

St John's VA C of E Primary School

NEWSLETTER

Finding the light in ourselves and each other (John 8:12)



30/01/26

Spring Term 1

Value: Joy

Welcome message from the Headteacher

Thank you for all your support!

Dear all,

I hope you have all had a good two weeks, the weather has been a range of cold, wet and stormy but our children continue to be resilient in coming in and learning each day.

We have had a busy two weeks with several projects beginning. Our front of the school courtyard has been planned and stages have begun. Our new fence line between the carpark and the courtyard is being worked on to create our new entrance area. I have met with the building team who aim to get all work done by February half term as well as a new gate system and school system finalised in the half term ready for Spring 2. I will continue to update you during this time, thank you everyone for your patience regarding the carpark and entering the school. During this time, we ask that when the courtyard is out of bounds, for all scooters and bikes to be lined up outside the office on the main playground. This is only temporary until the courtyard is finished.

We have been very busy with our staffing team as we have a few upcoming changes during the Summer term. Please see below regarding our changes. Letters have been sent out directly to the classes with staffing changes.

OPAL continues to go well, and we are slowly getting donations in for toys, pallets and kitchen utensils. Any equipment that can be donated would be greatly appreciated. We have received new playtime equipment from the AGMS foundation, this has brought new footballs, basketballs, tennis balls, egg and spoons and other lunch time equipment.

The Parish have also donated some money towards our OPAL project which will support getting our sand pit sorted once it has been dug out. Thank you to the parish for this kind donation as well as the children who are digging the sand pit out. It will take a while, but it will be worth it in the end. I also want to say thank you to all parents for allowing your children to explore outdoor learning and whilst they are muddy, having fun at lunch times. We are going to invest in some mud suits for children who particularly like to get rather muddy but they will be used by all.

Have a good weekend - Mr Worton-Geer

Pupil quote of the week- Quinn (Year 4): I have enjoyed playing with my friends at lunch time with the new footballs. I really enjoy the food at school.
Quote from the bible- Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope"

Improvements to the school:

We have had several improvements so far:

- The new fence line between the carpark and the courtyard has been cleared and a temporary fence will be put in. Our new fence has been ordered and the aim will be for it to be in the ground in the next few weeks.
- We have some new staff joining our team, please see below for further information.
- We are slowly receiving OPAL toys to play with, please continue to donate to the school.
- New iPads have been ordered for EYFS to be used
- A new donation of equipment from AGMS Foundation was greatly received.
- New donation of funds from our local parish has been greatly received.





Highlights

Here is some useful information that is happening in the school.

Attendance:

Week commencing 19th January 2026

Year	Percent	Place
Nursery	99.3%	2 nd
Year 1	94.5%	7 th
Year 2	99.7%	1 st
Year 3	98.3%	4 th
Year 4	95.2%	6 th
Year 5	97.0%	5 th
Year 6	97.0%	5 th
Year R	99.0%	3 rd

Amazon Wish list

We have created our amazon wish list if parents would like to buy items for the school – this would be greatly appreciated. The link is found [here](#). Throughout the year we will update the wish list.



Staffing update:

Mr M. Harnden will be retiring at the end of this term from his role in Year 3. He has dedicated many years to education and has chosen to retire to spend more time with his family. We thank Mr Harnden for his commitment and service, and we wish him a very happy and fulfilling retirement.

Both **Mrs Backman** and **Mrs Levy** are expecting and will begin their maternity leave during the summer term.

To ensure continuity for our pupils, we have been actively recruiting new staff. We are pleased to welcome **Mrs Protsyuk**, who will join our team after the Easter break, and **Mr Beaumont**, who will join us in July.

PSHE 'Keeping Safe' Spring 1st - What are your Dreams and Goals? – Guest Speakers

Over the last couple of weeks, we have been fortunate to have had the support of 2 of our Governors for our Collective Worship sessions linked to our current theme.

On Friday 16th January Matt Deacon shared with us a wonderful recording to share his life time dream of presenting on a radio show. This can be viewed here:-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2YZepxxGRY>

And on Friday 23rd January Aled Owen came and talked about his early dreams of playing Rugby for Wales and where his early inspirations led him to.

Thank you to both Matt and Aled for your contributions!

