



# ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL

*Living, learning and growing together with Jesus*



**NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2011**

## MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Dear Parents and Carers

We finish the autumn term with much good news to share with you. This week we had a monitoring visit from OFSTED and the Inspector judged St Gregory's school as being '**Good**' in all of the categories that were under review. We are delighted with the outcome which is a true reflection of the tremendous work that has gone on since the last inspection, where we were in the '**Satisfactory**' category.

Known for our sporting successes, we have received a high accolade from Bedford Borough as St Gregory's has been voted '**Sports School of the Year**'. (Do look out for the photo in the Beds Times). It is a tremendous achievement as we were competing against all of the Specialist Sports Schools in the Borough. Congratulations to Mr Millie and Mrs Belcher who attended the ceremony and received the trophy from two local Olympians Tim Foster and Gail Emms. In addition, our Year 8 Basketball team have qualified for the District Finals on the 5th January at Lincroft School. Supporters will be most welcome.

We also are proud of two of our pupils Chipo and Deborah who are travelling to the Holy Land over the festive period as part of a basketball tour and pilgrimage. The girls will be visiting Jordan, Israel and the West Bank and will play against Jewish, Muslim and Christian basketball teams. We wish them a safe journey and look forward to an update on their return.

Our vibrant learning community has been action packed this term as you will read in the newsletter. Our new pupils and staff have settled in well and are making a significant contribution to our school community. We have also welcomed Fr Jonathan Hill who has celebrated Mass with us on three occasions this term.

In keeping with our mission we have been working hard to help those less fortunate than ourselves. We had a school focus on Operation Christmas Child and through the generosity of parents, pupils and staff we were able to send 120 boxes to the Ukraine. Each class has also contributed to our collection for the local homeless charity based in Prebend Street. Children In Need and the Poppy Appeal have also benefitted from the generosity of the St Gregory's community.

There have been many highlights not least the very successful Open Evening in November which was our opportunity to show case the excellent work that goes on here at St Gregory's. There was a tremendous amount of interest and we were proud to show off our school to the many visitors. More than half of the school population assisted staff on the evening and it is testament to the shared sense of pride that so many wanted to help.

Congratulations must also go to Miss Bremner and the newly established ECO Club. We are the only school in the Catholic Federation to have gained the ECO Bronze Award, recognising that we are an ECO friendly school. We will be striving to gain the Silver Award by the spring and then on to gain the Green Flag by the end of the summer term. We certainly are ambitious!

My first year as Head teacher of St Gregory's has been full of joy and I have been delighted by the hard work and endeavour so evident within the school. There is a culture of aspiration and a great drive for success and I know that there will be many more achievements in the year to come.

I wish you all a happy and holy Christmas with very best wishes for the New Year.

Yours sincerely

Frances Topa

Should you wish to contact the PTA, please call 07906 695835 / [stgregoryspta@googlemail.com](mailto:stgregoryspta@googlemail.com)



### WELL DONE!

Advent is a time of preparation, a time for love, hope and joy.

This term we had a fantastic response to the shoebox appeal,

over **120** boxes. All these will be shipped to children in the Ukraine and every one of them will provide a child with a happy and joy filled Christmas. **THANK YOU** so much for your generosity, especially in this economic climate, mirroring the example given by Jesus: "Whatever you do for these brothers of mine you do unto me!" Matthew 25:40.

Equally we have been collecting for need closer to home, for the Prebend Street. With collections of chocolate items, tinned produce, warm items of clothing and assorted toiletries; all greatly needed and appreciated within our local community. These will be delivered to the Day Centre on 15 December 15 by school representatives, one from each year group, showing that it **IS BETTER TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.**

### Inclusion

St Gregory's is a fully inclusive school and we strive to make school a positive experience for all children. We fully believe that if a child is happy and healthy they can achieve their potential and beyond.

This term we have widened the opportunities available in order to make sure that pupils are happy and achieving. We now run a lunchtime homework club, which is available to all year groups, where pupils can access computers and adult support to help them with homework. The club also gives pupils the opportunity to discuss homework with their peers. We have now opened up the Tardis at break and lunchtime so that pupils have a space to go to. Mrs Oppong has started a very successful club that encourages Year 5 pupils to look at their positive achievements and build their self esteem.

As a team at St Gregory's we are striving to achieve the Inclusion Quality Mark in the spring term.

