

St Benedict's Newsletter 346

20 November 2026

Catholic Social Teaching

This week, as we mark **Anti-Bullying Week**, we bring together several themes of Catholic Social Teaching to reflect on how we treat one another and the choices we make as members of our school community.

Sometimes it is easy to think that bullying is simply about unkind words or actions, but at its heart it is about how we recognise, or fail to recognise, the dignity of another person. Every person is created and loved by God. Nobody should feel that they have to change who they are, hide their differences or endure hurt in order to belong.

Perhaps one of the simplest questions we can ask ourselves this week is: How do I make other people feel?

In St Pauls letter to the Thessalonians he wrote “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.” *1 Thessalonians 5:11* His words remind us that our words and actions have the power to build others up or to knock them down. We may not always realise the impact

of a comment, a joke, a message, being left out or choosing to remain silent when someone is being hurt.

Jesus consistently noticed those who were overlooked, welcomed those who were excluded and treated people with compassion. His example challenges us to do the same. We are not simply called to avoid hurting others; we are called to actively help others feel valued, respected and included.

Catholic Social Teaching gives us a powerful way to reflect on Anti-Bullying Week, allowing us to see others through the eyes of Christ:

Dignity: Every person is made in the image of God. Nobody's worth is defined by their appearance, background, popularity, ability or differences. Every person deserves respect.

Solidarity: We stand alongside one another. Solidarity means not walking away when someone is being hurt, isolated or excluded. It means recognising that we are responsible for one another.

The Common Good: The choices we make affect the whole community. A school where people feel safe, respected and included is something we all have a responsibility to build.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: We are called to pay particular attention to those who may feel powerless, overlooked or vulnerable. We should be especially mindful of those who find it difficult to speak up for themselves.

Peace: Peace isn't simply avoiding an argument. It means choosing words and actions that heal rather than hurt, resolving disagreements respectfully and having the courage to challenge behaviour that causes harm.

We can live this out at school in simple ways;

- **Wisdom:** Think before you speak, post or act. Recognise the impact your choices can have on someone else. Don't simply follow the crowd; make choices that reflect what you know is right.
- **Compassion:** Try to see things from another person's perspective. Notice those who may be feeling lonely, excluded or hurt. A simple invitation, kind word or willingness to listen can make a difference.
- **Resilience:** Have the courage to stand up for others and seek help when something isn't right. Resilience isn't about putting up with bullying; it is about finding the courage to speak out, support others and seek the help needed to make things better.

Perhaps this week we can take a moment to reflect on some simple but important questions: Do my words and actions help others feel that they belong? Do I include people, or do I sometimes leave others out? Do I have the courage to speak up when someone is

being treated unfairly? Am I willing to reflect on my own behaviour and put things right when I have hurt someone? And what could I do today to help someone feel valued?

Sometimes we may never know the full impact of our words or actions. A joke, a comment, a message or a moment of exclusion can stay with someone far longer than we realise. Equally, kindness, encouragement and standing alongside someone can help them feel seen and valued.

We cannot always change what others choose to do, but we can choose who we want to be. We can choose not to join in, not to spread hurt, not to turn away and not to make someone else's pain our entertainment.

Let us try to see one another as Jesus sees us: not as labels, not as differences, not as mistakes, but as people of dignity, worth and possibility.

Loving God,

Help us to see the value in everyone

and treat one another with kindness and respect.

Give us the wisdom to make good choices,

the compassion to include and support others,

and the courage to stand up for what is right.

Help us to build a community

where nobody feels alone,

where everyone feels valued

and where kindness is stronger than hurt.

Amen.

Our Lady of Walsingham Writing Competition

OLOW Trust Writing Competition

The winners of the trust's 500 words writing competition were delighted to receive their prizes this week. Barnaby Coates (1st place), Elijah Dow (2nd place) and Bobby Talbot-Hadley (3rd place) each received a winner's medal and a £10 book token for their stories based on the idea 'It appeared overnight'. St Benedict's also received a trophy, which will be displayed proudly in 8L's tutor room.

