



## Church of England Junior School

**No: 8**  
**14<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

Dear Parents and Carers,

We have made it to the end of a busy term!

I would like to start this week's newsletter by thanking you all for your ongoing support of the school and the warm welcome I have received in my new role as Headteacher. Although I have been at the school for many years, starting as a year leader 15 years ago, this role is bringing many new exciting challenges and opportunities and I am looking forward to moving the school forward with the fantastic staff, children and families that we have here at St Mary's.

Thank you to everyone who donated a toy for the Spotlight appeal. We were pleased to hand over several donations that will make a difference to many children in our community this Christmas. Spotlight have already sorted, wrapped and distributed over 2500 gifts to young people in and around Basingstoke, thank you for your generosity.

It was lovely to join the Junior choir in the Church last weekend as part of their Christmas Tree Festival. They sang beautifully, their final song, 'I Will Rejoice' sounded amazing in the Church, I have to admit it brought a tear to my eye! Thank you to those who came to watch and support the choir and the Old Basing Infant's singing club. We are also very happy to say that we won the most eco tree! Thank you to the parents who came in to help sew our holly leaves from a recycled school jumper!



This afternoon everyone has enjoyed their Christmas parties, there was a lot of festive attire on show! We are looking forward to our annual carol concert this evening and Christmas lunch tomorrow to end the term and bring our school festive celebrations to a close.

Please look out for a very special additional end of term newsletter coming out tomorrow!

On behalf of all the staff, I would like to thank you all for the kind sentiments and generous gifts we have received this week.

Finally, I wish you, and your families, a very happy Christmas and all the best for 2024. I look forward to welcoming you all back to school on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January (please don't forget Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> is an INSET day!)

### **Safeguarding – Online Safety**

Christmas is such a wonderful time of year, excitable children and time to relax with family and friends. And of course, there are new toys to play with – for many children these will be new electronic devices and for older children possibly new phones.

With a huge increase in sales of devices, (around 13 million people receive smartphones for Christmas each year) it is important to ensure that you and your children are safe when playing with new electronics. The UK Safer Internet Centre (UKSIC) have set out a few top tips to help keep your household safe online over the holidays:

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/top-tips-for-staying-safe-online-at-christmas>

### **School Dinners**

We are aware of a small number of parents who have had concerns over the school dinners provided by Hampshire County Council Catering Services (HC3S). We have fed back all comments to the catering team. Unlike some schools around the country where dinners have been ordered in advance, children are able to choose daily if they would like a school dinner or a packed lunch, therefore we would encourage you to look at the menu at home to ensure your child has something that they would like for their lunch each day.

### **Homework**

There will be no homework set over the Christmas holidays but don't forget your child can log onto Mathletics, Education City and Times Tables Rock Stars anytime at home.

### **Uniform**

Thank you for your support in ensuring your child has the correct uniform on each day, we have seen a huge improvement in PE kit so far this year with the majority of pupils wearing plain black tracksuit bottoms. Please can we remind you that this is what should be worn over green shorts on colder days, shorts must be worn for indoor PE, coloured/patterned jogging bottoms or leggings are not part of our school uniform. When the children take pride in their appearance it really does have a positive impact on their confidence and work ethic – we are having to say 'tuck your shirt in' less frequently which is great!

### **Visit from Right Reverend Philip Mounstephen**

We are very much looking forward to welcoming the new Bishop of Winchester, Right Reverend Philip Mounstephen, into school to lead an AoW on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January. As part of his visit he will assist us in the 'chalking of the doors' to celebrate Epiphany (also known as Twelfth Night, *Theophany*, or Three Kings Day) this will mark the occasion of a time-honored Christian tradition of 'chalking the doors.'

### **Attendance**

At the end of term the school's overall attendance stood at 96.8%

Congratulations to Davies Class with the highest attendance of 97.9%.

We have seen an increasing number of requests of leave during term time for holidays. In line with Hampshire County Council guidance on school attendance, these will not be authorised except in exceptional circumstances.

### **A Christmas message from Miss Bunkle (SENCo)**

At our Parents' and Carer Coffee morning the topic of Christmas was on all our minds. We are all feeling the pressures of building towards the big day and the to-do lists are getting longer! Whilst we are all hoping that Christmas will be a wonderful family celebration... you might actually see some behaviours coming out that are challenging. Remember – this is normal. Most of our children are tired, excited and overwhelmed. You might not see this on Instagram, but you certainly would in most of our homes!

I just wanted to say as a parent – don't be hard on yourself if it does go wrong. Don't feel paying a fortune on expensive gifts is the answer, or run yourself ragged trying to make it all perfect. It might be a beautiful Christmas day... or you might be hiding behind the turkey, from the children, holding a glass firmly... Both are just fine. In the future, your children will look back fondly, and all the Christmas's will blur into happy memories.

