

Dear SAS parents and carers,

As we come to the end of this busy (and very long!) Autumn Term, I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the wonderful moments we have shared as a school community over the last half-term as we have celebrated the season of Advent and looked forward to the joy of Christmas.

Staffing News We welcomed Mrs Wilson as our new Executive Head at the start of term. Mrs Wilson is in school for one day each week, adding extra capacity to our Senior Leadership Team. The children have already enjoyed attending 'Books, Bites and Bingo' with Mrs Wilson. We would also like to extend our congratulations and best wishes to Miss Joseph, who will be getting married in the New Year.



Curriculum, Trips and Extra-Curricular Activities You will have seen from our weekly blog posts on the website the huge variety of activities the children have enjoyed this term. Year 5 experienced their science topic of space in an exciting and interactive way with a space VR workshop. Key Stage 2 have greatly enjoyed their Drumba P.E. units and were even able to create their own festive Drumba routines this week. Nursery went on their very first trip to explore our parish church of Ss Alban & Stephen, while Reception visited St Paul's Church for a Nativity trail.

We also celebrated Anti-Bullying Week, when we thought about the importance of respecting those around us. On Odd Socks Day, everyone proudly sported mismatched or brightly coloured socks. This reminded us that it is ok to be different and to celebrate our uniqueness. We have continued to share our special talents during the past week in our end-of-term 'Express Yourself' talent shows in class. Finally, our Year 6 pupils have already started to work hard to raise money for their end-of-year leavers' party in July 2025 - watch this space for more fundraising events!



Parental Support

A huge thank you to our parents and carers for your continued support and involvement throughout the term. Whether through volunteering, helping with fundraising activities, or supporting your child's learning at home, your contribution has made such a difference. Our popular Key Stage Disco returned, and a new event, Christmas Family Photoshoot, was a big success. Well done to our dedicated, hard-working P.T.A. who organised these events, and to our talented parent photographer, Mrs Mills. Thanks to your generosity with your time and money, this term the PTA have paid for a visit from a Rabbi during our study of the Jewish faith; fortnightly sessions from our environmental tutor, Miss Sophia; information signs around our lower site pond area; and some new equipment for our children with SEND. Green-fingered parents also worked with their children during our popular Environmental Volunteer Days to improve our upper site environment.



Catholic Life

This Advent, our school community has embraced the spirit of hope, preparation, and anticipation as we have journeyed together towards the birth of Jesus. We began the season with an Advent liturgy, where the children reflected on the meaning of Advent and the importance of waiting and preparing for Christ. During our weekly Gospel assemblies, we have enjoyed lighting the next candle on our Advent wreath and thinking about how we can prepare in our hearts for the coming of Jesus.

Nativity Plays and Christmas Celebrations Our youngest children in Nursery performed a range of Christmas songs and carols on stage for their proud parents. Reception and Key Stage 1 each performed a Nativity play for parents and grandparents. The children's enthusiasm and dedication were evident, and their beautiful singing brought tears to many eyes. We are so proud of their hard work and the way they brought the story of Christ's birth to life. Our school choir, along with the children from all year groups, sang beautiful carols at our Key Stage 2 Advent Carol Service in Ss Alban & Stephen Church. This was a wonderful occasion for our school community to worship together in song and prayer. Thank you to Fr Michael for leading our carol service.



Catholic Social Teaching Our Advent Giving Calendar offers a daily donation idea, helping us think of those who may need extra support this Christmas as we live out our Catholic Social Teaching principles. Many SSAS families have joined in! There is still time to take part by using the calendar at:

<https://caritaswestminster.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Caritas-Advent-Giving-Calendar-2024-final.pdf>

Our Pupil Chaplaincy Team also organised Cosy Christmas Jumper day, where children could pay to wear different cosy items to school instead of school uniform and also take part in different competitions. The money which we raised will go to the charity National Energy Action. As we remember that baby Jesus was born, not in a warm and luxurious palace, but in a cold and draughty stable, we also remember those living in fuel poverty who cannot afford to heat their homes to keep warm and healthy this Christmas.



Travelling Crib During Advent, our travelling crib has been taken home every night by a different family who have played host to the Holy Family for the night. This journey symbolises Mary and Joseph's difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem before the birth of Jesus. Families have been reading prayers included in the pack or even writing their own prayer to add to our Travelling Crib diary.



Travelling Choir! Our fantastic KS2 choir have also been spreading the joy of Christmas with a visit to Luton Airport to sing carols. The choir brought the Christmas spirit to all the passengers arriving at the airport. Not only did they brighten everyone's day, but they also helped raise funds for the Luton Air Ambulance and a local food bank. Our Year 5 choir members also visited Orchard Nursing Home to sing carols for the residents. The performance was a huge hit, with the residents joyfully joining in with the songs, making it a heart warming and memorable event for everyone involved.

School Development Plan– half termly update

AREA	KEY PRIORITY	PROGRESS
1. CATHOLIC LIFE & R.E.	Prayer & Liturgy	R.E. leaders have visited other schools to make links and observe R.E.. The Travelling crib has developed home-school prayer links. The children have prayed and fundraised for different charities.
2. QUALITY OF EDUCATION	Evidence- based principles to improve teaching	Herts English and Maths advisers have visited and provided support and training. All teachers are using review and revisit in each lesson to go over key concepts.
3. BEHAVIOUR & ATTITUDES	Developing positive attitudes	A new behaviour policy has just been approved by Governors and is ready to be introduced. House points are now collected on the Class Dojo system. Whole school routines for behaviour have been taught and practised.
4. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	Promoting justice, equality & diversity	The equality and diversity working party has met. Teachers ensure learning environments reflect our diverse school community. Black History Week was a great success. In Anti-Bullying Week, children had a lesson on recognising and challenging gender stereotypes.
5. LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT	Empowering effective leadership at all levels	All staff have received appropriate induction and training. Phase leaders now receive regular coaching sessions. Governors and leaders are exploring the academisation agenda for all Catholic schools.
6. EARLY YEARS	Personal, Social and Emotional Development.	The Herts EYFS adviser and other external advisers have visited and provided support for staff to continue to develop the learning environment . Our pastoral mentor provides Sand Play support sessions for children who need support to manage their emotions.

Online Safety Tips for Parents

Over the holidays, many children will spend more time online and may also receive new devices.

- ⇒ Set an agreed screen time each day with a set turn-off time at least an hour before bedtime.
- ⇒ Set parental controls on sites that your children access. Make sure that you know and follow the age limits for any social media sites or online games.
- ⇒ Set up any new devices with appropriate parental controls before your child receives them.
- ⇒ Set a rule that children must ask your permission before adding anyone as a 'friend'.
- ⇒ Talk to your child about sites they visit, games they use and what they enjoy doing online.

Helpful advice for parents can be found at <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/top-tips-for-staying-safe-online-at-christmas>

Reminders

We look forward to seeing everyone back in school on **Tuesday 7th January at 8.45**. Please be in school promptly. Classroom doors open at 8.45 and close at 8.55 a.m..

In the event of snow in the Spring term, we will always try to keep the school open if it is safe to do so. If it snows, check the school website for a news post letting you know whether school is open or not, and whether Breakfast and After School Club are on. We will also send an Arbor message.

Finally, thank you all for the generous gifts and lovely cards sent to staff. On behalf of the staff and governors, I would like to say how much we appreciate your continued support.



We wish all of our families a lovely and peaceful break filled with the blessings and joy of the Christmas season and look forward to seeing you in 2025.

With best wishes,

T. Hackett

Ms T. Hackett, Head of School