Reading Challenge Winners

Congratulations go to Cecily Healy (7A), Sarah Faria Pestana (7P), Angus Palmer (8C) and Iris Gurrell (8P) for completing the reading challenge by reading 4 books on the recommended reading list for their year group.

Mrs Oakes



ESU Mace

Our debate team for 2026/27 is comprised of two Year 12 students, Rowan Kimble and Minnie Davies, both of whom joined St Benedict's this year, and Keira Cartwright from Year 13. The English Speaking Union gave them the position of Proposition and the motion that "*This House would allow under-16s to use social media, but require platforms to take stronger steps to protect them from bullying and predatory behaviour.*"

The first round of the ESU Mace was hosted by Abbeygate Sixth Form College on Wednesday 18th November, and there were to be two debates. Our Opposition was the Abbeygate team and there was an interesting exchange of ideas and viewpoints between the speakers. Our first speaker was Rowan, who was fluent, expressive and competent; then was Keira, who was passionate, well-informed and compelling and, last, our summary speaker, Minnie, who was poised, effective and confident. All three acquitted themselves with aplomb and Rowan and Keira both offered and accepted many Points of Information, to ensure a lively performance by St Benedict's. I am confident that the St Benedict's team would have triumphed, but an unexpected circumstance altered the end-result of the evening.

In the second debate, King Edward VI School was to propose the motion that "*This House would exempt family farms from inheritance tax, provided the land continues to be farmed by the family***"** *against the* Opposition team from Finborough School. Minutes before the first debate, we were informed that King Edwards would not be participating. This led to a situation I have never before encountered in the Mace: because there were insufficient teams, and Finborough had to present their arguments without opponents, the rules dictated that all of the teams would accede to the next round in January. We look forward to reconvening in the New Year and will be practising all the skills demonstrated at Abbeygate this week. Congratulations, ladies!

Mrs James

ESU Sixth Form Public Speaking Competition

William Digings and Linduli Jayaneth represented St Benedict's in the semi-final of the English Speaking Union's Sixth Form Public Speaking Competition over Zoom on Monday this week.

They were competing against four students from Colchester County High School for Girls, who spoke with erudition and passion on a huge variety of topics: **"***Recent student protests in France"; "Adding life to years - 'zombie' cells"; "How movies and media affect the geography of the modern world"* and "*Does your postcode determine whether you live?"*

The order of the speeches, which were conducted from the homes of the competitors, was decided by a random selection wheel, which added a little levity to ease any tension – though all of the speakers seemed quite calm, probably because this was the second round, so they had been able to prepare fully.

Linduli Jayaneth, in year 12, spoke eloquently on the thorny issue of "*AI and human capability"* in a balanced and spirited reflection on whether increasing our efficiency by using AI is actually eroding our capability due to such mechanisms as cognitive off-loading. It was an enthralling and compelling speech, and it provoked some insightful questions.

William Digings, in year 13, spoke about "*Space exploration"* and considered the economic, political and moral implications of the private exploitation of space technology. He made a strong case for investing more in saving this planet than in investigating the mining potential of asteroids, among other fascinating observations. This was probably the students' favourite speech as it was exciting and glamorous as well as wide-ranging.

The judges' decision was that Linduli should go through to the final next week. We are delighted for her and would like to congratulate her on her success, as well as wishing her well for the last round.

Bar Mock Trial Competition

Finally, after many weeks of lunchtime preparation and a two-hour rehearsal, Ms Turner and I took our Bar Mock Trial team to compete against other eastern region schools at Norwich Crown Court.

There were many stand-out performances, with all of our witnesses, our usher, court clerk and barristers as well as our jurors giving their all in this very busy day of defending and prosecuting two cases against our opponents.

The first case was the fictitious alleged dangerous driving of a taxi driver who seemed to have panicked and broke the law in several ways. This was a charge that was really impossible to defend but the judges mark teams on their familiarity with the etiquette of court and with court procedure, rather than the verdict. The second case was one of corporate bribery and offered more opportunities, perhaps, for a successful defence as much of the evidence depended on the interpretation of text messages and other behaviours.

In addition to St Benedict's being proud of our students' performances in the court environment, we are also very gratified with the fact that both defence and prosecution provided "swing" teams to substitute for a team that had to pull out at the last moment. This generous move meant another school could compete and our students had no down-time in the course of the day – their resilience is to be admired and, hopefully, emulated.