### French Link

As part of our link with Brittany, three Education Consultants visited the school on 24 November, along with Jan Lewandowski ( Primary languages Consultant), and were shown round the school by Mrs Fielder. They were very interested in our systems for assessment data analysis and were particularly impressed by the facilities in the school. As a result of this visit, a link with a French primary school in Brittany is hoped to be established.

### Year 7 Roman Day

St Gregory's was invaded by Marcus, Roman Centurion and Vulpus the Barbarian Roman Gladiator on 11 November. Year 7 pupils took part in a range of activities to gain an overview of Roman life in Britain. They were able to play Roman games, handle artefacts, take part in a quiz and watch a gladiator fight! Thanks must go to all the parents and pupils for the amazing costumes and to the PTA who subsidised the day.



### International Schools Award

As a school we work closely with local and national charities to help make the lives of those less fortunate than ours more bearable. This includes having raised money for the past few years to support the AVOCA project in El Salvador.

We are building on this aspect of our school life by seeking recognition from The British Council for our work, via the International Schools Award, and it was with pleasure that we received news recently that our action plan for the year has been accepted. This will involve students in a variety of activities and experiences aimed at developing understanding of different cultures around the world, including looking at life in Japan and El Salvador, the music and artwork of countries from South Africa to New Zealand and considering festivals and celebrations across the world.

We have a fantastically varied community and are very keen to hear from anyone who is willing to share their knowledge or experiences. Do please get in touch if there is anything you could offer us to enrich the cultural understanding of our students.

## Facebook Concerns



In the last newsletter we shared some information about the potential dangers of on-line communication.

Despite discussing practical steps for keeping safe in ICT lessons, many students do not seem to be following this advice and are potentially putting themselves and others at risk. If your child has a Facebook account, you might like to sit with your child and check that they are not using a photo of themselves in school uniform as their profile picture, that they don't have photos of their friends in school uniform and that they have limited access to their sites to friends only.

## National Young Mathematician Competition



A big thank you to Matthew McDonald, Hannah Spencer, Nicholas Brady and Francesca Hrymajlo who represented the school at The National Young Mathematician Competition, held at the Explore Learning centre in

Sainsbury's. The pupils worked excellently as a team to solve a mathematical problem involving squares.

## Maths Parent Workshop

Many thanks to the staff and parents who came along to our Maths Workshop on Thursday, 8 December.

At the Workshop, parents learned about the written methods the pupils use at school. More workshops will be running next term. Please do come and join us.

## Maths Club

Maths club has been up and running for several months and is popular amongst the Year 5 pupils. It would be good to see more Year 6 pupils come along to play Maths games and get help with their homework from our year 8 Maths leaders: Dario Mongiardi, Anthony Tanti, Akiel Mahmood, Riccardo Mazzeo, Sofia Contino, Anna Santhosh and Jillian Bernardo.

## Magic Gloves!

Pupils in year 5 have been using rubber gloves to help them learn their more difficult times tables!



## Photography Club

During this half term Mr Stevens introduced a photography club aimed at students in Year 7 and 8 who wanted to learn more about photography and improving their photographic skills.

The aim is to equip the students with enough knowledge about photography for them to develop sufficient confidence to enter some of their images into competitions during the course of the year. It would also be fantastic to have some of our own students' photographic work displayed around the school.

At the moment the club consists of just a few members, but it is hoped that this number will increase after the Christmas break. Any students who are interested should speak to Mr Stevens and come along to room 5 on Wednesdays at 12:30.

## Resistant Materials

*Key stage 3 students have been extremely busy this first term with their first project of the year.*

*Year 7 have been designing photograph frames using acrylic plastic. It has been an exciting time for many of the students as it is their first time using machinery such as pillar drills and strip heaters. Once this project has been completed, early in the second term, the students will be able to take their frames home to show off their hard work.*

*Year 8 have made an excellent start to their design work this year. We have considered the designs of clocks for audience and purpose and there have been some outstanding designs produced as a result of this. Most of the students are in the final stages of completing their work and I suspect that a few of these clocks may be found under the tree this Christmas!*

## Science

The Year 7 students have been working hard on their Reproduction and Relationships topic, culminating in the Flour Babies project.

This challenge is based on the book called 'Flour Babies', in which the boys in a class are given a bag of flour each to look after as if it were a baby. This has involved the students caring for a flour baby for a week and taking sole responsibility. The students have responded admirably to this task.

