

# Newsletter

December 2025



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Dear Parents/Carers,

We are approaching the end of the Christmas term, after what has been an extremely busy and successful year for our school. We joined St Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Multi Academy Trust on 1<sup>st</sup> November. This has been a time of positive change for our Academy. As a family of 63 Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, we are united in one mission: **Forming Christ-centred pilgrims of hope with kind hearts, questioning minds, a thirst for knowledge and a hunger for justice.**

During this term and evidenced by this Newsletter our students have really lived out this mission. Our newsletter contains just a snapshot of all the different activities and enrichment opportunities that occur within St Thomas More Catholic Academy. It highlights what a vibrant and positive community we have. Further details can be found on our Twitter feed, on Facebook and on our website.

I am delighted that over 350 students have received the Headteacher's award this term for over 350 positive rewards points. I look forward to them wearing their badges with pride in the New Year.

Over the recent weeks, we have been preparing for Christmas through Advent; last Tuesday we held our Christmas Concert, which was a fantastic evening and the students' talents and effort shone through. I am delighted the music department is thriving and enabling students to develop and show their musical talents. On the last day of term, we will have our annual Christmas jumper non-uniform day to raise funds for Hudson's Caritas. As you know we have been supporting Stoke-on-Trent foodbank through advent, putting our faith into action by bringing donations into school. Thank you for your support.

The Year 13 students have recently completed their mocks and we are delighted with their approach to the academic challenge. Year 11 students are now preparing for their mocks in January and we wish them a restful break in preparation for the challenge in January. All other years are in the middle of assessment and we are proud of the academic excellence you can see within school.

I would like to thank the governing body for all their commitment this year and every year. Mr Rob Fello continues as Chair of the governing body, with Mr Damian Ball our Vice Chair. Finally I would like to wish you all a happy and holy Christmas. Thank you for your continued support.

Mr M Rayner  
Headteacher

## Year 11-Father Hudson's Curriculum Talk

This term Father Hudson's Caritas spoke to all of our Year 11 students about how their work supports the dignity of the person. This linked to students' learning in the topic, Life and Death, where students explored the value of each person made imago dei.



## Year 10 and 11 Artefact Making



Our Year 11 Students have creatively explored the Paschal candle in RE, designing their own 3D candle as they focus on the importance of each of the features.



Our Year 10 Students have creatively explored the features of the Church by building their own churches, focusing on the features (internal and external).



## Craft Club

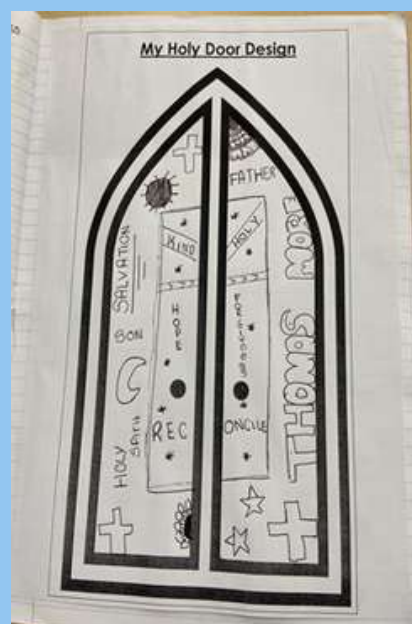
Each week our students are invited to an after school enrichment club in the RE Department with Miss Machin. Our enthusiastic students practice mindfulness craft activities. Here is an example of a knitted bunting our students produced for Interfaith week.



## Jubilee Lessons

Before the Jubilee year ends on the 6th January, our students after their assessments in RE have spent a special lesson reflecting on the Year of the Jubilee.

Students reflected on how our doors can continue to be opened, even after the jubilee, and all had the opportunity to design their own holy door as we look towards continuing to be pilgrims of hope



**How do Holy Doors link to the Jubilee Year?**

Which symbols can you see/do you recognise?

Catholics may go on a pilgrimage to Rome and pass through these Holy Doors

Crossing each door symbolises leaving sin behind and entering God's mercy

Outside of the Jubilee year, the doors are sealed and different entrances used

Doors will shut on 6th January 2026 (Epiphany)

Task: What do you notice about how the doors have been decorated?