The other way in which our team made us grateful for teaching the calibre of young people we have at St Benedict's was their flexibility, camaraderie and joint problem-solving when one of our barristers was too ill to attend. We gave them the problem to discuss as we embarked on the outward journey and by the time we reached Norwich, they had swapped, doubled-up and planned how to cover the absence. This is the nature of our students, who are adept at demonstrating the precepts of our ethos in representing our school.

Mrs James

Year 8 Girls Netball

West Suffolk Cluster Tournament

On Tuesday 17th November, the Year 8 girls' netball team took part in their second competition of the year, representing the school at the West Suffolk Cluster Tournament, hosted at Thurston Community College.

The team faced three challenging matches against County, Sybil Andrews and Thurston, and got off to an excellent start with a convincing 3-0 victory over County, with goals from Daphne Patrick and Annabelle Stephens.

They carried this momentum into their second match against Sybil Andrews, producing another strong performance to secure a well-deserved 3-1 win.

Their final match saw them face the hosts, Thurston. Despite putting in a determined effort, the team were unfortunately unable to secure a third victory.

Throughout the competition, the team demonstrated great teamwork, resilience and sportsmanship and should be incredibly proud of their performances. While success was very much a collective effort, a particular standout performer was Tilly Ferreira Da Silva Carreira, who showed fantastic determination in defence and demonstrated excellent leadership skills throughout the tournament.

Congratulations to the whole team on a successful tournament and for representing the school so brilliantly!

Mr Fishlock



Careers Update

BAE Systems STEM Roadshow - Years 7 & 8

On Wednesday 18th November, our Year 7 and Year 8 cohorts (and their teachers) were educated, entertained and inspired by another BAE Systems STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Roadshow. The theme this year was "THE MATERIAL WORLD".

Bryn, Georgia and Lauren - the STEM Roadshow Team - enlightened students on how everyday materials such as aluminium, titanium and magnesium drive cutting-edge technology and how STEM is actively involved across engineering, manufacturing, technology and aerospace. Our cohorts learned how important creativity and problem-solving are in fuelling innovation and how engineering is for everyone. Stereotypes were well and truly broken by the STEM team and ensured our students let go of the myth that engineering is just for men, in construction, and must involve getting greasy and dirty!

Our Year 7s and 8s were a credit to the school throughout the workshops. The Roadshow Team had a tough time selecting students from the sea of hands that shot up in readiness to participate

in their interactive activities e.g. finding molecules to help an oxygen molecule become water and carbon dioxide, and to demonstrate the flexibility of certain materials!

Huge thanks go out to Bryn, Georgia and Lauren for their energy and skill in teaching us all something new in such an entertaining, inclusive and inspiring way. I now know that that atoms stack and slide and that aluminium doesn't rust!

We are all looking forward to next year's Roadshow...

Year 10 (and above) Free Webinar on Work Experience

To support parents and carers of Year 10 and older students in finding work experience placements for their child(ren), we have asked Georgia Turner at InvestIN to host a free online webinar: "Classroom to Career". Georgia will talk about today's labour market, how students can develop their skills and the career experiences that lead to future success.

Ms Hahn






The Material World








School of
WONDERS

Christmas Card Competition - Deadline Next Week

We have launched our Christmas card competition, we want to see your best design 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. There will be a first, second and third place for each year group and a prize in the form of house points and art packs. Please send in your entries by the 25 November 2026. We look forward to receiving them.

Mrs Chacksfield

Christmas Concert - Raffle Prizes

As you are aware, we are collaborating with the Bury St Edmunds Youth Concert Band for a concert on Sunday 13th December 4PM-5PM, followed by refreshments.

All money raised will be split evenly between supporting the youth band, and our global charity Children and Families in Need in Zimbabwe (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN NEED IN ZIMBABWE - Home).

To help raise further support, we are seeking some raffle prizes. If you think you have anything suitable, please could you provide to the office, for the care of Mr Kevin Murphy ref. Concert Raffle.

If you wish for your child to participate, please complete the form link Christmas Concert 13th December 2026 – Fill in form.