## Eco Warriors



*St Gregory's Middle School has recently been awarded the Bronze Eco Schools award. This has given us a solid foundation as we progress towards the silver and green flag awards.*

*and green flag awards.*

*Special mention goes to Joe Smith and Arun Nar for their excellent organisation and management of the litter patrol.*

## Cookery Club



The Food Department's Cookery club has been busy baking some delicious Christmas fare! Every Tuesday wonderful smells have been

wafting out of the Food Tech room as mince pies, cheese straws and festive biscuits have been baked. The club has been well attended by both staff and students.

Please look out for our next club and sign up if you would like to enjoy some Easter treats!

## Uniform

We are changing our school uniform supplier from 1 February 2012. From this date, uniform will only be available to purchase on line.

We have a limited stock available in school, including summer polo shirts. Should you wish to take advantage of being able to purchase directly from ourselves, please do so by 31 January 2012.

More details of how to place orders will follow in January.

## PTA Raffle



Many thanks to everyone who bought a raffle ticket – we raised a profit of £100!

The hampers were won by:

**Taysha Bowskill** (Yr 6) Chocolate hamper

**Saskia Powell** (Yr 6) Boys' hamper

**Katie Peace** (Yr 8) Girls' hamper

Congratulations also to the following prize winners:

Mrs Joyner, Mrs Reddy, Mrs Owens, Mrs Fielder, Mrs Langley, Mr & Mrs Tipton, Miss Duggan, Luke & Suzanna Denham and Georgia McCann.

## Sporting News

### Girls Football

Year 5/6 and Year 7/8 teams competed in the Girls football tournament at the Bunyan Centre. Both teams played very well but narrowly missed out on qualifying for the finals.

### Table Tennis

For the first time we entered four teams (two boys/two girls) in the Year 7 and 8 table tennis tournament at Harrowden Middle school.

All teams competed well in their first round of matches.

The Year 7 Boys team got through to challenge for the top three places, and so did one team of Year 7/8 girls.

### Basketball

Year 8 Boys have started their fixtures this term, and are playing very well. They have made it through to the District Finals night on 5 January 2012, where they will play Beauchamp in the semi-final and either Lincroft or Daubeney in the Final.

Year 7 basketball will begin after Christmas and so will the Girls' basketball. This will take place on Tuesday lunchtimes.

### Boys' football

Years 6, 7 and 8 will begin their matches after Christmas. We are also hoping to run B team fixtures for both Years 7 and 8. The Year 7 Boys continue to go from strength to strength and will play their County Cup Quarter Final against Margaret Beaufort after Christmas.

### Cross Country

Tournaments will begin the second week back so go easy on the mince pies!

### Dodgeball

Begins straight after Christmas

## Holdenby House



The year 5 pupils and teachers had a fantastic time at Holdenby House on Wednesday, 14 December. As part of our History topic we dressed up as Victorians and experienced what life was like to work below stairs in a Grand Victorian House. Pupils (and teachers!) were given jobs such as: ironing, washing, cleaning, polishing and making beds. In the afternoon the pupils performed a poem to the Lady of the house. A fantastic time was had by all!

### Reminders

- There are still children coming to school with no coats – please do ensure your child has a coat on when they set off for school.
- Please note boots are not an acceptable part of school uniform.
- Pupils are not supervised on the playground until 8.35am – even in this bitter weather children are arriving at school far too early.
- The school car park should not be used by parents at the beginning and end of the day to drop off or collect children. Please use the car park at Biddenham Upper School.

### SATS (Week Commencing 14 May 2012)

Year 6 keep revising for Mock SATs at the beginning of February!



### Severe Weather



As the cold winter months approach, and the possibility of having to contact parents by text message increases, it is important we have an up to date mobile number to notify parents of school closures etc. If you have recently changed your mobile number please let school know by contacting the school office (01234 268649), or emailing:

[enquiries@st-gregorys.beds.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@st-gregorys.beds.sch.uk)

### New Appointments

We are pleased to welcome two new members of staff:

- **Aleatha Cumberbatch**  
(Library Resources Centre Manager)
- **Gemma Boulton**  
(Parent Support Worker - shared with St Joseph's Lower School)

**PLEASE REMEMBER TUESDAY, 3 JANUARY IS A TRAINING DAY. PUPILS RETURN TO SCHOOL ON WEDNESDAY, 4 JANUARY 2012.**

