St Benedict's Newsletter 322

13 March 2026

1 - Inter-House Sports Day

Catholic Social Teaching

This week our focus has been on the Catholic Social Teaching theme of Creation and the Environment, reflecting on our responsibility to care for the world God has entrusted to us.

In assemblies we explored the idea of stewardship, the understanding that the earth is a gift from God, and that we are called not to dominate it but to care for it wisely and lovingly.

The beauty and complexity of the natural world remind us of God's presence and creativity. From the smallest living creatures to vast oceans and forests, creation reveals something of God's goodness. Scripture reminds us that the earth ultimately belongs to God and has been entrusted to our care.

Scripture reminds us of this responsibility: "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it." Psalm 24:1 This passage reminds us that caring for the earth is not an optional extra but part of our vocation as human beings, recognising that the world is a gift from God which we are called to respect and protect.

In his encyclical Laudato Si', Pope Francis reminds us that the earth is our "common home." He teaches that caring for creation is closely connected to caring for people, especially the poor and vulnerable who are often the most affected by environmental damage. He writes: *"Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue." Laudato Si', §217* This powerful reminder challenges us to see environmental care not simply as a scientific or political issue, but as a moral and spiritual responsibility.

We are also reminded that caring for the environment often begins with small everyday actions. Across the county, new recycling bins are being introduced to help households recycle more effectively and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. These small changes encourage us to think carefully about what we throw away and how we use the resources we have. Waste that ends up in landfill can take a very long time to break down. For example, a plastic bottle can take around 450 years to decompose, an aluminium can around 200 years. This is why it is so important to recycle where possible and reduce the amount of waste we produce. When rubbish is dumped irresponsibly, it damages natural habitats, harms wildlife, and leaves places looking uncared for.

Taking responsibility for our waste, whether through recycling, using the correct bins, or helping to keep our school environment tidy, is one way we show respect for the gift of creation. Activities such as litter picking around the school grounds or local community may seem small, but they remind us that stewardship begins with simple actions. When we care for our surroundings together, we help protect the environment for everyone.

We can all play a part in caring for our common home by living out our school values in simple everyday ways

- **Wisdom:** Taking time to appreciate the beauty of the natural world and understanding how our choices affect the environment.
- **Compassion:** Recognising that environmental damage often harms the poorest communities first and choosing to care for creation in ways that protect both people and the planet.

- **Resilience:** Making small but consistent changes in our daily lives, such as reducing waste, recycling, and being mindful of how we use resources.

This week we might reflect on a few simple questions: Do I appreciate the beauty of God's creation around me? Are there small changes I could make to care more responsibly for the environment? How can our school community work together to look after our common home? Caring for creation is one way we live out our faith in action. When we treat the earth with respect and gratitude, we honour the Creator who entrusted it to us.

Loving God,

Creator of heaven and earth,

we thank you for the beauty and wonder of the world around us.

Help us to be good stewards of the earth you have entrusted to us.

Give us wisdom to care for creation responsibly,

compassion for those most affected by environmental harm,

and resilience to make choices that protect our common home.

May we learn to appreciate the gifts of creation

and use them with gratitude and care.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Careers Update

Every student in Year 11 is entitled to a 1:1 meeting to discuss their post-16 choices, and information relating to their next steps, with a qualified (Level 6) Careers Adviser. In line with this entitlement, my remit as a fully qualified Careers Adviser and Head of Careers at St Benedict's is to provide impartial and unbiased information about post-16 choices to our students and to record this information in a way that is accessible to them. Each of my post-16 meetings with our Year 11 students are recorded via a detailed and bespoke report of our conversation (the final document is sent to their student email address).

During the first part of our post-16 meeting, we look at subject and study preferences, hobbies and interests, and any work experience (WEX) the student has completed. I explain that nowadays, *meaningful* (a term used by the Department for Education to describe valid and useful WEX) work experience can be hybrid, and can be completed in person, online, through part-time paid jobs, volunteering and shadowing. *All* of these WEX options can be added to a CV to evidence the skills and experiences a student has gained.