Make sure you look after yourselves. Happy parents mean happy children. If you are feeling overwhelmed by your children's behaviour remember, you're not the only one. You are not alone. Don't forget to look on our well-being page for links to useful websites that can offer advice and support.

<https://www.st-marys-jun.hants.sch.uk/page/?title=Emotional+Well%2Dbeing&pid=326>

### Well done Mrs Malone!

We are thrilled to share that Mrs Malone was invited to join Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales, and other members of the Royal Family, at the carol service at Westminster Abbey last week. Mrs Malone was nominated for her services to music and children, I cannot think of anyone more deserving. Selfless efforts of those who support children and families in communities across the UK were recognised at the 'Together at Christmas' carol service. The service will be broadcast as part of a special programme at 7:45pm on ITV and ITVM on Christmas Eve – I wonder if we will spot Mrs Malone!

### Governors' Corner

I recently had the privilege of joining Year 5 as they held an Act of Worship at St. Mary's Church. During a week in which they were considering the value of respect, the Act of Worship considered how we respect the natural resources we have, in this case water, and how we consider those who don't have such easy access to clean water. The children thought about all the different uses of water, the consequences of not having clean water and how they could help to change things. They talked about giving to relevant charities and how they could use less water, though it was emphasised that they shouldn't stop washing, just have shorter showers! The Act of Worship engaged us all and made us think about how we shouldn't take for granted the valuable resource of water that we have.

On behalf of the governing body I wish you all a happy and healthy Christmas.

**Paul Skinner, Foundation Governor**

### F.O.O.B.S. news

Hello and Merry Christmas from F.O.O.B.S.! Reply letters from Santa will be coming home this week for those that purchased letter to Santa kits. They will be in plain envelopes for you to share them with your child in your own way. A big thank you for all your support this term and we'll see you next year with more exciting events!

### Coffee Mornings

It has been so lovely to welcome so many parents and carers to our regular coffee mornings over the last term. Our half-termly coffee mornings are an opportunity for parents to get together, share ideas and parenting challenges over a cup of coffee (and a biscuits!)

Miss Bunkle (our SENCo), Mrs Alvarez (our ELSA) and Mrs Squire (Behaviour Support LSA) are also on hand to chat about issues.

Meet us 9am to 10.30am on:

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> February

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July



### Year 3 Applications for September 2024

Don't forget that the application window for applications into Year 3 in September 2024 is open. The deadline for applications is 15th January 2024.

For even more news, updates and photos, don't forget to visit our website:

<https://www.st-marys-jun.hants.sch.uk/>

**Gemma Lillywhite**  
**Headteacher**

### **2023-24 INSET Days**

2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024

19<sup>th</sup> February 2024

24<sup>th</sup> May 2024

### **Dates for your Diary**

14<sup>th</sup> December – Christmas Carol Concert at Church 6pm

15<sup>th</sup> December – End of term Church visits:

09:15 am Davies, Mitchell, Nelson, Conan Doyle

10:00 am Nightingale, Brunel, Paulet, Dickens

11:00 am Russell, White, Wellington, Austen

15<sup>th</sup> December - Last day of term

2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 – INSET Day

3<sup>rd</sup> January – First day of new term

4<sup>th</sup> January – Hampshire Music Service Inset Day (no music lessons)

10<sup>th</sup> January – Yr. 5 Swimming (am)

12<sup>th</sup> January – Yr. 3 Disco F.O.O.B.S

16<sup>th</sup> January – Yr. 6 Church visit 1:30pm

17<sup>th</sup> January – Yr. 5 Swimming

18<sup>th</sup> January – Mitchell Class Sharing Assembly 2:45pm

23<sup>rd</sup> January – Yr. 6 SAT's info evening

24<sup>th</sup> January – Yr. 5 Swimming

25<sup>th</sup> January – Russell Class Sharing Assembly 2:45pm

26<sup>th</sup> January – Yr. 6 Movie Night F.O.O.B.S (details to follow)

30<sup>th</sup> January – Yr. 4 Church visit 1:30pm

31<sup>st</sup> January – Yr. 6 visit to Woking Mosque

31<sup>st</sup> January – Yr. 5 Swimming

31<sup>st</sup> January – Open the Box Theatre company visiting Yr. 3

5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> February – Yr. 3 Show week

5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> February – No after school clubs this week

6<sup>th</sup> February – Coffee morning 9-10:30am

7<sup>th</sup> February – Yr. 5 Swimming

9<sup>th</sup> February – F.O.O.B.S Dare to be Different Day

12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> February – Half Term

19<sup>th</sup> February INSET Day

20<sup>th</sup> February – First day of new half term