



St Benedict's Newsletter 327

1 May 2026



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

Just a reminder that if you do not inform us by 9.00am using 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

Catholic Social Teaching

This week, our focus has been on the Catholic Social Teaching theme of the Option for the Poor. In assembly this week students were encouraged to look beyond poverty as simply a lack of money and to explore what it might mean to be poor spiritually, struggling with faith, feeling unsure of beliefs, lacking confidence, or feeling disconnected from God or from the community around them.

Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that God shows a special concern for those who are vulnerable and overlooked. The Option for the Poor challenges us to place their needs at the centre of our thinking and actions. When we consider spiritual poverty, this means noticing and supporting those whose faith may be fragile, whose confidence may be low, or who may

quietly struggle to find meaning and belonging. This theme invites us to reflect on an important and challenging question: Are you protecting the poor?

Scripture reassures us that faith does not need to be strong or fully formed to be powerful. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples: *“If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible.”* (Matthew 17:20) This reminds us that even a small amount of faith has great potential. Faith grows when it is nurtured, encouraged, and protected, especially in environments where people feel safe to ask questions, make mistakes, and learn.

Pope Leo speaks powerfully about this in his Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te*, where he reminds the Church that children have “a right to knowledge as a fundamental requirement for the recognition of human dignity.” This teaching is especially important in a school setting. Knowledge, academic, spiritual, and personal, is not something to be taken for granted. It is a right that must be protected, particularly for those who are most vulnerable.

Living out the Option for the Poor in school means recognising that behaviour in the classroom matters. When learning is disrupted, it is often those who already struggle, with confidence, concentration, faith, or understanding, who are affected first. Poor behaviour can take away someone else’s opportunity to learn, grow, and develop their faith. In this way, protecting the right to knowledge is part of protecting the poor.

Pope Leo also reminds us that faith cannot remain only as words or ideas but must be lived through action. In school, this means that our care for the poor is shown not only through prayer or charity, but through everyday choices: listening respectfully, allowing others to learn, showing patience, and taking responsibility for our own behaviour. These small actions help protect the dignity and learning of everyone in our community.

We can live out the Option for the Poor through our school values in very practical ways:

- **Wisdom:** Understanding that everyone’s journey, in learning and in faith, is different.
- **Compassion:** Noticing those who may be struggling quietly and choosing to support rather than judge.
- **Resilience:** Encouraging ourselves and others to keep going when learning or faith feels challenging. Resilience reminds us that small steps, like a mustard seed, can grow into something much stronger over time.

As we reflect this week, we might ask ourselves: Do my actions protect the right of others to learn? Am I aware of those who may be poor in confidence or faith? How can I help a small seed of faith or understanding grow? Are you protecting the poor? When we choose to protect the poor, especially those who are spiritually vulnerable, we live out our faith in a real and meaningful way, helping to build a school community rooted in dignity, respect, and hope.

Loving God,

You remind us that even the smallest faith has great power.

Help us to recognise and protect those who struggle in their faith and learning.

Give us wisdom to understand,

compassion to care for one another,

and resilience to persevere when things feel difficult.

May our actions help knowledge and faith to grow,

and may we always work to build a community where all are valued.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Careers Update

Careers Talk: Soft Skills - Big Impact!

On Wednesday 28 April, Dorcas Sukami, Growth Officer at West Suffolk Council, delivered an insightful and inspiring Talk to students about the importance of developing soft skills alongside competence in their academic studies.

Soft skills - also known as transferable or employability skills - are the *non-technical* people skills that help individuals work with others and adapt to workplace challenges. They are *highly valued* by employers and include effective communication, teamwork, problem-solving and a positive attitude.

Dorcas explained how her early exposure to workplace challenges helped her develop an array of valuable soft skills that laid a strong foundation for later career success. Dorcas began her career journey after Year 11 with fast paced, customer-facing roles in McDonalds and Taco Bell, honing her skills in customer service, teamwork and problem-solving. Dorcas shared that pre-lockdown, she spent two years working for a charity on pop-up stands in busy shopping centres, selling subscriptions to people she had never met before. This was followed, post-lockdown by running a sales team who worked door-to-door selling things such as internet services. Both experiences taught Dorcas how to build rapport (establish a connection) quickly with others and how important it was to be determined and maintain a positive attitude.

Now working in Local Government, Dorcas noted that it was not her technical knowledge or skills alone that secured her current employment - in fact, she had less experience than other candidates. It was largely her 'can do' attitude, ability to get on with others and openness to new challenges that tipped the scales in her favour.

