

VERITAS



St Mark's Catholic School

No. 32 - AUTUMN 2023



The UN has marked the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December since 1992, to spread the word on disability issues and mobilise support for the dignity, rights, and well-being of persons with disabilities, visible or non-visible.

This day resonates with us as Catholics due to this day linking to the Catholic social teaching of 'Dignity of the human person'.

Year 7 & 8 students were invited to do an information scavenger hunt around the Science department learning about amazing scientists with disabilities. We also ran a lunchtime disabilities workshop where students were able to take part in activities that enabled them to walk a mile in the shoes of people with specific disabilities such as being deaf or having disabilities of balance and coordination. Let's hear from some students who took part in the activities that celebrated those with disabilities:

"I really liked the disabilities workshop and scavenger hunt because it let me experience how hard life could be with different disorders. It was very fun and educational which made it quite easy to participate and understand. The scavenger hunt was my favourite because we got to learn about different inspirational scientists with disabilities and got to explore the science department. I really liked this event and enjoyed participating."

Nicole Monteiro Y7

"The event was quite exciting and educational!.

The scavenger hunt helped us learn a lot about the amazing discoveries and scientific exploration but the workshop gave us an understanding of how people with disabilities view the world and the challenges that they face. One of the things in the workshop I quite enjoyed was wearing the glasses that were used to show different types of blindness (such as tunnel vision) and trying to solve puzzles whilst wearing them."

Samaira Rodrigues Y7



A big well done to all of the year 7 and 8 students that took part in our events to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Mrs Brennan (Science Teacher)



The Autumn Term is always filled with new opportunities, and there have been so many events to celebrate (despite the challenges of the recent fire!). We launched our new Mission Statement and 'Mission of the Month' which students and staff have embraced with enthusiasm. This new initiative reflects our commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, and has provided a fresh approach to student leadership development and faith in action through our student ambassadors. I am proud of the staff and students for all that they have achieved this term, and I hope that you enjoy reading about the many additional opportunities and activities that are available to our pupils beyond the classroom.

On behalf of all of the staff, I would like to wish you and your families every blessing for Christmas and the New Year.



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



It's that time of the year again where the Rotarians call for the voices of the future to express themselves at the Rotary Public Speaking Competition. With a great history in the competition, St. Mark's, of course, fielded three strong teams across the intermediate and senior levels looking to make our mark in the world of Public Speaking once again.

On Thursday 23rd November, St Mark's had the wonderful opportunity to host this year's competition. Several teams from our school were tasked to compete with those from rival schools in a battle of heated discussions.



Two teams from Year 9, and one from the Sixth Form debated topics, working as groups in order to continue the legacy of holding the title of 'Borough Champions' that the school had held for years before. Each team consisted of an opposition, proposition, and chairperson and were tasked to speak in front of a panel of judges who would surely put each team in their place.

The grand event was held in the theatre, where schools from all over Hounslow came to watch and compete. Discussions were heated, tensions rose, and performances were incredible. The judges even stated themselves how impressed they were with the teams that came from St Mark's because the communication, the cooperation and speaking skills were immaculate.

After an evening of heated debate, it was announced that the Junior and Senior round were both won by St Mark's - ending the day with medals, certificates and trophies being awarded to the winning teams. Overall, it was a fantastic event that sparked talent and showed everyone the motivation and determination students at this school have.

The Year 9 students who competed (and won) have been taking part in the Aiming for Oxbridge programme over the past two years and it is becoming increasingly evident that they are growing into world beaters! We look forward to seeing where this ambition takes them over the next few years!

(If you're looking to join the Debating Club, come to Room 205 on Mondays after school)

Youth Speaks' Rotary Public Speaking Outright Winners for the Intermediate

Category:

Chairperson - Misha Mac

Proposition - Luke Donnelly

Opposition - Phoebe Lawrence

Youth Speaks' Rotary Public Speaking 'Best speakers' for the Intermediate Category

Best Chairperson - Felix Watts

Best Proposition - Selena Viegas

Best Opposition - Micaela Antido

Youth Speaks' Rotary Public Speaking Outright Winners for the Senior Category

Chairperson - Zygy Lopez-Dyrka

Proposition - Cara Stanislaus

Opposition - Emma Nagle

Written by Phoebe Lawrence

Aiming for Oxbridge - Year 8 and Year 9

Aiming for Oxbridge returned this year with a bang! Students in Year 8 and 9 went through a rigorous application process to be whittled down to the lucky few fortunate enough to get on the programme.

The programme allows students to learn skills and explore topics that can help with interviews for some of the top universities in the world. From problem solving to oracy and public speaking, Aiming for Oxbridge teaches a variety of skills and studies new topics every lesson from debating and speech writing to business, entrepreneur skills and classical studies. Aiming for Oxbridge allows you to think more critically. Students don't just learn new skills but also new cultures.