I often include a link to the FREE online WEX platform, Springpod, in students' reports - not because I am promoting it (I only offer impartial and unbiased information!) but because it gives students an idea of what online WEX can involve. Only students aged 13+ to 19 years can access this platform, but you could take a look at it with them to see if any programmes align with their interests at this point.

At St Benedict's we are now preparing the groundwork for WEX activities in the next academic year. I encourage you to explore hybrid opportunities for WEX with your child(ren), especially from Year 9 onwards. On that note, I have sent all students from Years 9-13 (inclusive) a questionnaire about their WEX to date, so please do encourage your child(ren) to complete it: Student Work Experience (WEX) Survey Years 9-13 – Fill in form Their responses will help us to fine tune our future WEX programme.

Sharing your own career and work experiences with your child(ren) can really help them understand the world of work that awaits them and the skills that are valued in the workplace. Research clearly shows that parents and carers have the greatest influence on the career choices of their children...

Ms Hahn

Magistrates' court Mock Trial 2026

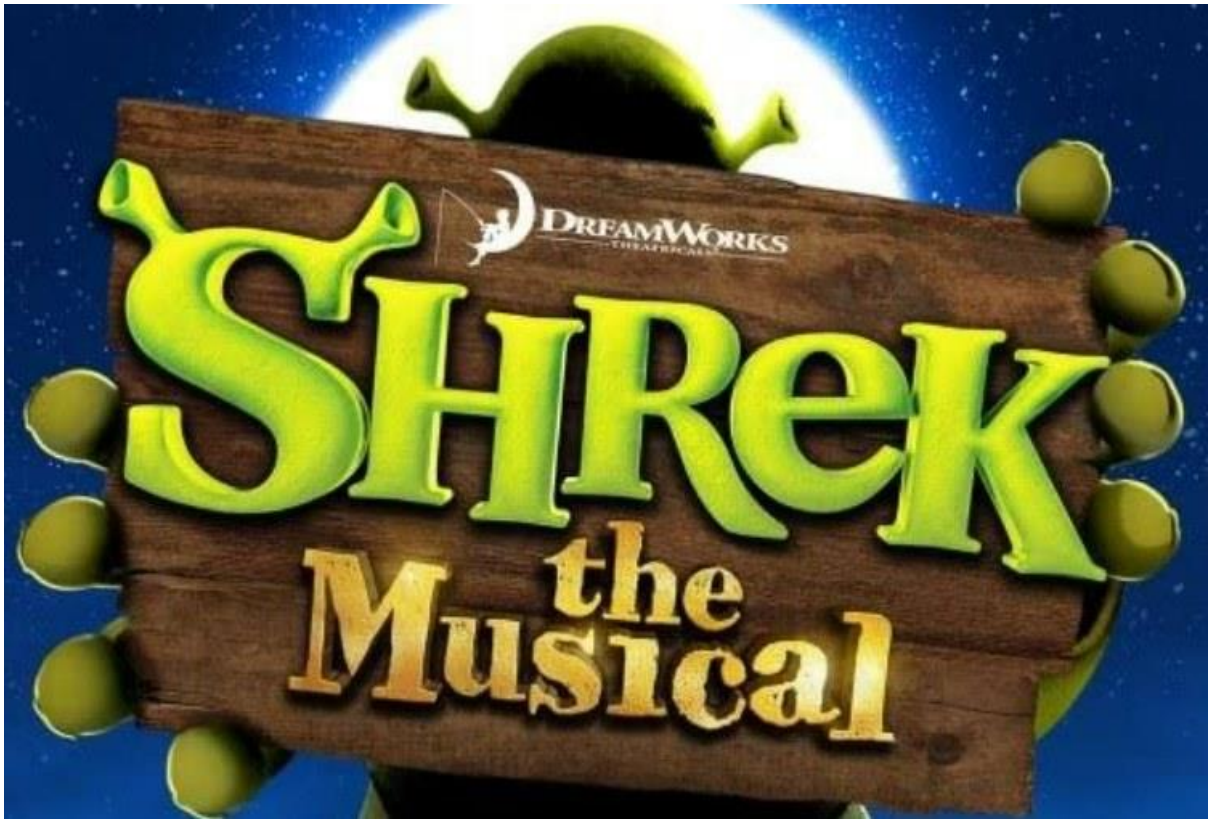
On Saturday 7th March Ms Turner and I took fourteen year 9 students to Great Yarmouth Magistrates' court to compete against other East Anglian schools in prosecuting and defending the case of "Kim Hanley", accused of snatching a new mobile phone whilst cycling past complainant "Sam Friel", who was standing at a bus stop making a call to his/her partner. Our legal cast consisted of two defence lawyers: Beatrice Harpur-Davies and Sophie Wray; two prosecution lawyers: Amelie Pickering and James Davey, and three magistrates: Scott Jones, Oakley Nelson and Lily Barwise. Our court staff were: legal advisor, Adam Herd and usher, Kitty Fuller. Our witnesses were Saoirse Walker, Daniel Herd, Angel Denni and Gabriella Pochec. This year we were also fortunate to have recruited a reserve in Tallulah-Rose Banister, who added to our feeling of preparedness.