OPAL:

The children are all extremely excited about our new playground project. As mentioned in the OPAL launch letter sent out at the start of the programme, we will continue to collect loose parts for children to play with. The items we are looking for will enable us to enjoy a wider range of play experiences during playtime (see below for some examples).


If you have any items to donate, they will need to be brought to Mrs Davies-Golder. Staff will be on the main gate and will direct you to where the items need to be left. Please bring your items in between 8:30 and 8:50 any morning.

If you are able to, or you know anyone who can, donate a large number of plastic boxes/crates/pallets, please contact the school office.

Thank you for your continued support with our OPAL Primary Programme. We look forward to sharing more of what we have been getting up to at playtimes very soon.



Get ready to play... OPAL BINGO

Laundry basket 	Suitcase 	Wooden spoons 	Action figures 	Plastic trucks 
Dress up items 	Cars 	Dinosaurs 	Pans 	Plastic dolls 
Lego 	Wheelbarrow 	Fabric 	Plastic tubes 	Tarpaulin 
Beach spades 	Buckets 	Trowels 	Watering cans 	Cardboard 
Guttering 	Wooden planks 	Baking pans 	PVC pipes 	Chalk 

AGMS Foundation Donation

We are very glad to have received a donation from AGMS Foundation who have given the school some new lunch time equipment. The Year 6 class received these items and disrupted these across the school. Thank you for supporting our school AGMS foundation.



Parish Donation

We have also received a kind donation from the local parish. We aim to use this money for our OPAL project paying for new storage, resources and our new sandpit that is currently being dug. We are very excited to see how this goes over the next few months. We will keep you posted, thank you to the Parish of Digswell. Here is a vision of our sandpit with a cover to be installed.



Child Prayer:

Dear God, Thank you for our family, friends and the houses that we have. Thank you for the food that you provide us. Please look after our staff at school. Thank you for always being there for us.
Amen (Year 4- Gracie-Mae)

Calendar

Monday 2nd February -Thursday 5th February

MOCK SAT's Week – Year 6

Friday 6th February

Forest School – Year 2

Monday 9th – 15th February

Children's Mental health Week

Tuesday 10th February

Safer Internet Day

Friday 13th February

Forest School – Year 1

Monday 16th -Friday 20th February

Half Term

Monday 23rd February

Return to school

Friday 27th February

Forest School - Year 6

Thursday 5th March

World Book Day

Friday 6th March

Forest school – Year 5

Monday 9th -Friday 13th March

Science Week

Wednesday 11th March

Year 1-6 Science Workshop

Thursday 12th March

Book Look Day- 2:45pm

Friday 13th March

Forest School – Year 4

Monday 16th-Friday 20th March

Year 6 Residential trip to Essex Outdoors

Friday 20th March

Forest School – Year 3

Monday 23rd -Thursday 26th March

Mock SAT's Week (Year 6)

Wednesday 25th and Thursday 26th March

Parent Consultations

Friday 27th March

Forest School – Year 2

Friday 27th March

Last day of term – finish 1:30pm

Forest School

This term, we will be focusing on a range of outdoor skills, including fire safety and management, knotting techniques, and building simple shelters. These activities are designed to help children grow in confidence, resilience and independence as they learn to work with natural materials and collaborate with their peers.

Please ensure that children come to school dressed appropriately on Forest School days. They will be spending extended periods outdoors and are likely to get muddy, wet or cold. Warm layers, waterproof clothing and sturdy footwear make a big difference to their comfort and enjoyment.

Our Forest School curriculum is something we are continually developing. As our grounds have now reached a stage where we can expand and enrich the learning opportunities, we are excited to introduce more structured progression in skills and knowledge. Over time, children will revisit key skills at increasing levels of challenge, helping them build mastery and confidence.



Academic Highlights

Here is some useful information that is happening in the school.

Nursery:



Nursery have been loving reading the story of 'We're going on a bear hunt'. We have been using our fine motor skills to create a scene from the book, and we have been practising re-telling the story using actions and different sounds. We loved having the grown-ups in to watch us perform!

Year 1:



Year 1 have been loving Ruth Brown's A Dark, Dark Tale – so much so that we've been reading it in the dark... with torches, of course, for full atmospheric effect! It's sparked some truly incredible writing (honestly, I keep having to remind myself they're only six). Our continuous provision has also had a makeover this fortnight, with dressing-up added to inspire language-rich play and it's been a huge hit. All in all, a fabulous couple of weeks... and

yes, after all that suspense, in the dark, dark box there really is just a mouse 🐭!