# Sixth Form and Year 6 Open Evening

Our RE Team welcomed prospective sixth form and year 6 students for next academic year for our whole school open evenings. Students discussed with staff how they are supported in RE, what they learn and got involved with interesting activities (did you know that jelly babies have hidden Christian symbols on them?). We can't wait for all those we met to join us in RE!



Year 11 students took part in a retreat morning as part of our interfaith week celebrations. We were joined by guest speakers Mrs Jo Goulding from Father Hudson's Caritas and Mr Iftikhar Ahmed, Stoke on Trent Community Cohesion Officer who discussed similarities between Catholicism and Islam and the importance of respecting difference. While both speakers offered valuable insights into treating every person with dignity and understanding.

Students then took part in an engaging activity based on the theme “One Body, Many Parts” 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, reflecting on how each of us contributes uniquely to our shared community. It was a thoughtful and meaningful morning that encouraged everyone to reflect on how we can live out these values in our daily lives



# Science

## Honours Masterclass



Honours students from Years 7-10 learnt how to Stableford score in the game of golf with Miss Shufflebotham and Mr Nixon.

They also enjoyed having a go at the game, chipping into the nets

Ladies Stableford									
Miss Shuffle 11.903 (3)									
No.	Markets Score	White	Yellow	Par	St.	Handicap	Net Score	Stableford	Net Par
1	9	312	307	4	12	4	3	3	274
2	4	504	499	5	16	5	4	2	398
3	7	505	498	5	6	5	4	3	421
4	4	124	121	3	18	4	4	1	122
5	7	479	476	5	8	5	5	1	393
6	7	330	319	4	4	5	3	3	276
7	3	170	158	3	14	5	2	2	141
8	6	459	453	4	2	5	2	2	432
9	6	420	410	4	10	5	4	2	357
3303 3241 37					Out	42	19	2814	36
PLEASE AVOID SLOW PLAY AT ALL TIMES									
10	4	310	293	4	11	4	3	3	275
11	4	319	313	4	13	4	3	1	301
12	6	455	447	4	1	5	4	3	411
13	6	394	385	4	5	5	4	2	368
14	4	174	168	3	15	5	3	1	149
15	4	340	329	4	3	5	3	1	247
16	5	356	345	4	7	5	3	1	310
17	6	281	274	4	17	4	2	2	238
18	7	447	443	4	9	4	2	2	345
3076 2994 35					In	45	15	2644	36
3303 3241 37					Out	42	19	2814	36
6379 6235 72					TOTAL	74	64	5458	72
74					Stableford	74	64	5458	72



The Science Department delivered an Honours Masterclasses this term on Medical Physics.

The students were taught about X-rays, CT scans and MRI scans. They then had the opportunity to take their blood pressure, check for colour blindness and have a hearing test. Some students measured the amount of oxygen in their blood using a pulse oximeter. It works by shining light through skin and measuring how much light is absorbed.



# Corn-starch Christmas Decorations

Chemistry is all around us and plays a crucial role in many areas of modern life, including creating sustainable materials.

To positively shape the future, we all need chemistry and making corn starch decorations is an example of finding more sustainable materials to replace plastics made from non renewable sources.

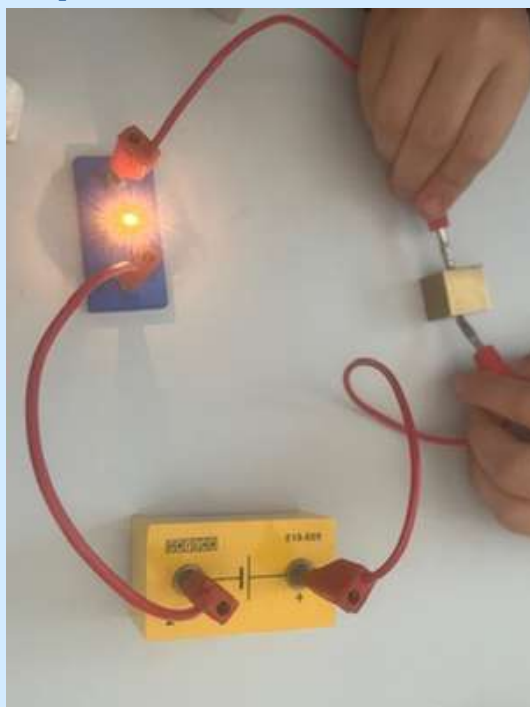
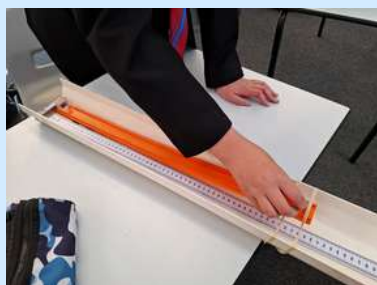
To celebrate chemistry week Year 7 students had the opportunity to make some corn-starch plastic Christmas tree decorations. They did an amazing job!