This year, sessions have been based around:

- Introduction to Law: Defining Murder (Mr Sheehan)
- Big Questions: Answering university interview style questions (Mr Windmill)
- Physics and Philosophy - the end of the world... (Mr Windmill)

Next term, the Year 8 students will move on to their focus on Problem Solving while the Year 9s move on to the highly anticipated The Apprentice competition. Who will be crowned this year's The St. Mark's Apprentice?

LAMDA

The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts is a world-renowned exam awarding body which specialises in the transformative power of the dramatic arts. The qualifications it offers specialises in training students in their performance

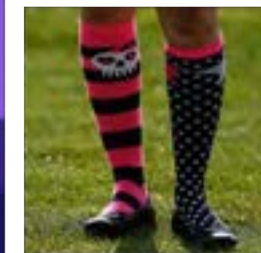
and public speaking skills while promoting creative, authentic and confident communication. While LAMDA exams cover a range of disciplines, we at St. Mark's currently offer the qualification in: Speaking in Public.

For the past 10 months, students now in Year 11 have been training intensely for their qualification. Whilst having weekly sessions, as part of the programme students also had to contribute to the wider life of the school such as assemblies, mentoring, form time activities where they are encouraged to apply their learning across the wider school setting.

On November 11th, 30 Year 11 students took their final exam and performed exceptionally. The examiners were in awe of their passion, drive and authenticity in their speech writing and performance.

Congratulations to the following students who performed so well - we are all very excited to see where these exceptional results take them next.

Ritvik Afonso	Evelyn Bale	Brroke Bastienne	Joyce Bitumba	Raphaelle Briones	Dianne Carino
Chloe D'Souza	Gabriella Dobranska	Angel Fernandes	Elisha Fernando	Dylan Gomez	Rihanna Jose
Rahul Karthikeyan	Grace Kelly	Aoife Kingsland	Jamie Kisby	Katarzyna Kloskowska	Zack Kubinsky
Aine Kynes	Christiane Managuid	Erin Murphy Amarteifio	Alisha Musni	Noel Nelson	Andreas Pereira
Jennifer Preknicaaj	Emilia Radon	Jade Rodrigues	Rachel Rodrigues	Mary Shaymelo	Zofia Staczek



Anti-bullying week was marked in school during the week of Monday 13th - Friday 17th November with assemblies, a dedicated PSHCE lesson and a variety of form activities. A highlight was seeing the wide variety of socks worn on the Monday as the school took part in the Anti-bullying Alliance's Odd socks day, which takes place nationally. Staff and students displayed an amazing array of colours and patterns on socks over tights or peeking out below trousers. Here are pictures of 3 of the year teams in school - can you identify them from their socks?!

The work of Anti-bullying continues throughout the year, and issues should always be reported to a trusted member of staff.

Odd socks day ... which year team is which?!



ADVENT SERVICE

The most incredible time of the year, Christmas! At St. Mark's we had a Carol Service to celebrate the birth of Jesus. We sang different songs to celebrate Advent and to recognise how Christmas is celebrated around the world. I especially loved Joy to the world with African drums.

The song we sang are:

- One in Royal David's City
- Joy to the World
- The First Noel
- Christmas to Me
- Silent Night

In the song Silent Night, I sang a duet with Phoebe from 7PO. It was one of the most enjoyable moments of my life!

The evening was a wonderful way for our community to come together to celebrate Jesus being born.

Aleksander Sledz



St. Mark's student wins.....

The Ealing Secondary School chess tournament at the Ellen Wilkinson on Sunday 3rd December was won by Luke Donnelly (9 Champion). Twenty eight people took part in the competition open to both girls and boys and consisted of 5 rounds. Luke won his first four games and drew the last one in order to finish first with an impressive total score of four and a half out of five A big congratulations to Luke Donnelly for a very thrilling achievement! Luke has been attending the chess club at St. Mark's on a regular basis since he joined the school. He actually won the St. Mark's Chess Championship just under two years ago when he was in year 7, again another remarkable achievement!

There has been a tremendous interest in chess at St. Mark's since the opening of extracurricular activities after covid. The number of pupils turning up on Fridays after school meant that we did not have sufficient space in one lab to accommodate all the pupils and thanks to Mr Mihailovic and the site team we have relocated to 'Maggies' and this has been an excellent venue for the past six weeks!

The Chess and games Club takes place every Friday after school until 4.00 pm and everyone is welcome, including beginners and students wanting to learn the game(s).

We are hoping to play chess against other local schools in the new year and looking to select players for this and other competitions.



