



Weekly Newsletter

16th December 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been a long term with many reasons to feel proud of what has been achieved. From an enthusiastic opening of the whole site, as zones became a thing of the past, to assemblies in the Hall, we greeted the new term with relief.

Students joined in clubs, teams and societies, competed in competitions and volunteered to help others. We raised £9.5K at the Fair, gave 442.4kg food to Watford Food Bank and each Form or Year group carried out their own fundraising. The Year 11s completed their Mock Exams, the Year 13s are preparing for theirs and endless experiments, essays, programmes, lessons and pieces of homework have been completed.

We did all this as restrictions began to encroach on our plans and worst of all, we began to worry again. The toll of the constant changes cannot be underestimated and the school has dedicated more time, energy and resources to supporting all the community with how to manage stress, anxiety and worry. It is when we are now tired and a little worn down that we must remember that Pandora's Box also contained hope. To have the light we must also have the dark, or more importantly, as we look forward to 2022, whatever comes "we can do it and we will do it".

We can do it, We will do it.

St Mary's Carol Service

It was both a privilege and a pleasure to attend the service in person on Monday evening, the choir sang with grace and the readers read with poise. All the school watched a recording of the carol service that took place, instead of our usual in person services.

At the end of every carol service the choir sings the 'Seven-Fold Prayer'. I cannot find records of how long this has been a tradition, but Margaret Houston, who came to the school between 1930 and 1934, remembers that it was sung on special occasions. So, tradition and innovation combined perfectly as the school watched the Latin version of 'O Come All Ye Faithful' recorded on a mobile phone, streamed through Teams and played on projectors.

A Sad Goodbye to Mr Bevan

After 11 years at WGGS and over 33 years in teaching, Mr Bevan is retiring. He has given great service to both the school and teaching in general, that it will be difficult to convey how much he will be missed. Mr Bevan joined the school in 2010 as an English teacher, becoming a Head of Year in 2013, and then in 2017 he was Head of English as well. Appointed as Assistant Head in September 2017, he has led the Sixth Form with passion. Under his care the Sixth Form has grown in size, moved buildings and introduced a more dynamic provision, especially in pastoral care.



Mr Bevan has a wide range of talents; from being the Strictly Come Dancing Champion when raising money for the renovation of Lady's Close, to acting in 'Roman's Other Journey' a play about the Holocaust, to singing all the verses of 'We'll Meet Again' in the final assembly of Year 13 when exams were suddenly cancelled and schools closed in March 2020. His students will miss his outstanding teaching, especially when he launches into spontaneous recitations of poetry and the staff will miss his humour and compassion. We wish him well in his many travels, which will undoubtedly lead him back to his beloved Wales at some point.

Sporting News and Success

Congratulations to the U14 and U16 Badminton teams who are now the County Champions. You can read all about their success and all sporting news in Spotlight on Sport which is included in this week's Parentmail.

Thank you to all the staff, both in the Sport Department and in other Departments, for the time they give to the training and matches. Also thank you to all the parents who wait in cars in the dark to pick up their daughters!



Giving Tree

I am delighted to show you the results of your generosity as we delivered over 900 parcels to the Giving Tree offices this week. It was wonderful to see the presents arriving throughout last week and the happiness brought to the girls who delivered them. Well done to Miss Dodhia for organising the event, for the Site Team for collecting in all the gifts and to every parent and/or pupil who bought and wrapped a present.



Year 11 Religion and Ethics Conference

As we draw nearer to the end of term, Year 11 students have had the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge in Philosophy, Religion and Ethics. On Monday, all of Year 11 participated in an RS Core Conference led by Dr Greg Barker author, university lecturer and fellow of the University of Winchester. Dr Greg Barker was hugely impressed by the quality of the student responses and questions throughout the day. The students studied Feminist Theology, ethical theories, philosophy, and religion in the media.

Year 11 Theatre Trip

Year 11 RS GCSE students also had a fun evening at the theatre where they watched 'The Prince of Egypt' which tells the story of Moses and the escape of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt - content which is covered in the Judaism aspect of their course. The choreography was phenomenal and the girls enjoyed seeing the story of the Passover come to life.

A Royal Christmas Carol Service

I asked Maggie (Y13) and Trixie (Y10) to write a paragraph about a particularly interesting trip they took last week:

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It's not every day that you receive an invitation from Buckingham palace, if you're not about to celebrate your 100th birthday. Along with our Opa (a holocaust survivor who comes to talk at our school) we were personally invited by the Duchess of Cambridge to attend a Christmas Carol Concert at Westminster Abbey. We set off with our pink tickets and when we arrived we saw reindeer and were given a gold star for our negative lateral flow test!



Then we were ushered down to the front of the Abbey where we were surprised to be seated just behind the Royal Family. The carol concert was amazing and included beautiful singing from Westminster Abbey Choir and a lovely rendition by Ellie Goulding of 'Have yourself a merry little Christmas'. The congregation was full of a number of recognisable people and front-line workers. Before the service the Duchess stopped to talk to us which was a real honour. It was a delightful afternoon and just to prove we weren't avoiding the queues at Thorpe Park, you can see the concert on ITV on Christmas Eve! The concert was in aid of the Royal Foundation, a charity set up by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge to support mental health."

Congratulations

Well done to Haneen, Y13G, who recently entered a translation competition at the University of Sheffield and was selected as one of 10 winners. The competition involved translating an extract from a French novel, an exercise which is challenging, even to university students! It's a demonstration of real linguistic talent.

COVID Safety

We all want to keep our loved ones safe this holiday, so we are making sure that everyone is taking home enough Lateral Flow Tests so they can take a test:

- On Wednesday 5th January – unless you have opted for your daughter to come on site
- Before any large social gathering
- Before meeting with any person who is clinically vulnerable.

This is the message from Herts CC.

Keep Testing

If you're planning a family gathering or party make sure no one brings Covid-19 with them. The virus doesn't always make people feel unwell or have any symptoms, which is why taking rapid or 'lateral flow' tests before getting together is so important.

It's now even easier for Hertfordshire residents to get [home rapid test kits](#), for people with no symptoms to check that they are Covid-free. There are 17 libraries across the county offering free kits to anyone who is unable to [order online](#). Residents can also ask at their local pharmacy, speak to their employer or call 119. Those with children aged 11 and over can get home testing kits through their school.

For those with Covid-19 symptoms, please [book a free PCR test](#) for yourself or a family member. To keep everyone safe, please do not turn up to a walk-in or drive through test site unless you have an appointment. For more information on staying safe during the festive season go to www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/PlayYourPartcampaigntoolkit

Watford Museum

If you visit the Watford Museum during the holidays you may spot this display, which is work from our students called the Wonders of Watford.



Supporting Families

I have also attached a flyer from Supporting Links, the charity we work with to provide workshops for parents. Bringing up a child is the most important job you will ever do and yet you receive no training. Maybe these will be of interest to you?

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sylvia Tai'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the 'i'.

Sylvia Tai