



ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL

Living, learning and growing together with Jesus



NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2012

MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Dear Parents and Carers

The New Year has started extremely well in school as you will read in the action packed newsletter. There are so many opportunities to get involved in a wide range of activities which enrich our school curriculum and expand pupils' learning opportunities. Miss Cumberbatch, our Resource Centre Manager is developing a variety of exciting initiatives encouraging pupils' literacy. The library is rapidly becoming the hub of the school offering a tremendous range of events for all year groups. Developing reading skills is a key focus in school and we hope that you will continue to encourage your child to read at home on a regular basis.

Our musical talents emerged in the recent Percussion Workshop which was led by Jeff Rich the former drummer from Status Quo. It was a terrific morning where the school learnt about the history of drumming from its origins through to the modern day. There were many fascinating exhibits and all of the pupils had an opportunity to play a range of percussion instruments. It was great fun and very noisy!

Sporting successes are mounting this term with the Under 13 Boys' Basketball team clinching the District Cup. Congratulations to Jack Wawryn who has qualified for the County Cross Country Championships and to Kerry Delaney who will be representing the Year 7s of Bedford at the Winter School Games swimming competition.

Mrs Belcher and Mrs Dodd are the organisers of the 'Lunchtime Marathon Club' which is linked to the Bedford Olympic programme. The pupils have the opportunity to run a marathon over a ten week period. The final mile will be run in Bedford Park alongside the internationally acclaimed Kenyan athletes who will be visiting the town in April. Over a third of the school have signed up for the club and many are well on their way to their first bronze award. We will have the fittest pupils in the Borough!

Our work with the Catholic Federation has continued this term with a range of activities. We are sharing expertise across our schools with a number of staff involved in joint projects.

Staff and pupils from each school attended the Diocesan Mass in Dunstable, celebrated by Mgr. Kevin McGinnell. Candles were distributed to each school as a symbol of the light that Jesus brings to our world. A light that shines brightly in our wonderful community.

I would like to thank the dedication and commitment of our PTA who do so much in support of the school. We hope that you will be able to join in with our next event to be held on March 3rd at St Gregory's. It is a family evening with an Italian theme which I am sure will be a great success. Tickets are available from the school office, please do bring along your family and friends for what will be an enjoyable evening.

I wish you all a good rest and look forward to exciting opportunities that the next half term will bring.

Yours sincerely

Frances Topa
Headteacher

Should you wish to contact the PTA, please call 07906 695835 / stgregoryspta@googlemail.com

Year 6 News - 12 Weeks To Go!

Pupils in year 6 have been working hard preparing for their end of Key Stage 2 SATs tests and last week took part in mock examinations in English, Maths and Science.

There are only 12 weeks left to prepare for these very important assessments, which will take place week beginning **14 May 2012**. Please encourage your child to revise regularly to enable them to do their best. Full attendance at school during the next 12 weeks is essential.

There will be a **SATs information evening** on **Thursday, 22 March 2012** from **6.45-8.00pm**. We do urge you attend as this will provide you with vital information to help support your child in the lead up to the examinations.

We have been prioritising reading and are encouraging all children to read regularly at home. Those who read regularly to an adult at home benefit a great deal in terms of their confidence and progress in both reading and writing.

Thank you to all those parents who write regularly in children's reading/homework diaries. Teaching staff are very committed to writing in each child's reading diary and value this communication from parents.

Super Learning Day



There will be a Super Learning Day for pupils in Years 5 and 6 on **Friday, 16 March**. Pupils will be taking part in a range of activities that will support their learning, including a maths puzzle day.

Homework Club

This academic year at St Gregory's we have been running a highly successful homework club which runs every lunchtime in the Tardis. Pupils have been able to access staff for help with their homework and have been able to access computers where needed. All year groups welcome.

