



ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL

Living, learning and growing together with Jesus



NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2012

MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Dear Parents and Carers

I am delighted to inform you that St Gregory's has been awarded the prestigious Inclusion Quality Mark. Mr Matthews, the external assessor, spent two days in school last week and his report will be shared with you once it has been finalised. He was full of praise for St Gregory's, describing our pupils as *'enthusiastic learners who greet visitors, smile and open doors'*. The pupils he spoke to said that they *'loved coming to school'* and he noted that, *'Staff know the pupils very well and pupils throughout the school made good progress'*. Governors and parents were also praised for their generous and supportive contribution to the life of the school. He noted that *'St Gregory's has high aspirations for and expectations of everyone in the school community'* and that *'Everyone is welcomed and treated as part of the school family.'* He enjoyed his time with us and concluded *'It was a pleasure and a privilege being able to spend the two days at St Gregory's'*. It was a wonderful opportunity for all of us to share the tremendous work that we do as a community and I am confident that we will have even more to celebrate in the term to come.

Pupils have had a number of opportunities to develop their independent learning skills outside of the classroom. Winter Sports Day was a great success with staff and pupils supporting their respective houses. Teamwork and participation was very much in evidence as pupils in their vertical groupings encouraged each other across the day.

Years 7 and 8 travelled to the 'Big Bang' Science Exhibition in Birmingham, they had a fantastic day seeing exhibits such as spinning chairs, flying sharks and dancing robots. Years 5 and 6 enjoyed a 'Super Learning Day' with inputs from The Maths Happy Puzzle Company, Ashley Harrold, the amazing performance poet, and Andrew Clover, an entrancing story teller. There was great buzz of creativity as pupils used their collective talents to solve the puzzles, spin their stories and develop captivating poetry.

Last week we celebrated Oscar Romero Day which is a high point in the school's calendar. Following a highly reflective Mass celebrated by Father Jonathan, the pupils put their entrepreneurial skills together for our AVOCA fund raising afternoon. They are very aware of the needs of those less fortunate and their enterprising efforts will certainly help the young people of Soyapango. Mr Millie is going to El Salvador, as he did last year; to train potential football coaches and he will take the prayers of St Gregory's school with him.

Sadly we say goodbye to three members of staff who will be leaving us at the end of this term. All have given tremendous service to the school and the pupils have benefitted from their commitment and dedication. Mrs Burnage is retiring after completing 25 years at St Gregory's, Miss Bremner is taking up a post at Icknield High School and Mrs Wightman is to be the Headteacher of Sundon Junior School. We wish them every success in the future and hope that they will stay in touch with us. However, we are also pleased to announce that Mr Simpson will be joining us after Easter as Assistant Headteacher in charge of Key Stage 3.

We have had another highly productive half term with a full range of successes to share in the Easter edition of our newsletter. I am sure that you will enjoy reading about the full range of activities that we have undertaken and I would like to thank all staff whose drive, energy and commitment have made these possible.

I wish you all a Happy and Holy Easter.

Yours sincerely

Frances Topa
Headteacher

World Maths Day Fun



Pupils in Year 5 celebrated World Maths Day by taking part in a problem solving challenge, working in teams to solve a range of maths problems, including shape and space, measures and decimals. The pupils really enjoyed working together to share their knowledge and skills.

World Maths Day Competition

Congratulations to Julija Kovalevska and Siam Islam who won the World Maths Day competition in each Key Stage. The pupils were asked to investigate a national flag that would be seen during the Olympic Games. They had to identify shapes, lines of symmetry, parallel and perpendicular lines. They were also asked to design their own Olympic flag to represent St Gregory's School.

SATS

Thank you to those parents who attended the KS2 parents workshop on Thursday, 22 March. Feedback from parents was very positive with many parents stating it was a good insight into their child's current standard.

After the Easter holidays there are only four teaching weeks until the Year 6 SATS exams, which will take place the week beginning 14 May. The children in Year 6 will be coming home with some extra revision materials and we ask you to encourage your child to revise for ten minutes a day. This extra practice will make all the difference in their preparation for the exams.



Mini Saga Writing Competition

Congratulations to the 57 Year 7 and 8 pupils who had their 50 word mini sagas selected for publication. Well done to you all. We are looking forward to seeing the sagas in print when we receive our complimentary copy of the book in July.

Times Spelling Bee 2012

A big thank you to Rosie Armitage, Ania Marsh, Ronan Cook and Chloe Leckning (Year 7 pupils) who are the St Gregory's 'Super Spellers' in this year's competition.

The heats took place on Tuesday, 27 March but we are still awaiting the results.



Super Learning Day

On Friday, 16 March Key Stage 2 had a Super Learning Day. This consisted of the children attending workshops run by Ashley Harold, a published performance poet. The children were entertained by him reading and performing some of his own poetry.