## Space Lab

Year 7 students took part in Space Lab with Miss Shufflebotham and Mr Melling where they developed their knowledge of space from primary school and worked with their new peers in an informal setting to investigate which materials the European Space Agency should use to build parts of their spacecraft.

Students worked scientifically to test materials and investigated which properties are best suited for parts of the spacecraft.





# Curiosity Boxes

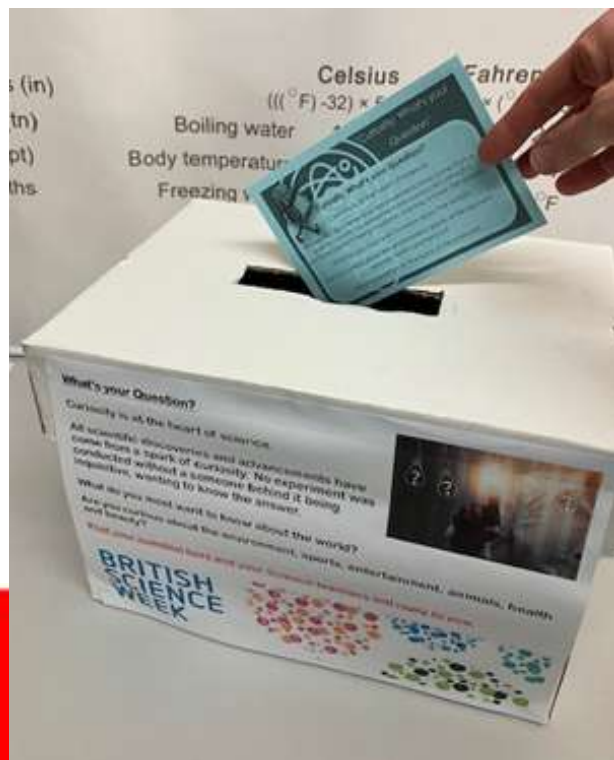
British Science Week 2026 takes place from 6th–15th March, with the theme "Curiosity: What's Your Question?"

We are celebrating throughout the year and have placed 'Curiosity Boxes' in each Science lab where students are invited to post their curious questions.

Our Science teachers will reply to all questions with a monthly PRIZE for the most interesting question.

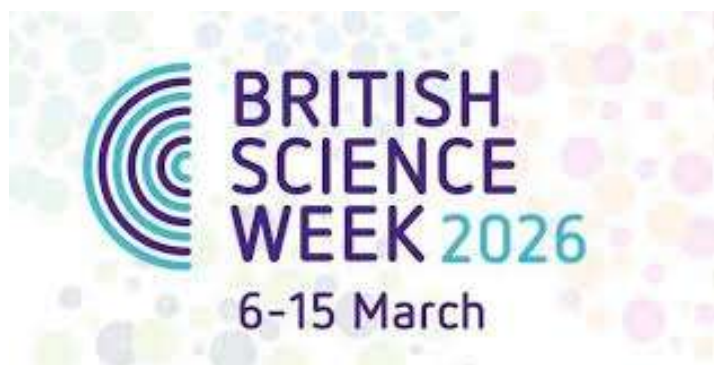
Students posted some amazing questions in November! Here are a few:

- What was the first ever animal?
- How fast does the Earth spin?
- What is natural selection?
- What happens to your ribs when you breathe in?
- How are rocks formed?
- How did dinosaurs become extinct?
- What is the fastest animal alive?
- If I have chapped lips and spit is acidic, will a high pH water cure me?
- How are Rainbows made?



The winning question in November was 'What was the first ever animal?'

We can't wait to reveal the winning question for December at the end of term!



My Question is

Answer (completed by your Science teacher):

Science Department

St Thomas More Catholic Academy

Aspire to be More

## A Christmas Carol Jumps from Page to Stage

By Katie Caley, year 11

Dickens' allegorical novella comes to life.