KS3 News

Grade sheets will be going out for Year 7 students before Easter and the Year 8 students will get their full report for the year. This is an important term, as much of the new learning from the Autumn term starts to be applied and extended, leading to raised levels of attainment. You can support your child by making sure they have all the equipment they need each day, that homework is completed appropriately and that they have plenty of sleep.

Homework

Homework is an important part of your child's school life. It enables students to prepare for the next lesson, to extend their learning or to apply their learning in a different context. Students are asked to write their homework in their planner and teachers regularly send emails to students to remind them about their homework. School email accounts can be accessed from home by following the link on the school website or via:

<https://webmail.stgregorys.beds.sch.uk/OWA/> enabling both you and your child to see what homework has been set. A copy of the homework timetable can also be downloaded from the school website, by clicking on the student link on the menu.

Theatre Group

We had a theatre group in school recently talking to the oldest students about cyberbullying. This built very well on the work covered in ICT lessons at the start of the year and was a good reminder of the possible consequences of being involved in sending messages, prank calls or sharing images over the Internet or phone network. Thank you to Mr Stevens for organising this event and to the students for listening so attentively and asking such perceptive questions.

For the last two years, our Year 8 leavers have contributed to a year book. This year, students have chosen to have a 'hoody' with the names of students in their year as a memento of their time with us. Look out for a letter about this next half term.

Science News

The Science department is about to embark on a monster KS3 Science trip! We are heading to the Big Bang Fair at the Birmingham NEC on Friday, 16 March.



The Big Bang is the largest celebration of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths for young people in the UK. Everything is aimed at showing young people just how many exciting and rewarding opportunities there are out there for them. There will be the chance to experience first class Science exhibits and to get up close to new developments in a wide variety of scientific areas.

Congratulations to Year 6 who have just undertaken their Science SATs paper. The students worked very hard and really gave it their all at the end of a long and challenging week.

Eco



The Eco Warriors have elected a new Chairperson and Vice Chair to begin their Eco Committee. These appointments are:

Chair: Chloe Leckning
Vice Chair: Chipo Maseko
Parent Member: Mrs Shirley Brown

All have been working tirelessly towards the Eco Schools Silver award and we are currently reviewing our action plans and looking towards our next big projects.

Library News from Miss Cumberbatch



A Library News notice board has been erected in the library to highlight news and events and a display board has been erected just outside the library to inform staff and students of competitions, accomplishments and initiatives that can be accessed.

We have joined the Schools' Network, an area of the National Literacy Trust, which enables us to receive regular updates on National Literacy information, support, training and competitions. A great investment for both pupils and staff!

A new library timetable has been trialled this term with **specific year groups given access to the computers and lunchtime table activities on particular days**. All other students are still granted access to the library to read, borrow or return books at breaktime.

Lunchtime:

- Monday Year 5
- Tuesday Year 6
- Wednesday Year 7
- Thursday Year 8

We have also introduced extra library hours, for all year groups, as follows:

- Tuesday afternoon 3.30 - 4.00pm
- Wednesday morning 8.15 - 8.45am
- Thursday morning 8.15 - 8.45am

During these extra hours, students can do homework or participate in library projects with parental consent.

Lunchtime Activities: All students are encouraged to utilise the library, and we have introduced board games, wordsearch and drawing opportunities, to encourage students to explore different mediums of learning.

Suggestion Slips: The library actively encourages pupils to express their opinions about what they would like to see and do in their library.

We have subscribed to **First News Children's Newspaper** to develop students' awareness and interaction with the world around us.

We have also been selling bookmarks to raise funds for the AVOCA charity.

We have promoted, encouraged and supported students to access the Bedford & Kempston School Sport Partnership competition to try their hands at Sports Writing.

National Storytelling Week

Pupils signed up to learn storytelling skills. The storytelling week was 28 January to 4 February and we have laid the foundations for a longer project that will culminate with our students telling stories to St Joseph's Lower in time for **World Book Day on 1 March**.