As well as enjoying the performance, pupils had the opportunity to have a go at writing some of their own poetry in the style of the poet.

What am I?

*Great grey belly porker
Toothy yawning slug
Cow-nosed submarine,
Giant in the mud
Unlikely ballerina,
Tip-toes underwater,
Sleepy swampland-island
River favourite's daughter.*

By Ashley Harrold - Poet

What am I?

*A sly sneaker,
A prey peaker,
A rat muncher,
A stomach slider,
A sly creature,
A name so cool,
I'm the size of a metre.*

By Ola Ajao 5A



In addition to this pupils had the opportunity to work with Andrew Clover, who is also a published author, actor and storyteller.

During Andrew's workshops he delighted the children and staff with his very amusing tales, sharing the seven secrets of creative story writing. Children and staff came away with fantastic creative ideas to try out both at home and in the classroom.

The day also consisted of Maths Challenge Workshops.

The aim of which was to raise the pupils' own expectations of what they could achieve. The students encountered



a variety of fun, but challenging, 3D hands-on puzzle tasks which they had to complete in teams. The challenges required each team to work together and carefully develop strategies in order to find a solution. When tempted to give up, the programme taught perseverance and teamwork. Pupils were able to put their own skills to better use as part of a team and were helped to approach problems from a different perspective.

A fantastic day was had by all.

International Schools Award

We've been working hard this term to gather evidence towards our International Schools Award application.

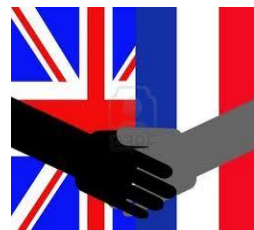


In ICT the Year 6 students have been developing their research and persuasive writing skills by considering attitudes to hunting in different communities. Year 7 have been looking at different festivals and celebrations across the world, focusing particularly on those countries who celebrate Independence Day and what this means for them. In Art the older students have been considering the culture and art of the Ndebele tribe by creating their own miniature clay huts and decorating them in a similar style to the Ndebele tribe. A group of KS3 students have been

exchanging emails with children of the same age in a French school and we are currently trying to arrange for them to visit us at the beginning of next term.

It has been lovely to see how many students have responded with interest to unfamiliar cultures and how keen they are to compare their own lives with those of people from such diverse backgrounds.

Schools' Twinning



In addition to the Collège in Le Havre, we now have a link with a French primary school. The school is situated in Quimper, in Brittany.

We have recently received postcards from the French children and our KS2 pupils have made a visual tour of our school to send to them. They are also sending postcards of Bedford and Easter cards to their new French friends.

Oscar Romero Day

On Friday, 23 March we celebrated Oscar Romero day - and what a fantastic day it was. Our Mass was a very spiritual and respectful occasion attended by the family of the late Fr Peter O'Neill and other very welcome visitors to the school.



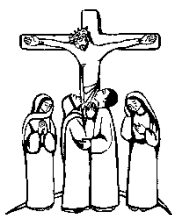
Kerry Delaney taking her turn in the stocks!

In the afternoon our charity day was blessed by the best weather of the year and by the enthusiasm of all our pupils. From searching for smarties with chopsticks, painting nails, throwing sponges, apple bobbing, selling ice creams, fab snacks and drinks, football challenges and a plethora of other great individual ideas.

A huge thank you to everyone who took part - you all deserve a huge pat on the back! The monies raised so far stands at about £1600 and rising. Thank you also to all our parents who enabled our students to shine ☺.



Passion Play



A big thank you to Year 8 pupils, Jack Palmer, Reuben Eastwell, Hakeem Hussain, Alvin Minani, Dario Mongiardi, Fabio Paris, Akiel Mahmood, Jacob Buck and

Przemek Mazowski for all their hard work rehearsing and performing our Passion Play as part of our preparation for Easter. Aided by Lorena and Anisa we have been able to retell the important events of Holy Week in drama and speech, helping us all remember the sacrifice made for us and for all mankind.

Faith across the Community

Saturday, 24 March was a very special day for one of our local parishes as it saw the young people who are preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation take part in their first retreat.

They arrived at St Gregory's for a day of prayer, reflection, fun and team building. Some of the members of the group were both current and former pupils of the school so it seemed fitting for the retreat to take place here.

The pupils spent time reflecting on the Cross and the fact that in life, like Jesus, we all have a cross to carry and that through prayer, faith and community we can make this journey together.

The catechists who helped guide the pupils through the day expressed their gratitude at being able to use the school grounds. They were very pleased with the setting for the retreat, not to mention the fact that the Chapel provided a place of peace and tranquillity.