Mrs Hamilton

November in the Library

Library Newsletter

November 2026

This Month in the Library

Welcome to November's library newsletter!

Join us as we explore some of the most interesting and important events taking place this month including Reading Week, Anti-Bullying Week, Remembrance Day, World Children's Day, Thanksgiving and Doctor Who Day. Whether they are moments from history, key religious dates, cultural celebrations or awareness days, we will be highlighting them via engaging displays and book recommendations. Also, don't forget, we will have plenty of fun and creative activity sheets available too. You can complete them during a quiet moment in the library alone, with friends or take them home for later.

Looking for your next great read? We will also be sharing a range of reading recommendations chosen by students and staff for all ages and interests. They are perfect for discovering something new and inspiring.

Next month we will be celebrating Computer Science Education Week, Hannukah, Jane Austen Day and Christmas!

Mrs Hayter-Gare, the library helpers and the English Department.

'You want weapons? We're in a library! Books! The best weapons in the world!'

The Doctor, Doctor Who.

Welcome to St Benedict's Library

Our library is a safe space to read, play chess, play games, chat with your friends, study and research.

Whether you are looking for your next favourite book, help with research, a space to study, chess pieces or activity sheets we are here
to help.

Food and drink are allowed in the **lower area** but please keep it clean and tidy.

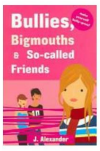
No food or drink to be consumed in the **upper (computer) area. Computers for academic purposes only.**

Go to the main desk to check out/return books or, if Mrs HG is absent, use the forms provided on the desk.

Book recommendations

Anti-Bullying Week

***Bullies, Bigmouths & So-Called Friends*, Jenny Alexander, (Nonfiction)**



Most books about bullying tell children how to act without addressing how they feel—you can't act brave and confident if you feel stressed and helpless inside. Jenny Alexander's approach is to develop readers' psychological defences. Through a mix of exercises, quizzes, and fictional scenarios, she combines common sense with simple cognitive techniques to build up children's self-esteem. Her tone is humorous and upbeat, but always sensitive to the reader's feelings. Link: goodreads

***How To Fly With Broken Wings*, Jane Elson, (Fiction, genre: Modern Relationships, pink dot)**



Twelve-year-old Willem has Aspergers Syndrome and two main aims in life: to fly and to make at least two friends of his own age. But all the other boys from the Beckham Estate do is make him jump off things. First his desk - and now the wall. As his toes teeter on the edge, Sasha Barton gives him a tiny little wink. Might she become his friend?
Bullied by Finn and his gang the Beckham Estate Boyz, Willem has no choice but to jump. As he flies through the air he flaps his arms, wishing he could fly and escape into the clouds. Instead, he comes crashing down and breaks his ankle.
Sasha, angry with herself for not stopping Finn and his Boyz, is determined to put things right. And soon, while the gangs riot on their estate, Willem and Sasha form an unlikely friendship. Because they share a secret. Sasha longs to fly too.
When Magic Man Archie arrives with stories of war-flying spitfires, he will change the lives of the kids on the Beckham Estate forever. And perhaps find a way for Willem and Sasha to fly ...
Touching on themes such as friendship and bullying, this is a charming tale about overcoming obstacles and finding friendship in unlikely places. Link: goodreads

Contact Mrs HG with any questions. rhayter-gare@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

Student Recommendation:

***The Legend of Zelda, Ocarina of Time*, Akira Himekawa, (fiction, genre: graphic novel)**



I think this is a good book because I like Manga and comic books. I also like it because it has adventure and I like the character's personalities.

Written by a Year 7. 4 out of 5 stars.