Year 3:



In Year 3 we have been enjoying sports lessons with Mr O' Neill from Monks Walk School. Here we are learning to play handball. We had lots of fun together developing our ball skills.

Year 5:



Year 5 have been thoroughly enjoying their Dance unit in PE – they have learnt to hand-jive and 'Rock around the Clock' In fact we struggled to get a photo that wasn't blurry as they were moving so fast!!!

Reception:



This week we continued our Gruffalo Forest School adventures by rereading The Gruffalo, making Gruffalo Crumble and reenacting the story. We even added some warts to the crumble (they were raisins of course!)



Year 2:



Year 2 have been really enjoying their cricket lessons each Monday. They are always keen to participate. We have also had a handball session led by Monks Walk where the children were engaged in lots of different games, building on their throwing skills. In Dance, children have been listening to different pieces of music, finding the beat and creating 4 step sequences with a theme for the songs. So far, our themes have been animals and space.

Year 4:



Year 4 have been hard at work throughout January. We have continued our learning around Earthquakes and Volcanoes in Geography - two things that have really captured the attention of the

children! On Friday 23rd we took part in forest school, where we had a go at building dens and lighting small fires using flint & steel. We have many successful Firestarter's!

Year 6: Year 6 have had a super fun few weeks. We have been busy writing our adventure stories which we are publishing next week! In the last few days, we have also had lots of excitement for a song we have looked at in music: 'You to me are Everything' by the Real Thing. I am sure lots of parents will know it! We even learned some 70s disco dance moves!





Parish News

Here is some useful information that is happening in the Parish.

The Churchwardens would like to thank everyone who contributed to the 2025 Christmas Appeal.

The idea was that all monies contributed via our school services would go towards our two chosen charities - *Isabel Hospice* and the *Sisters of the Beatitudes*. The rest of the funds from parishioners would then help us "over the line" as a parish financially into 2026 as we look to continue to engage in mission.

The final total raised was **£4781.48** before reclaimable Gift Aid. Of this **£150** was given at our schools services.

The Standing Committee of the Parochial Church Council therefore agreed on Monday that in view of the large amount raised

- +£700 would go to Isabel Hospice
- +£700 to the Sisters of the Mount of Beatitudes
- +with the rest assisting the parish in our outreach to schools and young people throughout 2026 and in our mission generally.

Thank you to everyone.

This will make a huge difference in many different ways.

Fr Rob Marshall

Rector

Thank you to Heather Yuill and Mandy Clements for their help in admin for the appeal throughout December.

Once again the Cowper Arms in Digswell will be hosting

PARISH PANCAKES

on Shrove Tuesday, 17 Feb 2026

12 Noon - 8pm.

The pub will be open as usual serving a wide range of cold and hot drinks as well as its usual menu but all pancakes purchased on the day will be donated to the parish's work with schools.

Although it is half term we hope that you will publicise this widely to parents, staff and governors as it may be something nice to do for those not going away for the holiday.

Pancakes are just £1.50 each including a range of fillings and payment can now be made in cash or card.



Next Sunday in Church (1 Feb) Candlemas

9:30 am Parish Eucharist followed by refreshments

Join us as we take the light of Jesus out into the parish

The Parish Lunch at the Cowper Arms has been postponed as those who regularly attend are unable to be there. Of course you are perfectly free to go to the Cowper and have lunch at any time.

Diocese awarded major grant for specific areas

<https://resource.stalbansdiocese.org/newsletters/smmib-bid-outcome-confirmed-awards-and-next-steps-diocese/>

Lent Book 2026

Lent in Plain Sight: A Devotion Through Ten Objects by Jill Duffield.

Fr Rob's Lent Book.

If you did not use Fr Rob's Lent Book - *Transfiguration, 50 Pilgrim Steps* - last year you might like to order your copy now for this year and recommend it to others?

<https://canterburypress.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781786225313/transfiguration>

Parish Study Day

An Overview of I Corinthians - led by Fr Rob at the Rectory

Wed 4 Feb 11am

Cost is £8 including soup, cheeseboard and hot drinks.