It is very pleasing for us here at St Gregory's to have our grounds and Chapel used for such an important retreat and we hope that this will be the start of many events to come which will see a link between school and church.

PE News Football

Year 6 Boys have qualified for the



County Finals and are playing Goldington in the District Final after Easter.

Squad: Lewis Walsh, Declan Norton, Janei Burke, Kevin Njamen, Brandone Mutombo, Neville Nzembela, Arafat Walugembe, Nicholas Brady, Adam Brady, Hassan Iqbal, Damiano Ruggiero, Dylan Asonganyi, Anu Alemanji, Elijah Haynes, and Fraelias Mienambolo.

Year 6 Girls qualified for County Finals by getting to the final of the District 6-a-side tournament. *Squad: Saskia Powell, Jasmine Ajayi, Apollonia Bass, Alessia Frezza, Emilia Ives, Georgia McCann, Karina Santana Lara, Alicja Olszanska, Faida Dangi, Oliwia Andrzejewska and Ola Ajao.*

Year 7 Boys Beat Lincroft on Wednesday, 28 March to win their league and qualify for the County Finals. They also play Woodlands after Easter in the County Cup Semi Final.

Squad: Aaron Mante, Angela Moscaritolo, Ethan Tanti, Jordan Wilson, Joseph Brewer, Haamid Ali, Arafat Walugembe, Stefano Verdura, Frank Touko, Dylan Asonganyi, Anu Alemanji, Jack Wawryn, Kevin Njamen, Oliver Jun and Aaron Hussain

Basketball

Year 8 Boys qualified for the County Finals and came Third overall - a great result!

Squad: Aaron Brown, Jack Palmer, Jacob Buck, Jason Grewal, Muza Mugalu, Dominic Price, Brian Lewis and Dario Mongiardi



Year 7 Boys did very well and reached the District Finals where they lost in a close match to Lincroft.

Winter School Games 2012

St Gregory's were involved this year with the Winter School Games. It was a large event for schools throughout the County representing each school sports partnership.

St Gregory's were participating in **Boys Year 7 & 8 table tennis; Girls tag rugby** and **Year 7 Girls swimming**.

The boys finished 4th in the **table tennis**.

Squad: Jack Faulkner, Jack Wawryn, Joseph Brewer and Marco Lavita

The girls finished 3rd in the **tag rugby**.

Squad: Esree Haynes, Elisa Coluccello, Akus Obazuaye, Lorena Vara, Lidianna Kulczycki,

Tiffany Mutesa, Soline Fish, Vanessa Kadji, Jonelle Nathan and Tania Mutesa.

Swimming - Kerry Delaney finished 2nd in Butterfly, Elena Tipton finished 2nd in Breaststroke, Gabrielle Lawrence finished 3rd in Front crawl and with Gabriella Franco, the team finished 3rd in both the front crawl relay and the medley relay.

Marathon Club

Marathon club has been very successful this term. All participants have enjoyed running at lunchtime and have set themselves individual targets.

Bronze Certificate - 37 pupils

Silver Certificate - 13 pupils

Gold Certificate - 6 pupils

Britney Kadji, Marco Lavita, Anthony Tanti, Sebastian Jurkowski, Emmanuel Barkat and Arafat Walugembe

Kenyan Athletes

St Gregory's have been invited to take 30 pupils to run with the Kenyan athletes in Bedford Park on Monday, 23 April at 3pm. Further information will follow after Easter.

Winter Sports Day

The annual Winter Sports Day was held this month and was an overwhelming success. All of the pupils took part in a full range of activities including Netball, Football, Rugby, Bench ball and Cross Country. Great team spirit was shown as pupils did their very best to gain points for their respective houses. Staff and pupils cheered each other on and there was a great sense of support and encouragement.

Particular mention must go to Roberta Nocera for her fantastic completion of the cross country course.

Congratulations to:

John Paul House who won the overall Winter Sports Day Trophy

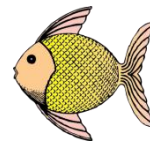


and to **Mother Teresa House who won the Cross Country Cup.**



Thanks to the Sports Leaders from St Thomas More who did sterling job of refereeing across the day and of course to Mr Millie and Mrs Belcher who organised the events.

Art

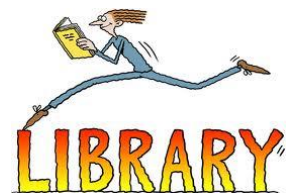


Recently the Bedfordshire Orchestral Society organised an art competition where children were encouraged to create works of art depicting various animals. This was inspired by a suit of music entitled 'Carnival of the Animals' and among the topics to choose from was 'Aquarium'.

Well done to Melissa Williams, Tiffany Mutesa, Jack Palmer, O'Mara Libertucci, Francesca Rumble and Alesia Ives for entering the competition and congratulations to Jack for being awarded a highly commended certificate.