On the 11th of November 2025, Year 11 had the opportunity to revisit one of their GCSE texts live on stage. The Lyceum theatre in Crewe brought A Christmas Carol to life, giving Year 11 students the chance to recall the plot of the text. Dickens' allegorical novella was portrayed perfectly giving a clear image toward the students that attended the show.

A Christmas Carol is a part of the GCSE literature curriculum; therefore, the trip offered an amazing chance to revise quotes, themes and even the plot. One of the Year 11 students who attended the trip believed it helped to support them to "learn key points in the play; and helped me learn quotes to the best of my ability". Important quotes from the novella were easily spotted throughout the entirety of the show and refreshed the memory of everyone who attended.



Overall, the performance had a profound impact on students' understanding of the story. All 5 staves were vividly brought to life: powerfully conveying Dickens' message. It was a captivating show that held year 11's attention the whole way through. The time period was presented to the best of its abilities, maintaining the reality of poverty and social injustice. All students who attended were given revision cards on A Christmas Carol which encouraged revision on the novella to continue after the show.



## Creative Writing Club: Half-Term Highlights

This half term has been a fantastic one for our Creative Writing Club, with numbers growing week by week- some sessions welcoming nearly twenty young writers. The energy and imagination in the room have been inspiring, and our focus has naturally drifted toward the world of fantasy writing.

In recent weeks, students have explored a series of magical prompts: a town covered in enchanted mist, a fantasy creature accidentally trapped in our world after the veil between realms closes, and a herd of mysterious reindeer with hidden abilities. As always, the creativity on display has been wonderful. Ideas have ranged from a reindeer that can grant wishes, to one that can speak to the wind—proving yet again that our writers' imaginations know no bounds. We look forward to seeing what stories the next half term brings!



## Year 7 Christmas Theatre Trip



This year, our annual Christmas visit to The New Vic Theatre involved an amazing production of the The Little Mermaid. As usual, The New Vic Theatre did a fantastic job of bringing a classic story to life with skilful visuals and sound. It truly was ‘an unforgettable tale of hope, love and self-discovery’.

Our Year 7 students thoroughly enjoyed the experience and represented the school wonderfully.

Watching how a well-known tale can come to life on stage has fuelled their passion for drama and performance.

Thank you to those students that attended the trip and we hope you enjoyed it as much as us. We already can’t wait to book again for next year!

## MP’s Christmas Poetry Competition!

A huge congratulations to Lyla-Rai in Year 8, who has been announced as the winner of the MP’s Christmas Poetry Competition!

Students were challenged to write an original 12-line poem capturing what the Christmas Spirit means to them—whether that be community, kindness, family, hope, or celebration. All entries were judged by a panel that included our local Poet Laureate, who selected Lyla-Rai’s poem as this year’s standout piece.

Well done to all students that entered the competition.



## Debate Competition

Year 10 students proudly represented the academy at a local debate competition, where they were challenged to argue both for and against two motions: “Green belt land should never be built on, on the basis of housing” and “Fireworks should be banned.” In preparing their arguments, students carried out independent research and listened closely to opposing points to develop effective rebuttals. Throughout the event, they demonstrated a wide range of skills, including reading, writing, critical thinking, public speaking and teamwork.



The experience deepened students' understanding of the value of debate and offered valuable insight into the political landscape and future plans for England. Participants also had the opportunity to meet several influential figures, including the Speaker, Sir Lindsey Hoyle, who spoke about his experiences in Parliament. Students were able to ask him questions about his advice for young people interested in politics, his views on the current political system and how he manages the pressures of the Speaker's role. Overall, the event proved to be both enjoyable and educational, leaving students inspired and eager to take part in similar opportunities in the future.