Photo of Luke Donnelly playing against Mr Crone and then holding his trophy won on the 3rd of December 2023 at Ellen Wilkinson School in Ealing.

CHESS COMPETITION



St Mark's held its annual coffee morning on Monday 2nd October 2003. both year 13 charity reps and staff were involved in this event. Colleagues and students were treated to homemade bakes which were baked by both staff and students.

This year St Mark's raised a whopping £594 including gift aid for this worthwhile cause.



At the beginning of October, 70 of our year 12 and 13 mathematicians, along with over a tenth of a million students nationwide, took part in the 2023 UK Senior Maths Challenge.

This taxing 25 question multiple-choice test of their mathematical ability aims to provoke a different sort of mathematical thinking and problem-solving to the challenge provided by their A-level studies.

I am happy to report that 49 of them (70% of our entrants, compared with a figure of 40% nationally)

have since earned a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award.

Special mention should go to Stephen Lavada and Matthew Bale of Year 13 for attaining Gold Awards, and to Stephen as the highest scorer from St. Mark's.

Both students have been invited to sit the follow-on round (the prestigious UK Senior Kangaroo) by dint of their performance in the Challenge.

Well done indeed, boys and congratulations to all our entrants for putting their brain power on the line yet again.

I know the students would like to thank their maths teachers for the smooth running of this year's Challenge, as indeed would I.

If any parents/guardians are interested in seeing the challenge posed to our senior students in this exacting annual workout of the grey matter, this year's and previous years' papers and solutions can be found on-line, initially at 'UKMT'.

Prepare to be taxed, mentally.

Classical Civilisation is a popular A Level choice for students at St Mark's and is traditionally a subject taught in private schools. Classical Civilisation focuses on the civilisations of Greece and Rome, and is a wide ranging subject involving the study of literature, material culture, ancient thought and ideas, and the ancient historical context. It is new subject to students and they have enjoyed learning about the background to the Roman and Greek world. Below are some year 12 thoughts on Classical Civilisation A Level.



I took classics because I am intrigued with ancient civilizations, literature and philosophy. I am positive that classics can offer an insight into the past and help us understand the foundation of a modern society. It is an interesting subject

Studying classics taught me valuable skills such as critical thinking, analysis, research and a deep understanding of human nature and civilisation

Overall, I think Classics is a good A level to have since it can open a lot of career paths in the future and especially if you want to see yourself doing law in the future

I have learnt about historical figures such as Julius Caesar and Cicero, the founding of Ancient Rome and how life was like in Rome. In lessons I am currently learning parts of Homer's Odyssey and have learnt about Greek myths and gods.

For me I always had a passion for the Greek gods since I was in primary school as I was an avid reader and loved the Percy Jackson

In lessons, we often are active and move around a lot and do activities with the people at our tables. We often move around and work with others, while also doing activities that help better our understanding of a certain concept, such as when we all represented the ranks of the Cursus Honorum, the Roman political system, in one of our lessons.



So far I love classics and always look forward to my lessons. If I had to go back and choose my A level subjects again I would still choose classics as it is very interesting and never fails to surprise me.



Musical Theatre Workshop



The Drama department had 25 incredible students work with the Royal academy of music in a Musical Theatre workshop. The exciting opportunity saw students participate in acting and singing tasks with course leaders and industry professionals from RAM. Then after hearing the amazing alumni from RAM sing songs from 'Hamilton' and 'Annie get your gun' our students were invited to get up and perform solos.



- What does it mean to be a modern man?
- What are the three simple things a man can do to help their immediate environment?
- How can "World Cup" expectations be met, if you hold yourself to "Sunday League" standards?

All big questions that the 12 boys from Year 8 who attended the Rocking UR Teens conference were challenged with. As we found out, this isn't a challenge to be shied away from. The students found out that each day we should continue in the efforts to define a healthy and personal version of "masculinity." This is best done so by surrounding yourself

with kind, supportive peers that value themselves as a part of the community, but also want the best for you.

The boys weren't left to discuss this complex idea of masculinity on their own though, and as part of the day we also got a slice of life from working professionals in different fields, saw the power of the spoken work with Poetic Unity, as well as took part in "speed mentoring" where no question was too out of place. Throughout the day, residing in the comfortable and safe space created for us all, we could be engaged with the big question, How do I live up to my God-given potential?



Mr Rogan and Mr Fisher who chaperoned the trip would agree that the boys threw themselves into this day wholeheartedly, but see for yourselves as we've taken some quotes from the review form of the day:

"It showed me that I can do what-ever I want if I stick with it."

"I can see how I set my standards in my day to day life is important, and how talking will benefit me."

"I am excited about the future, I hope for my dream job and to have a family."