'Reading Miles Global Challenge'

Is an opportunity for pupils from Year 5 & 6 to read their way around the world with the help of parents/guardians. Ten minutes of reading equals 500 reading miles that will take you to six locations around the world on your **reading miles** map. Come to the library to get your passport and map, you will have until **16 March** to complete the challenge for your certificate.



'Read This'

Is a literacy challenge for Year 7 & 8 pupils to come up with a unique way of presenting a book review. This is your chance to design a fresh marketing spin on something that has been done many times before. It could be a blog, a news report or TV show. If interested sign up at the library, the deadline for this competition is **16 March**.

Library Monitors: Year 8 Prefects have been nominated to take on library duties after half term, to assist with the effective running of the library and gain valuable work experience skills.

Lastly, we will be reintroducing library fines for late returns and lost books after half term, following the recent amnesty.

Key Stage 3 English News

WATCH THIS SPACE

Times Spelling Bee

St Gregory's will be entering a team of Year 7 pupils in the Times National Spelling Bee in March.

Years 7 and 8 pupils are waiting to hear how many of their **Mini Saga** stories have been published.

Follow up information will be in the next Newsletter.

Budding Interviewers in Year 7

As part of their English studies Year 7 pupils have interviewed some recently retired local residents in order to help their research of Shakespeare's 7 Ages of Man.

We would like to thank Mrs Cross, Mrs Morris, Mr Redmond, Mr Shepherd and Mrs Sackett who kindly gave up their time to come into class to be interviewed. They shared their views on retirement and compared life today with their school and teenage years.

The interviewees were very impressed with the warm welcome that they received from the pupils and the perceptive questions they asked.

Chaplaincy News

We are approaching the season of Lent - a time of reflection and sacrifice. A time to give, pray and fast, mirroring the actions of Jesus.

In school this will be highlighted firstly by our celebration of Shrove Tuesday, when every class will have pancakes, reflecting on the "using up" of the good things before the fasting of Ash Wednesday and the six weeks of Lent to come.

*On **Ash Wednesday** we will celebrate **Mass** with Fr Jonathan and distribute ashes to those who wish to receive them, and on the **23 February** we will begin our **Lenten soup kitchen**. This will be held weekly, every Thursday at 12.35pm, in the cookery room and is a fantastic opportunity for the community to gather together for a cup of soup and a roll. All monies collected will go to the AVOCA appeal.*



*On **23 March** we will be celebrating **Oscar Romero Day**, firstly with the celebration of a thanksgiving Mass and then with our charity afternoon, giving each class the freedom to raise money for AVOCA in their own unique and successful way.*

As we come to the end of term there will be the presentation of a **Passion Play** on the three mornings of **28, 29 and 30 March**, where our students will enact the events of Holy week - a time of spirituality and reflection on the sacrifice made for all mankind and of the joy of the resurrection, and a fitting end to a very thought-filled term.

Diocesan Mass



Pupils from St Gregory's, St Joseph's and St John Rigby at the recent Diocesan Mass

Basketball Pilgrimage



Two St Gregory's pupils, Chipo (Year 8) and Deborah (Year 7), travelled to the Holy Land during the Christmas Holidays. They were part of a Basketball Pilgrimage organised by Fr Jay McLeod of the Faith in Queen's Park Group.

The girls had an amazing experience which they shared in a recent assembly. The multi-faith competition saw teams from the Jewish, Muslim and Christian traditions playing alongside each other, fostering a deeper understanding of the commonality of prayer and reflection. Highlights for the girls were the visits to the Dead Sea, the Garden Of Gethsemane and the opportunity to stay with families in Al Walaja. It is hoped that

this will be the start of an on- going link between the two towns.

U-13 Basketball Champions



St Gregory's Middle School have been crowned under-13 District Basketball Champions 2012. The side picked up the title with a win over Daubeney Middle School in the final held at Lincroft Middle School.

