the last time we visit!

At Montana, the choir assembled ready and hopeful to spread some Christmas cheer! On an added wave of excitement and anticipation down to the last minute announcement that we would be using tambourines!

We started off with "Once in Royal David's City", first verse sung solo by the exceptional Catherine Cunningham, 8L. It was clearly a carol to start with as it got the audience confidently singing along. After that we sung a few more carols which included "Silent Night" sung in German, French, Spanish and English!

We also sung some more lively numbers - "Step into Christmas" and "Felice Navidad"- which we brought the tambourines on.

It was lovely to see smiles emerge from faces and I really hope we succeeded in entertaining everyone and spreading joy this Advent season.

Ruby Smith - 8C

Youth SVP Sleep Out

We are delighted to share that the Autumn Term Year 8 Youth SVP Sleep Out was a great success, raising an impressive **£1,231.51**. This money has now been donated to the St Vincent de Paul Society, where it will help support their vital work with people experiencing homelessness.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all the Year 8 students who took part with such commitment and compassion, as well as to everyone who generously sponsored them. Your support has made a real difference.

Mr Murphy

Lost Property

We still have a lot of lost property that has not been collected, please can you encourage your children to collect their lost property. We also have a number of smaller items in the front office (see the photo).

Thank you very much.

The Reception Team





Lessons from Auschwitz

Year 12 students are invited to apply for a place on the Eastern Region Lessons from Auschwitz Project (LFA) with the Holocaust Educational Trust. Please see the letter emailed to parents and students for details on the LFA and how to apply.

The deadline is 4pm on Monday 26th January.

Mrs Eden

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



28 January - Year 7 Parents' Evening

30 January - 6 February - Introduction to Careers at St. Benedict's with Miss Hahn, Head of Careers, Year 7 PSHE Careers lessons

2 -5 February - Year 11 Language Speaking Mocks

5 February - Year 9 Options Evening

9 - 13 February - Optional Year 11 In class mocks

9 - 15 February - National Apprenticeship Week (NAW2026)

10 February - Alumni Careers Talk with Dan Bourne, My Mace Consult/Sizewell-C Project Manager Graduate Scheme Experience

7 February - Year 10 Rome Trip Departs

12 February - Year 9 Parents' Evening

13 February - Break up

[Term Dates](#)

Contact Us



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