The point of the competition is not to win the verdict we want, but to perform in appropriate ways, using our knowledge and understanding of the procedures and processes of the justice system. Our students played lawyers, witnesses, magistrates and court staff in two lively hearings and they did so with great aplomb. Everyone thoroughly knew his or her part and observed the rather tricky court etiquette required, in addition to carrying out all their duties with confidence and using the skills they have been practising for several weeks.

As well as having a great day in a real courthouse, with legal professionals, each child was kindly awarded a chocolate Easter egg by the organisers – a kind gesture much appreciated by all, and a reminder that this is an annual event to be enjoyed, not only as an intellectual exercise, but also as a chance to experience supportive teamwork and a celebration of what we can achieve together.

Mrs James

Shrek Tickets



Tickets are now on sale for Shrek!!

The show dates for Shrek are:

- Tuesday 24th March 6.30pm
- Wednesday 25th March 6.30pm
- Thursday 26th March 6.30pm

Tickets are available on ParentPay.

Seats are unreserved and on a first come, first served basis. If you require accessible seating, make sure you complete the optional note box on the ParentPay booking.

The cast and crew have been working incredibly hard this term and it is going to be a fantastic show.

Mrs Roughley

Science News

The WILLIAM & ELLEN VINTEN TRUST was set up in 1982 to help young people move on to careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). Every year the Vinten Trust gives a bursary to one student from each school in the Bury area who is leaving to study an engineering degree at University. In addition, the Trust grant a significant sum of money to schools for the purchase of items of equipment that would not normally be possible from departmental budgets. The Science Department has recently benefited from the Trust's generosity, as follows.

Data measurement and capture by electronic means is an essential part of many physics and chemistry practicals. For example, using a device known as a "light gate" can provide an unprecedented insight into linear motion. It will convert time to speed, acceleration, acceleration due to gravity, kinetic energy, and simple harmonic motion.

Temperature measurements are a cornerstone of a range of physics and physical chemistry-based studies, such as cooling curves, heat of fusion or absolute zero, then this is the probe sensor choice. Traditional thermometers, as useful as they are, are now outdated and such measurements require a digital thermosensor probe.

The ability to measure pH (the measurement of the acidity or basicity of liquid solutions) is important for a wide variety of scientific investigations, extending across biology, chemistry and environmental science.

All of these devices are computer-controlled with Bluetooth or USB connectivity and they will significantly improve the students' practical experiences in the classroom and outside.

The Faculty of Art & DT also benefited by being able to replace their aging and "past their best" set of artists' aprons which, after years of exposure to all sorts of art materials, were more like rigid armour than flexible protective attire!

We therefore owe huge thanks to the Vinten Trust, and especially their ambassador Mr Derek Langley, for their continuing support of our STEM departments and their students.