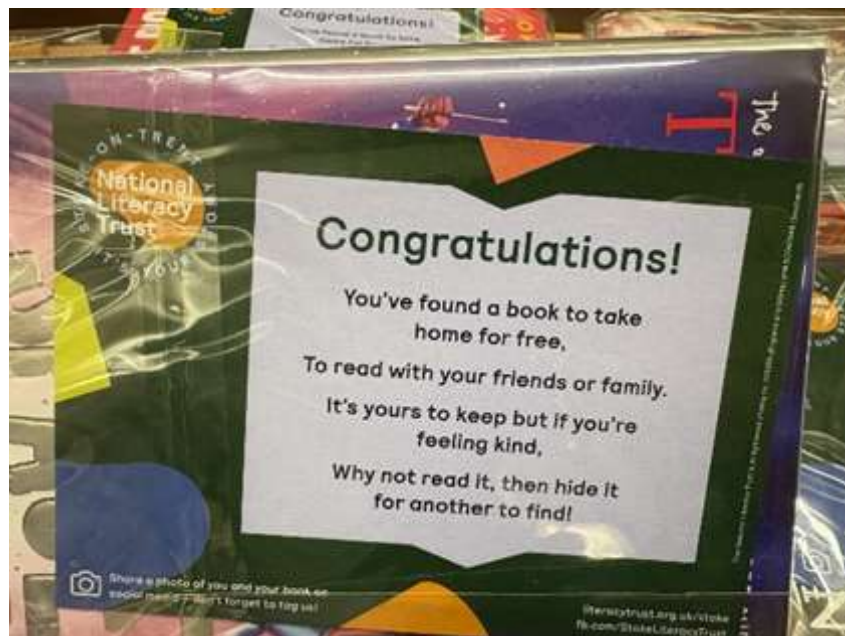


# Literacy Ambassadors

## Introducing Our New Literacy Ambassadors!

At St Thomas More Catholic Academy, we are proud to have a dedicated culture of reading. To help us develop this more, we are delighted to introduce our newly appointed Literacy Ambassadors.

Representing every year group across the school, their primary goal is to share the joy of reading and help their peers discover the many benefits of a good book.



## Expert Training:

To prepare for their roles, our Ambassadors have been working closely with the National Literacy Trust:

**Specialised Training:** Each student received training focused on promoting reading for enjoyment.

**Student-Led Initiatives:** They are now using these skills to plan creative ways to make our library and English department even more engaging for everyone.

## What's next?

**Our Literacy Ambassadors are currently planning lots of exciting activities to encourage reading at St Thomas More.**

While the full details are still under wraps, students should keep a very close eye on the library shelves in the final week of term! Our team has been busy decorating select books to hide around the library. If you happen to find one with a congratulations slip on it, you'll be able to take it to an Ambassador to claim and keep the book for yourself!

Keep your eyes peeled for more information as we get closer to the end of term!



## Year 7 & 8 Students Excel at Bedrock Learning

At St Thomas More Catholic Academy we are proud to champion the power of literacy, and one of the key tools aiding us with this is Bedrock Learning. This digital platform supports students in building their vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension through engaging and personalised lessons.

We are thrilled to announce the Top 5 Bedrock Learners in Year 7 and Year 8, based on the number of Bedrock Points earned. The following students have shown incredible dedication:

Top Scoring Year 7 Bedrock  
Top Scoring Year 8 Bedrock

A Reward for Our Top Bedrock Learners: To celebrate hard work we are delighted to offer each of the students a free book from our Book Vending Machine! Come to the school library during opening hours to collect your machine token, which you can use to choose a book of your own!  
Well done Year 7 & 8!

<u>Name</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Points</u>
Denna	Year 8, 8JB/En, 8X3/En, 8JB/Re	1226
Deona	Year 8, 8JB/En, 8X3/En, 8JB/Re	1005
Yolanda	Year 8, 8DB/En, 8X4/En, 8DB/Re	824
Abdul-Rafey	Year 8, 8RL/En, 8Y2/En, 8RL/Re	807
Seby	Year 8, 8VP/En, 8X4/En, 8VP/Re	672

<u>Name</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Points</u>
Francisca	7Y4/En, Year 7, 9 DB, 7TL/En	923
Asvitha	Year 8, 7X1/En, Year 7	452
Rehana	7Y2/En, Year 7	387
Raphina	Year 8, 7X1/En, Year 7	374
Malik	7Y3/En, Year 7	351





The MFL department have launched our new year 7 French exchange project with a French partner school: Marguerite Bourgeoys in Troyes, France. 3 of our year 7 pupils recorded a video introducing themselves to the school and we were sent a return video by their French counterparts.



From next term, exciting plans are in place to further strengthen the links of communication between our two schools, which will highlight the similarities and differences between life in school in the UK and France.

## Young Carers

We currently have 40 Young Carers, and the number continues to grow.

Many of our Young Carers have huge responsibilities outside school and it's lovely to do nice things to celebrate their roles.