Remembrance Day

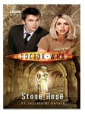
***War Horse*, Michael Morpurgo, (Fiction, genre: Animal Stories, purple dot)**



A powerful tale of war, redemption and a hero's journey. In 1914, Joey, a beautiful bay-red foal with a distinctive cross on his nose, is sold to the army and thrust into the midst of the war on the Western Front. With his officer, he charges toward the enemy, witnessing the horror of the battles in France. But even in the desolation of the trenches, Joey's courage touches the soldiers around him and he is able to find warmth and hope. But his heart aches for Albert, the farmer's son he left behind. Will he ever see his true master again? Link: goodreads

Doctor Who Day

***Doctor Who The Stone Roses*, Jaqueline Rayner, (Fiction, genre: Dystopian and Sci-Fi, blue dot)**



Mickey is startled to find a statue of Rose in a museum - a statue that is 2,000 years old. The Doctor realises that this means the TARDIS will shortly take them to ancient Rome, but when it does, he and Rose soon have more on their minds than sculpture.

Library Hours

Monday to Thursday 8.15am – 4.30pm

Friday 8.15am – 4pm

Open at morning break, lunch break and after school.

Book Club Wednesday after school

Chess Club Tuesday lunchtime

Reading Challenge

Available to all year groups.

Check out the posters in the library and around the school or talk to Mrs HG and the Library helpers.

This month's winners: Christopher Shenoda 8L, Angus Palmer 8C, Sarah Feria Pestana 7P and Iris Gurrell 8P

Christmas Lunch

We will be holding our Christmas Lunch on the 17 December 2026.

More information on booking and payment to follow early next week.