Dorcas encouraged our students to stretch out of their comfort zones to experience new and 'uncomfortable' environments that would help them grow their soft skills.

I think we were all assessing our skill sets after the Talk!

Note: [UK research](#) indicates that soft skills will remain crucial for job security and career advancement by 2030.

Student Opportunities

[Podiatry Degree Apprenticeship](#)

For information and applications contact Rachel Richardson, Suffolk Podiatry Clinical Lead at: rachel.richardson11@nhs.net. Closing Date: 14th May 2026 - Apply [Here](#)

[Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship \(PCDA\)](#)

For students who are unsure about going to university, or who want a more practical, hands-on option: the PCDA allows students to earn a salary of £42,000 while working towards a fully funded (BSc) Hons degree in Professional Policing Practice. For more information visit: [Police Apprenticeship and Traditional Entry | Join The Police](#)

Year 11-13 students:

Lloyds Banking Group Online Event - [Audit, Actuarial & Accounting Apprenticeships](#) Tuesday, 5th May, 5pm - 6pm

Register at: [Lloyds Banking Group Future Ready: All About Audit, Actuarial & Accounting Apprenticeships Survey](#) (Zoom link provided upon registration)

Year 10-13 students:

Get into Law - Virtual (Zoom) Work Experience Day - 28th May, 10am to 4pm

Take part in legal workshops, hear from international law firms and the UK's biggest university offering law degrees. Network in virtual booths (*under 18s should be safeguarded by a parent or carer*) and gain a Certificate of completion. Apply [here](#)

UCAT Support with "Get Into" Conferences

Get Into Dentistry Conference: Sunday 31st May, 9am-1:30pm

Register at: [Get Into Dentistry Conference Sign Up – Dental Mentor](#)

Request!

Please let me know if your child(ren) access any of the above opportunities by completing the following short survey: [Careers Student Opportunities – Fill in form](#)

Miss Hahn



Stella Maris Leadership Award Evening

Tuesday 28 April

On a beautiful sunny evening in our new chapel, a number of year 13 students were awarded certificates and badges recognising their achievement in the Stella Maris Award.

Mrs Senior introduced the evening explaining how delighted the school was to be taking part in this award, recognised by all four of the Catholic Universities. Rev Deacon Paul Raynes, Director of Operations and Finance, Diocese of East Anglia, gave a well-received address speaking about the importance of what are often considered, the counter cultural virtues found in the Rule of St Benedict, describing these virtues as not only important in individual human flourishing, but also for the growth and stability of our communities. It is not, he said, just about obeying rules, but doing the right thing. He then thanked the school for the support given to the parish and community in Cambodia, where many of the students volunteered in 2025. They were, he said, called to be a light that shines for others.

Music for the evening was provided by Year 10 student Imogen Rowland, who sang a solo accompanied by Mrs Roughley on the piano and the event ended with the assembled singing the Stella Maris hymn. Each of the awardees received a certificate and the Stella Maris badge from Mrs Senior to a round of applause for their achievements. After the final prayer, students, staff, and invited guest enjoyed some light refreshments and an opportunity to celebrate together.

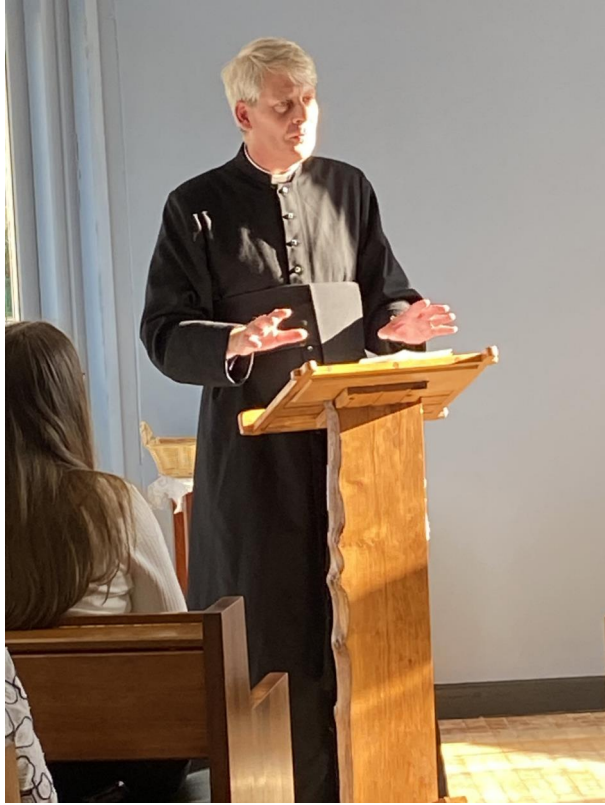
The purpose of the award is clear; the mission at St Benedict's is to provide an excellent broad balanced education to help young people grown to their full human potential. The Stella Maris Leadership Award is designed to cultivate the habits and virtues necessary to be a fully rounded person able to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Each student through the teachings in Core RE learns about the virtues and how these can be acquired through deliberate acts. In class they choose and review four virtues to reflect and review over the course of their time in the sixth form. In addition they engage in acts of service,

regular volunteering, or participation, developing leadership skills which lead to three levels of the award: bronze, silver and gold.