St Thomas More staff have been donating small gifts, so we have held a Young Carers Gift Shop. All of the students have received a selection box for themselves, and chose gifts for family members.



# Maths

It has been an exciting and productive autumn term within the Maths Department, with several key milestones for our students. Year 8 and Year 9 pupils have completed important data point assessments, while our Year 11 cohort is now gearing up for their mock examinations in the new year. Students in Years 12 and 13 have also risen to the challenge by taking part in the UKMT Maths Challenge. Looking ahead, we are delighted to share that we have some exciting trips to Keele University planned for the new year, offering students further opportunities to extend their learning beyond the classroom.



## Rising Stars

The Maths Department has been running dedicated Rising Stars sessions during form time for our Year 10 students, designed to inspire them to explore the wide range of careers that rely on mathematics. Students discover how key mathematical skills are used in real-world industries such as engineering, software development, network planning, and the design of structures like dams and aircraft. These sessions not only deepen students' understanding of mathematical concepts but also help them make informed decisions as they begin to consider their future pathways.

### Sparx Superstars

Here are our Sparx Superstars for each year group so far this year! A huge congratulations to all students for their outstanding commitment to home learning – an excellent achievement!

A massive well done to Layla Joseph in Year 7 who has achieved the highest XP score in the whole school.

Student ▾	Compulsory XP ▾	Boost & target XP ▾	Independent learning XP ▾	Total XP earned ▾
Layla	7413	4611	143945	155969
Zain	7999	4774	8946	23267
Francisca	11712	6473	4697	22882

Student ▾	Compulsory XP ▾	Boost & target XP ▾	Independent learning XP ▾	Total XP earned ▾
Fenix	6655	6740	11866	25261
Felix	6559	6452	7942	20953
Alina	7405	7009	4408	18822

Student ▾	Compulsory XP ▾	Boost & target XP ▾	Independent learning XP ▾	Total XP earned ▾
Lucas	7155	7016	2780	16951
Neha	7661	6873	786	15320
Khadijat	6640	6470	683	13793

Student ▾	Compulsory XP ▾	Boost & target XP ▾	Independent learning XP ▾	Total XP earned ▾
Maria	8305	7546	980	16831
Leo	5787	6186	520	12493
Umar	6015	0	4002	10017



## UKMT Senior Maths Challenge

Students in Year 12 and 13 took part in the UK Senior Maths Challenge, a competition designed to promote logical thinking, accuracy, and mathematical fluency. The problems start accessibly but quickly increase in difficulty, with some later questions even deducting marks for incorrect answers—adding an extra layer of challenge and excitement for our mathematicians.