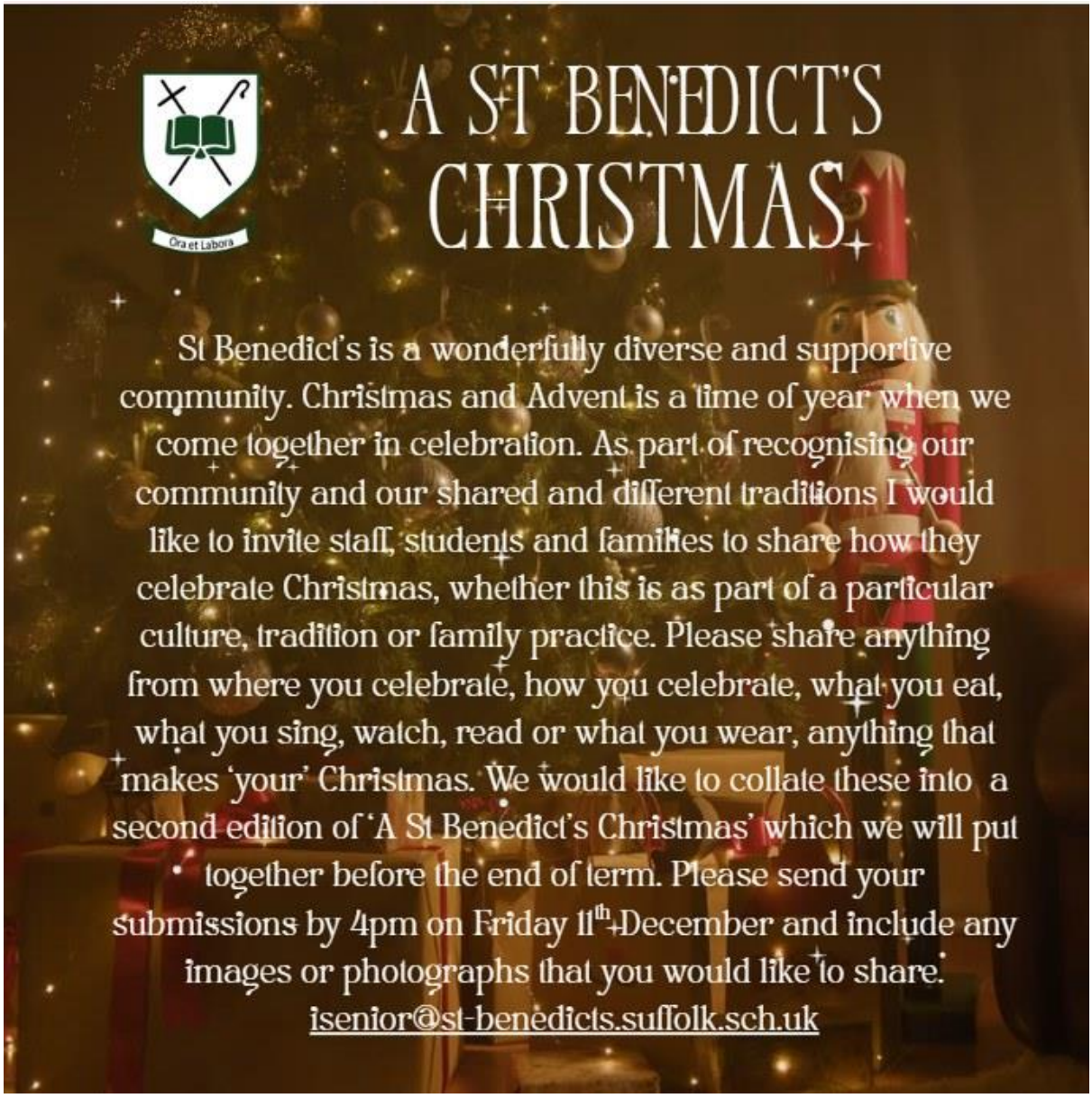
Mr Taylor



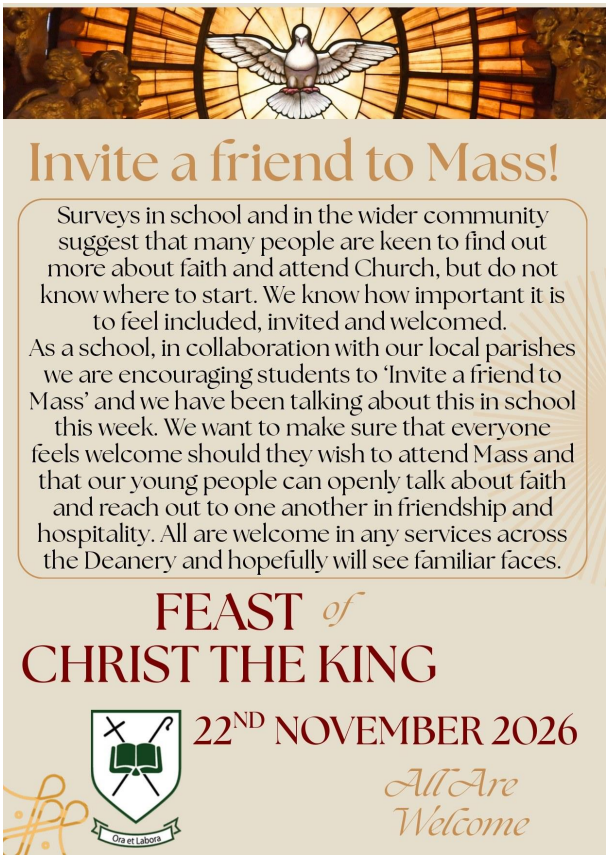
Christmas Carol Service



St Benedict's Christmas



Invite a Friend to Mass



PTA Quiz Night



Parish Contact Details



Is your child a Young Carer?