Library News

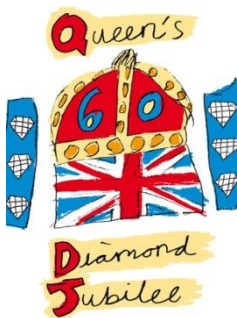
- First News, the newspaper for children, is back in the Library.



- The Library would like to create a forum for students to engage with and express their thoughts on specific national and international news stories. Each week after Easter, one article will be copied and posted on the Library notice board for students to comment on. Commentary forms will be available in the Library.
- The creative work produced for World Book Day was very impressive.

- Lots of strong entries have been received for the bookmark competition, favourite book reports and colour banners.
- Pupils from Years 5 and 6 responded really well to the Reading Miles Challenge, which will continue in the summer term, with great results and enthusiasm for being involved through reading.
- A huge thank you to all students who participated in the World Book Day webcast. This was a massive event that was witnessed by approximately 700,000 people in five continents and the pupils did St Gregory's proud by sitting for 1½ hours to listen to the variety of amazing authors that shared their stories. Well done!
- Storytellers- those pupils that put their names down to participate in storytelling workshops way back in February, please do not despair. We will make it happen in the Summer term.
- After the recent success of seven previous year 8 pupils being published in Young Writers 2011, we will be launching a new poetry competition after Easter.
- The Poetry Society is looking for the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award winner 2012. Do you think you have what it takes to be in the top 100 poets aged between 11-17? The closing date is 31 July 2012, so there is plenty of time...

The Big Diamond Jubilee Readers & Writers



To mark the Queen's 60 year reign, members of the Royal Family are going on a tour of the commonwealth. By taking part in The Big Diamond Jubilee Read your children will set off on their very own tour too as they read their chosen books. There

will also be the opportunity to correspond with children from different Commonwealth countries.

Cooking Club



The Cooking Club is a fun and exciting club that enables the children to improve their cooking skills. All Year 7 and 8s are invited to join. Now that summer is nearly upon us we are going to try some yummy dishes that are suitable for outdoor eating. So, put a spring in your step, grab your aprons and be prepared for some scrumptious meals.

Eco Club

Did you know that you can recycle used BATTERIES and INKJET CARTRIDGES at school? As part of the drive achieve the Silver award we have set up these facilities in school. So please remember to recycle these items at school.

The Eco Club have also started to clean up the pond area ready for summer.

Our next projects include bird feeders, nesting boxes and even growing some vegetables!



Watch this space.

Homework Diaries

A recent monitoring activity has shown that many pupils need to use their homework diary more effectively. Parents can help by:

- Looking at the diary every week
- Signing in the space provided
- Checking that homework is written down (a copy of the homework timetable is available on the school website)
- Checking that homework is complete

There is a space at the end of each double page spread for comments so you can write a quick note to the form teacher about any concerns you may have or things you're particularly pleased about - this will give your child a real boost.

PTA News



We hosted a very successful Italian Evening a few weeks ago, which was well attended from people in our local community.

We raised £560 which will go towards the on-going project to provide seating for the children. Thank you so much to everyone who helped support this event.

The next PTA Mufti and Disco will be on Friday, 27 April. All the money raised does go directly to improving your child's time here at St Gregory's.

School Polo Shirts

Children will be able to wear the summer polo shirts when they return to school following the Easter holidays.

Biddenham Show



We are very pleased to announce that the Biddenham Show Committee will be making a very generous donation of £200 towards the cost of some planters and benches for the school grounds. We would like to record how appreciative we are of this very kind gesture which will benefit the whole of the school community.

*For your information the Biddenham Show will be held on **Sunday, 9 September 2012** at Biddenham village hall and at St James's Lower school.*

REMINDER

Monday, 16 April is a training day and pupils return to school on Tuesday, 17 April.

Transport Update

The revised home to school transport policy, which will be implemented from 1 September 2012, is available on the Council's website at www.bedford.gov.uk/schooltransport

Some children who will be in Years 7 and 8 in September 2012 may still be entitled to receive free home to school transport on denominational grounds, **if your child is entitled to receive free school meals or you are in receipt of the maximum level of working tax credit.**

The home to school transport policy outlines the criteria to qualify for free transport under this aspect of the policy.

If you meet the criteria, you must contact The Council's Customer Engagement Centre as a matter of urgency. They will be able to give you further information and provide you with an application form, if appropriate. (Contact on 01234 718004)

Once they have the numbers they will then determine which bus routes will operate. Should you require assistance in completing the application form please do contact the school and we will be happy to help.

In addition, we are working hard as a Federation to support all parents make their travel arrangements for September 2012 and we will contact you with an update early in the new term.