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

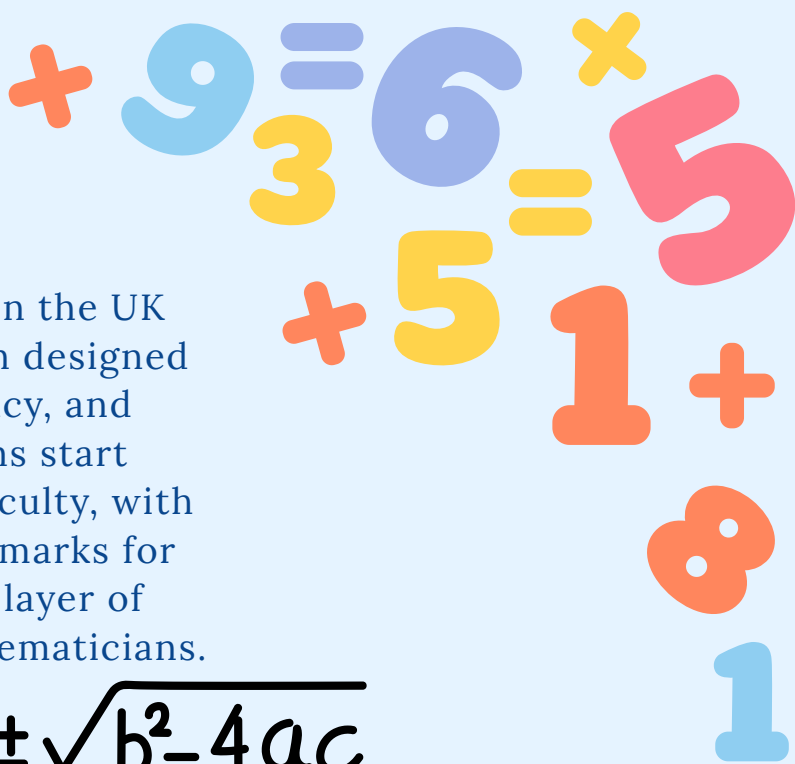
## Year 9 – Protecting Our Planet Day

Our Year 9 students took part in this year's Protecting Our Planet Day 25 by watching an inspiring session focused on the “hidden heroes” working behind the scenes on maths-based innovations that protect our planet. The panel featured experts from academia and industry who shared their journeys from studying STEM subjects at school to leading cutting-edge environmental research and projects in the UK. The session highlighted the vital role mathematics plays in tackling climate change and showed students how they, too, can pursue careers that make a real difference to our planet's future.



### Things to look forward to in the New Term

- Return of the Numeracy Ninjas and numeracy legends
- DP1 Assessments for Year 7 and year 10
- Year 11 Mocks





The STM Y13 students are checking their kit and getting ready for a day of kayaking as part of learning objective 3 to complete Unit 18 of their Cambridge Technical in Sport and Physical Activity.



The dancers who performed both a Lyrical and Acro dance on Friday as part of the schools SVG event.

The girls received praise from all of the attendees commending how much they enjoyed watching the dancers.





St Thomas More and 2 other teams were tied for 1st place in our section (on 9 points). When looking at goal difference St Thomas More were tied in 2nd place. We eventually ended in 3rd place (by only 1 goal) when using 'goals scored').

This is an amazing effort from a very newly built team, and a great warm-up in preparation for the Under 13 City netball tournament, which will be after Christmas. Well done girls!

### Under 13 City Netball festival Team

11 teams entered. We were placed in a section with Discovery Academy, Excel, OSSMA and St Joseph's.

#### Results:

V Discovery - won 2-1  
 V Excel - drew 1-1  
 V OSSMA - Lost 5-2  
 V St Joseph's - they withdrew from the tournament.







## Partnership Games Year 7 & 8 Teams



## Under 14 City Netball Festival

Team: Tolu, Khadija, Holy, Luwam, Zipporah, Raiyana, Saffron & Emily.  
12 teams entered. We were placed in a section with Biddulph, OSSMA, Trentham, Excel and St Peters.



### Results:

V Biddulph - Won 5-0

V OSSMA - lost 2-1

V Trentham - lost 5-3

V Excel lost 4-1

V St Peters - won 2-0

The games were very fast paced and only one half played, due to time constraints and the number of teams who entered. Lots of interceptions made, and regained possession (even when it was not our centre pass). However, we were not successful in getting through to the semi-finals / play-offs. Again, this is a great warm-up / practice tournament in preparation for the U14 City Netball tournament in the new year. Great work girls!

# Chaplaincy

## Year 5 Advent Retreat

Year 5 pupils from St Gregory's, St Augustine's, St Maria Goretti, and Our Lady's came together for a special Advent Retreat Day. The children took part in a range of reflective and creative activities to help them prepare for the Advent season. Throughout the day, they explored the meaning of waiting, hope, and kindness through prayer, scripture, group discussions, and hands-on craft sessions.

The retreat gave pupils the chance to deepen their faith, build new friendships, and reflect on how they can bring light to others during Advent

Throughout the day, they explored the meaning of waiting, hope, and kindness through prayer, scripture, group discussions, and hands-on craft sessions.



## Advent Light Journey

The flame of hope began its journey travelling across 20 schools earlier this month bringing our community of schools together in the spirit of Advent.





# Young Driver Training

The Young Driver Training School were welcomed into the into The Academy. Working alongside Year 10 and 11 pupils they gave the students hands on experience behind the wheel while teaching the importance of road safety, awareness and responsible driving

It was a fantastic opportunity for our students to build confidence and learn vital life skills before they ever hit the road!