Congratulations to all the year 13 who received the award this year.

Mrs Herring




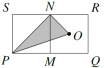


Success in the Intermediate Maths Challenge

Back in January we had a successful set of results from the Intermediate Maths Challenge, this included four students who gained the gold award, earning them a place in the next round in March. There were two levels of the next round, three of our students, Ben Baldock, Michael Knight and Hannah Thomas, took part in the Pink Kangaroo, which has a similar format to the Maths Challenge, including a series of multiple choice questions. The results from the Pink Kangaroo were very close but only Michael Knight managed to clear the threshold for a bronze award. Two of the questions are shown below, question five was completed correctly by all of the students but question 14 was not, are you able to find the correct answer. In the maths challenge they can not use calculators or measuring equipment.

Our final gold winning student, George Wightman, went through to the Maclaurins Olympiad, which has a very different structure, consisting of 5 long answer questions requiring full written solutions. You would have done well to complete two solutions in 2 hours. George came so close to earning a merit award, missing out by only one mark.

Mrs Nicholls

5. Sanika wants to write the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 in the boxes in the diagram. She has already written two numbers, as shown.
- 
- She wants the sum of the numbers in each pair of adjacent boxes to be odd, and to avoid the sum of the numbers in any three consecutive boxes being a multiple of 3.
- What is the sum of the numbers she will need to write in the shaded boxes?
- A 5 B 7 C 9 D 11 E 13
14. Let M and N be the midpoints of PQ and RS respectively in the rectangle $PQRS$. Let O be the centre of the rectangle $MQRN$. What fraction of the rectangle $PQRS$ is shaded?
- 
- A $\frac{1}{4}$ B $\frac{1}{2}$ C $\frac{1}{3}$ D $\frac{1}{5}$ E $\frac{2}{3}$

Summer Celebration

We are busy planning the Summer Celebration evening where we celebrate the achievements of our students. Previously we have been fortunate enough to receive generous sponsorship for the overall year 13 prize, as well as the year 13 subject prizes.

If you would like to sponsor a prize for Year 13 please could you contact me: ecoogan@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk by Friday 12 June.

Mrs Coogan

Library Closure Information

- The library will be closed from Tuesday 5th May until after the exams have finished in July.

- Any books you wish to return can be deposited in the large wooden Returns Box in reception.
- Mrs HG will be in G5 before morning registration, after school and at morning break.
- The **Reading Challenge** will continue. Bring any completed Reading Challenge books to G5 and talk to Mrs HG to obtain your next book.

I will see you back in the library in July!

Mrs Hayter-Gare

Friends of St Benedict's Parents Teachers Association

We are looking to resurrect our once active Parents Teachers Association to help with fundraising and general awareness of our school in the local community. If you think you might be interested in getting involved then please send me an email: JD'Mello@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

No huge commitments are needed at this stage. To begin with it would be good to get a small group together to explore how we could take this forward.

John D'Mello

Lockers

Year 11 and 13

Please can any student in years 11 and 13 with a locker, empty out their locker, and return the key to reception before they finish their exams.

Thank you very much.

Finance Department

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

Dates for your Diary



28 April - Lunchtime Careers Talk with Dorcas Sukami, Growth Officer at West Suffolk Council - **Soft Skills - Big Impact: building your future, one conversation at time**

29 April - **Year 9 Alumni Assembly** with Lauren and Matt Rowley, ATTREN

1 May - Alumni Lunchtime Careers Talk with Lauren Buckley, Social Events Manager, The Dorchester - **A Career in High-end Events Management**

7 May - Lunchtime Careers Talk with Sgt Darren Rivers, RAF - **Careers in the Royal Air Force**

5/6/7 May - A Level Art Exam

11 May - Public Exams Start

11 May - **Year 10 Next Steps Assembly** with West Suffolk College

22 May - Break up for half term

[Term Dates](#)

Contact Us



St Benedict's Catholic School

Beetons Way

Bury St Edmunds, IP32 6RH

01284 753512

enquiries@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

www.st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

[Instagram](#)