Suffolk Family Carers
Living Fuller Lives

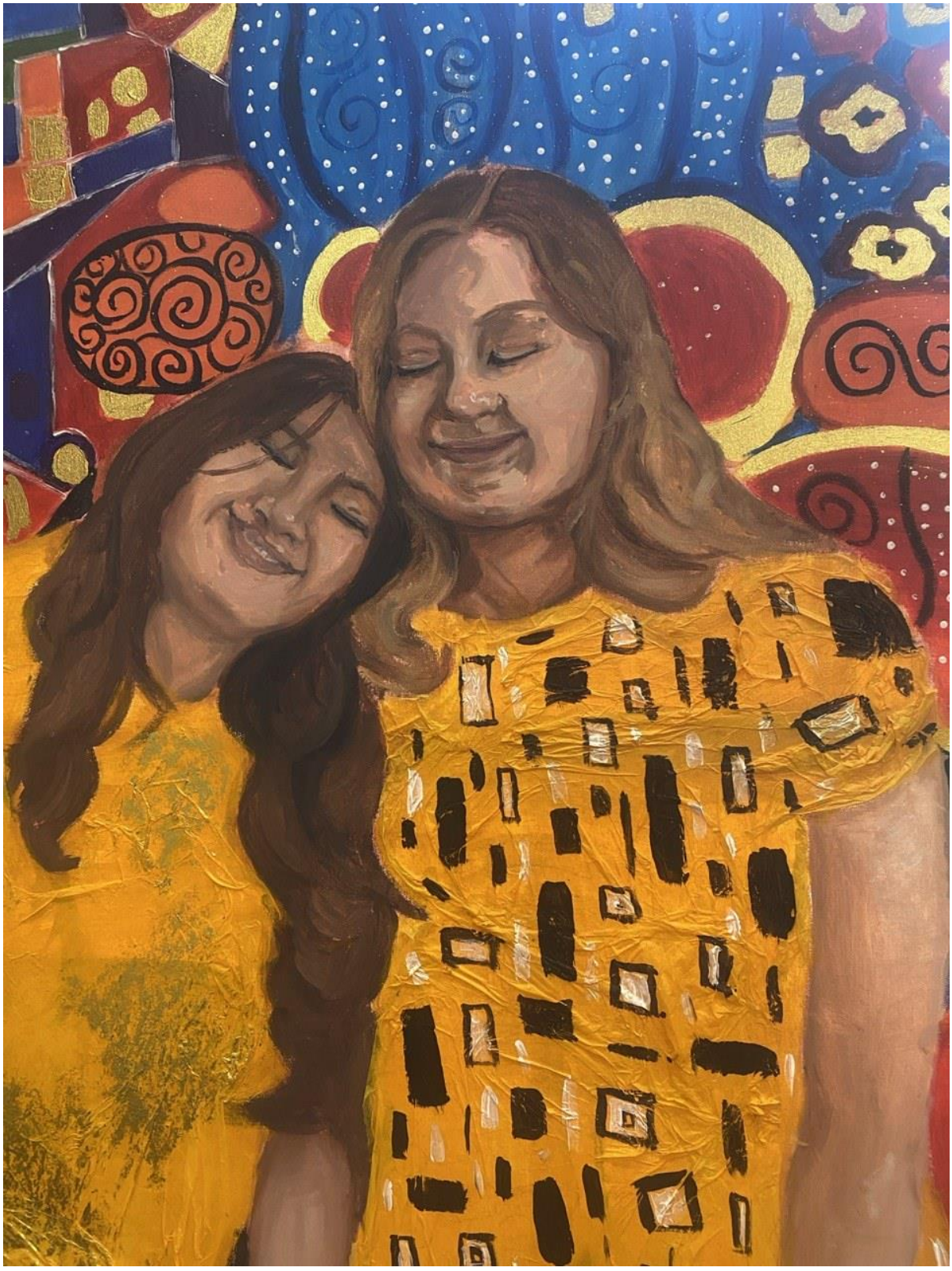
Young Carers
Young Adult Carers

A young carer is a child or young person aged between 5 to 25 years old whose life is in some way different or restricted because they provide, or intend to provide, practical or emotional support to someone else.

The person they provide care for is often a parent, a relative who is physically or mentally ill, frail elderly, disabled or misuses alcohol or substances. Young carers could also be supporting and caring for a disabled brother or sister.

If you think your child is a Young Carer, please call Ms Bourne on 01284 753512 to discuss, or contact Suffolk Young Carers directly at www.suffolkfamilycarers.org or 01473 835477

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

ARBOR Parental Information Verification



Please could we ask all parents to log onto their ARBOR accounts to ensure that you still have access to the system.

Once on the system, please check that the information that we hold is correct and up to date for each child that you have at the school. If it is not then please make any changes that are needed directly on the system.

If you are unable to make changes or would like some help then please email the school Arbor Support team on:

Arbor@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk

Mrs Defew

Dates for your Diary



25 November - Year 13 Parents Evening

26 November - Year 12 & 13 London Trip

27 November - PD Day

4 December - Charity Non Uniform Day - St Nicholas Hospice

9 December- Carol Service St Edmunds

10 December - Year 12 Parents Evening

11 December - Charity Non Uniform Day - CAFOD

13 December - Christmas Concert

16 December - Year 11 Mock Certificate Morning and Bowling

18 December - Charity Non Uniform Day - Children and Families in Zimbabwe

Term Dates

Contact Us



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