# Annual Community Christmas Party

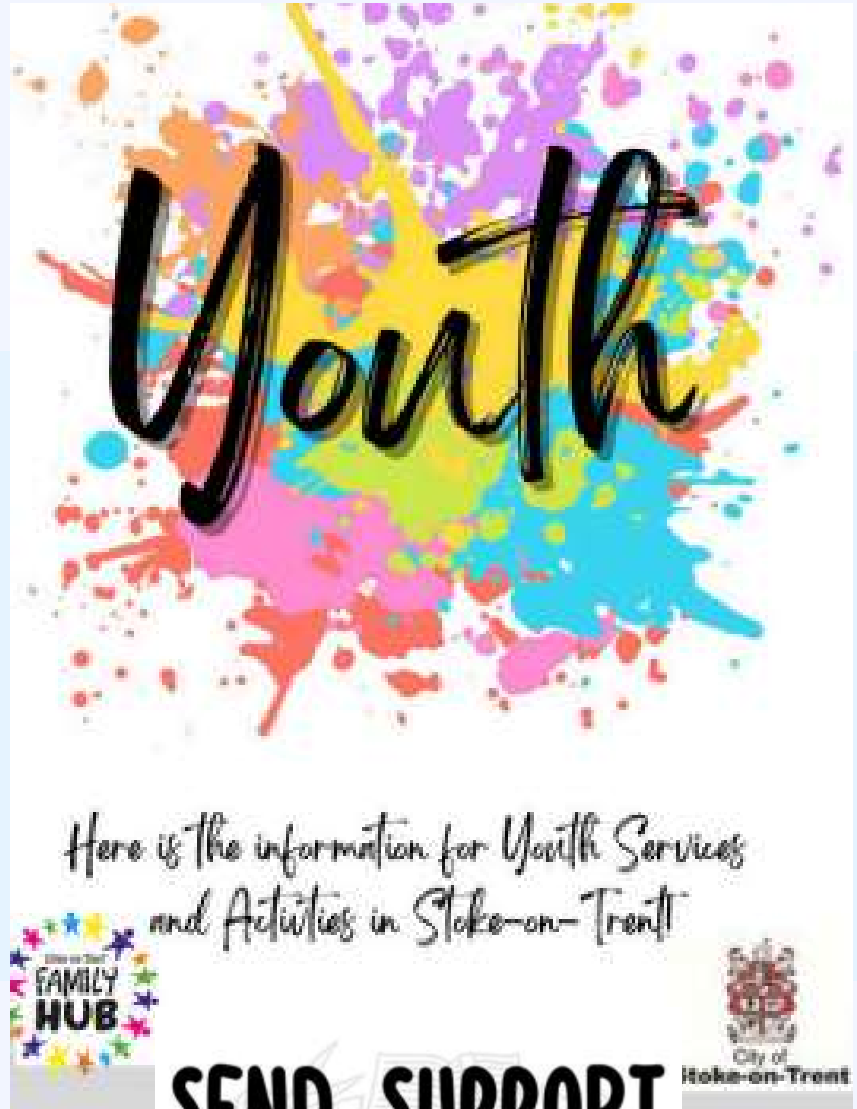
A joyful SVP Christmas Party took place at St Thomas More to end this week, with members of St Gregory's SVP joining us for an afternoon filled with festive cheer. Guests enjoyed wonderful performances from our students, including choir pieces and dancing, along with a Christmas quiz, fish and chips, and plenty of seasonal music. Our Sixth Form students served food and refreshments throughout the event, reflecting the spirit of service that sits at the heart of our community. The SVP raffle was a great success, raising funds to support the Lourdes pilgrimage. A warm thank you to everyone who contributed and made the celebration so special





# Support

Support Booklets in the palm of your hand  
Scan the QR codes for useful information



# Sixth Form



6th form students held a coffee morning on World Mental Health Day. Students made the delicious cakes in their Life and Food Skills enrichment sessions.

Staff joined students to share an early morning coffee and cake. It was a fitting and enjoyable start to the day.



The Year 12 David Campbell Soccer School have all been successful in their applications to be accepted on the USA/Canada Football Coaching programme for summer 2026. This is a fantastic achievement. The team also played against Accrington SC team at the first tam training ground and got a 3-3 draw. Ex Manchester City player, Ged Brannon praised the team for their positive attitude.

Year 12 students visited the university and careers event at Edgbaston in Birmingham on October 17th. Students had the opportunity to attend seminars that advised on how to make the best university applications as well as talk to numerous higher education and apprenticeship providers. This has helped students to look ahead to the range of possibilities available to them as they prepare for future careers-

Some of our Year 13 students worked hard to meet the early entry deadline for university applications. We are so pleased at the number of universities who have offered places, including prestigious Russell Group universities such as Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham, Leeds, Birmingham and Sheffield.