Mr Gregory

2 - pH detector

3 - Light Gate

4 - Digital thermosensor probe

More Science News

On Thursday evening this week, Mr D'Mello and Mr Gregory accompanied a keen group of sixth form physicists to the new Ray Dolby Centre at the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge. The main event was a lecture as part of the University of Cambridge Physics Centre Sixth Form Lecture Schedule. But before the main event the students took part in an activity provided by Isaac Physics – they were set a number of astrophysical puzzles to solve ranging from orbital periods of planets to gravitational force on an alien planet and more.

The venue is a splendid new part of the Cavendish that opened just under one year ago and also contains some historic items in its museum spaces. For example, the students were able to see the Crookes Tube that JJ Thomson used in 1897 to discover the first subatomic particle – the electron. On display was also the world's first Cloud Chamber. Invented in 1912 and designed to visualise charged subatomic particles, Ernest Rutherford described it as *"The most original and wonderful instrument in scientific history."* Also, the story of Jocelyn Bell Burnell who, as a 24 year-old postgraduate research student in 1967, discovered the first spinning neutron star – a pulsar.

The main event lecture that followed was titled ***"Brown Dwarfs: Linking Stars and Planets"*** and was delivered by Dr. Sonali Shukla, an experienced astrophysicist who has spent time at Caltech and Penn State in the US, as well as in Cambridge. Although the pantomime season can extend into March, Dr. Shukla's talk had nothing to do with Snow White and her dwarfs. Instead, it was about a relatively recent discovery in stellar astronomy, brown dwarfs. They were first theorised in 1963, when it was thought that when stars and planets formed from a whirling disk of dust and gas in space, a protoplanetary disk, it might not only be stars and planets that formed, but something in between. In 1995, the first brown dwarf was confirmed in a distant star system and, since then, countless others have been identified.

Brown dwarfs, initially composed mainly of hydrogen like a "normal" star, lack the mass to sustain the hydrogen fusion that powers a star. Instead their initial fusion of hydrogen (its isotope deuterium, actually) cannot be maintained and the wannabe star cools and fades. It

doesn't go "out" completely, but continues to emit a little visible light; however, it also emits radiation in the infrared which modern telescopes, like the James Webb Space Telescope, can detect. Because a class of stars had already been named "red dwarfs", these new objects were christened "brown dwarfs".

Our Milky Way galaxy may contain as many as 300 billion 'real' stars, but there may also be up 100 billion brown dwarfs to go with them. How they fit in between stars and planets is still something of a mystery and much is yet to be learned.

As brown dwarfs are so numerous, astrophysicists are speculating that they may provide an answer to a mind-bending puzzle: our current observations of the millions of galaxies in the visible universe lead us to conclude that there is more that we can't see out there than we can see. In fact, we might be observing only about 5% of what is actually out there! The other 95% is a combination of "dark energy" and "dark matter" – but we have no idea exactly what they are. Could brown dwarfs give us a clue?

As the late, great cosmologist Carl Sagan said: *"Somewhere something incredible is waiting to be known."* Maybe our young students will be the ones who get to know it.

Mr Gregory

Inter-House Sports Day

Tuesday saw the second of our annual inter-house sports days. During the day each year group had one period off their normal timetable where they competed in a variety of sports to try and win points for their house.

The sports played on Tuesday were; volleyball, netball, basketball and capture the flag.

There was a wonderful energy around the school and it was great to see the students so enthusiastic about their houses and sports.

A big thank you to all the staff and sixth form who helped during the day, it wouldn't have been possible without you.

End of Term Reports

Due to this half term only being five weeks long we will publish our usual end of term report at the end of the first week back after Easter which will be Friday 17th April. This will be for all year groups except Year 11 who will receive their report as usual at the end of term. Apologies in advance for any inconvenience that this may cause.

Mr D'Mello

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

24 March - Year 12 UCAS Discovery Day

27 March - Break up for Easter

13 April - Start of summer term

11 May - Public Exams Start

Term Dates

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