Head coach Daniel Bedeau said: "I'm extremely proud of all the boys after a string of quality performances by the whole squad. We were taken to extra time in the semi-final against Beauchamp Middle School on the same night as the final and won thanks to a basket scored by Jason Grewal in the dying seconds. A special mention must go to Jack Palmer who scored with virtually every attempt."

The boys are now looking forward to representing Bedford in the forthcoming county finals.

PE News

Year 8 Sports Hall Athletics

Overall boys 2nd and girls 4th

Boys' Team

La-Marr Morgan, Emersson Sambu, Jack Palmer, Jack Wawryn and Dominic Price.

Girls' Team

Lorena Vara, Tiffany Mutesa, Mia Charles, Melissa Williams and Shania Burke

Year 7 Sports Hall Athletics

Overall boys and girls finished 3rd

Boys' Team: Jack Wawryn, Frank Touko, Aaron Mante, Ethan Tanti and Jordan Wilson

Girls' Team: Kerry Delaney, Jonelle Nathan, Soline Fish, Gabriella Franco and Deborah Baugh.

Year 6 Sports Hall Athletics

Girls finished 4th

Girls' Team: Georgia McCann, Elena Tipton, Hannah Spencer, Julia Bangala and Apollonia Bass
Boys finished 3rd

Boys' Team: Arafat Walugembe, Anu Alemanji
Dylan Asonganyi, Janei Burke and Fraelias Mienambolo

Lincroft Cross Country

40 pupils all ran very well, with top finishers as follows:

Year 6: Arafat Walugembe 49th & Julia Bangala 56th

Year 7: Jack Wawryn 45th & Soline Fish 33rd

Year 8: Muza Mugalu 28th & Mia Charles 20th

This was an excellent result as there were over 200 runners in each race.

District Cross Country –

23 boys and 22 girls took part in this event at Priory Country Park.

Top finishers:

Year 6: Arafat Walugembe 53rd & Julia Bangala 74th

Year 7: Jack Wawryn 32nd & Kerry Delaney 23rd

Year 8: Muza Mugalu 23rd & Lorena Vara 34th

The top four finishers for Lincroft and District cross country were invited to run at the North Beds cross country. The top 16 in each race qualify for the County Cross Country at Ampthill Park on Wednesday, 8 February.

Jack Wawryn (Year 7) finished in 13th place and has qualified for the event.

Football

Year 8 boys are District Futsal Champions 2012.

Team: Emersson Sambu, Muza Mugalu, La-Marr Morgan, Dominic Price, Dylan Assonganyi & Hakeem Hussain.

Football fixtures to start again after half term for all year groups.

Marathon Club

Held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday lunchtimes.

Gym/Dance Display

This will take place on Wednesday, 22 February at 6.30pm. A letter with more information will follow shortly.

School Uniform

From **Monday, 20 February**, uniform will be available on line from the website

**Your
School
uniform.com**

www.yourschooluniform.com

This site is a one stop shop for all school uniform requirements, including skirts, shirts and trousers etc.

A letter will be sent out separately with more information.



Car Parking

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.

Bedford Youth Cabinet Elections

Eight students have put their names forward to take part in the elections which are being held this Friday, 10 February:

Rosie Armitage, Soline Fish, Marco Lavita, Chloe Leckning, Conor Tobin, Ajay Pal, Linda Scaramella and Lorena Vara.

Well done to all of them for volunteering to take part.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT CHILDREN ARE
BACK TO SCHOOL ON MONDAY, 20**

FEBRUARY.

St. Gregory's and St Thomas More PTA

Present

That's A MORE

Flore Luongo © 2012 - Designer

Italian

Saturday **3**
March 2012

from 19:30 to 23:00

For tickets contact:

St. Gregorys 01234 268 649

St. Thomas More 01234 400 222

EVENING

To be held at St. Gregory's Catholic Middle School
Biddenham Turn
Biddenham
Bedford

Music by G. Barile

Price **£ 7** Adult **£ 4** Child
Family ticket (2 adult 2 child) **£ 20**
Pizza , Licensed Bar