To book please reply to this email by Mon 26 Jan.

A Moment of Healing

Sat 7 Feb 9:15am in St John's Church. **Ash Wednesday**

Parish Eucharist at St John's at 12.30pm

SILENCE

Sat 7 Feb 2pm-4pm

St John's Church.

An opportunity for those who wish to enjoy total silence. Please note that no talking is expected in the church at all as this is a space exclusively for those seeking no noise or talking.

Parish Pancakes

Tues 17 Feb

12 Noon - 8pm at the Cowper Arms.

Make a date and, as it's half term, do support it best you can!

Ash Wednesday

12.30pm Parish Eucharist at St John's Church.

Racial Justice Sunday in February

As Racial Justice Sunday approaches the Diocese has announced major changes in its engagement with racial equality and justice.

<https://resource.stalbansdiocese.org/newsletters/a-new-commitment-to-racial-justice/>



The Friends News

Here is some useful information that is happening with the Friends.

This academic year we are going to host the AGM at school on Friday 13th February 2025 at 1:30pm. Mr Worton-Geer will be hosting with Teas and coffees to invite all parents to attend so that we can build a team to support the school. There are named roles here such as Chair, vice chair, treasurer and Secretary but also Reps for each class and non-named roles. Together we can support the school to develop a strong community that will help raise money for our children. Please come along.

Dates for the diary for half termly meetings are:

Friday 13th February 2025 at 1:30pm – AGM voting for roles

Wednesday 11th February 2025 – welcome new committee and discussion on World book day- a focus on Wonka.

Wednesday 25th March 2025

Wednesday 29th April 2025

Wednesday 24th June 2025



PLEASE COME AND SUPPORT OUR

AGM

**Friday 13th February 2026
1:30pm**

Refreshments will be provided

These are the cake sale dates

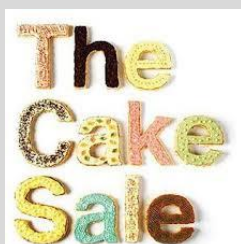
Yr 4 - 13/2/26

Yr 3 - 27/2/26

Yr 2 - 13/3/26

Yr 1 - 17/4/26

R - 8/5/26N - 22/5/26



Our future events that we would like to run and will need support are:

- Christmas Fair
- Christmas Cards
- Mother's Day project
- Father's Day project
- Sports Day
- Year 6 Show
- Odd shoe day

Target: £10,000

Total so far:
£7466.50

World Book day

Sport's day

Father's day projects

Mother's day projects

Christmas bizarre
£1966.50

Fireworks
£2200

Anonymous Donations
£1000

Tesco Grant
£1000

Quiz night
£1300

INCREDIBLE YEARS PARENTING PROGRAMME

A program for parents and carers of children aged 4 - 11 years in Welwyn and Hatfield, who are struggling with their child's behaviour at home.

Does your child display anxious, aggressive, argumentative, destructive behaviour and or refusal to follow instructions? Then this course is for you. This supportive program aims to develop parenting strategies tailored to you and your individual family's needs.

"This program is transformational in helping coach, support and gently challenge unhelpful thoughts or behaviours. Could not recommend more for parents of children of any age or background"

8th January - 26th March '26
Every Thursday
10am -12pm
(apart from half term)

Swallow Dell School,
Blackthorn Road, Welwyn
Garden City, AL7 3JP

Scan the QR code
to book now!



Who's in Charge?

A FREE* 8 WEEK COURSE FOR PARENTS/CARERS LIVING WITH A STRONG-WILLED CHILD

COURSE COVERS:

- ENTITLEMENT VERSUS RESPONSIBILITY
- CONSEQUENCES
- ANGER
- ASSERTIVENESS
- SELF-CARE
- COOPERATIVE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

DATES:

Monday evenings,
starts Feb 2026 - exact
date to be confirmed

TIME: 6:30-8:30pm

PROGRAMME CONSISTS OF 8 X 2 HOUR
WEEKLY SESSIONS

LOCATION: Onslow
St. Audrey's School

To book a place, please use the QR code or go to
this link: <https://forms.office.com/e/q1ci0btEX5>

*Please note that this course is only available for free to
our partner schools, details of which can be found here:
<http://welwynhatschoolspartnership.co.uk/our-schools/>