"It was useful seeing how the people got into what they wanted to be. I didn't know that there could be different opportunities for me."

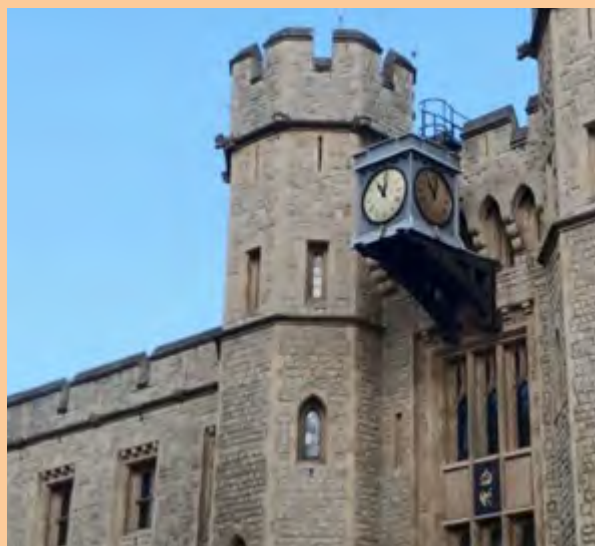
We greatly look forward to seeing all the fantastic places the students will go.



TOWER OF LONDON

discover about, and new knowledge of British history. It was a long day, but, our teachers made it enjoyable as it could be so we could still have fun.

Since there were only a certain number of students to come on the trip, the history department set up a history competition at the end of Year 7 so in Year 8, we could go on the trip. This competition was to write or create our own magazine or video that was about any event in history. The twist in our competition was that you had to make it as if you were working in the Horrible Histories



programme; we put hard work and dedication into a wonderful project. This competition was linked to our previous topic of the Tudor period in Year 7, where we learned about Henry VIII and his reign as monarch, as well as his children Edward, Mary and Elizabeth. Some examples of work from our form include Amelia Nyang's video on Henry VIII's six wives (Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Katherine Howard and Catherine Parr) and Angela's magazine on the Philippine Revolution.

Some parts of the tower we looked at were the crown jewels and royal garments (which we couldn't take pictures of but still have fun seeing them), world-class Royal Armouries collections - which is located at the top floor in White Tower, the Salt Tower (the only lasting chapel within the Tower of London) and prisoner rooms in the building. Our favourite was definitely the Royal Armouries collection as there were so many intricate and unique pieces of armour that were quite fascinating to learn about, especially since it was the 2nd most wanted place to see by our group (behind the crown jewels, which were very intriguing and unique).



The history trip from last term was absolute fun; there were many places to see, beautiful sights to



During our trip, we had the pleasure of attending a workshop where one of the tour guides in the Tower of London had prepared a special talk for us about the Tudor period - many of us participated in her questions and we all enjoyed it. In the workshop, we walked around places where important historical figures in the Tudor period were at the time in the building; for example, we walked by where Anne Boleyn's beheading trial took place and our tour guide explained further about Anne Boleyn's history. We also explored one of the chambers in the Salt Tower where John Gerard had escaped the castle from; he was imprisoned for practising the Catholic faith, which had been illegal at the time. At some moments in our workshop, we would get asked questions about our knowledge of the Tudor period - these were mostly about Henry VIII and the Church of England.

For one question we then split up into sides to see who would risk their life for their faith and who wouldn't and easily accept to turn Protestant like the rest of the country. Some of the simple questions we could answer were about Henry VIII's children, the religious beliefs of the country at the time, Henry VIII's wives, some important figures who died in the Tudor period and how the Church of England formed.



What we enjoyed was mostly spending time with our friends on a really well-prepared trip, as well as exploring many places in the Tower of London - there were different variations of artefacts and people that we got to learn about and take a look at, including some of the prison chambers, the housing in the tower,

the chapel and the sights from the top walls around the castle. We deeply thank the history department for planning a great trip, especially one that took place at the very start of the year. This is a great opportunity for us to share and discover knowledge about topics we learn in history (which is why there should be another competition like this!)



Our Faith in Action group were really happy to organise the Year 7 Party. We wanted to make it a fun event for our new Year students. We also wanted to raise some money for our Faith in Action projects. We split into teams for the organisation. Some of us were in charge of the games - we met with Mr Waters, who kindly helped us out and provided all the equipment we needed.



We all enjoyed interacting and ensuring they had fun. Some of us were in charge of the Tuck Shop and enjoyed serving our customers.



Year 7 Faith in Action Party



When the games started the Year 7s were filled with joy and the smiles were everywhere (these continued through the whole event) - the games were really fun, even from our perspective! Seeing them excited by the games and the smiles on their faces, made the whole organisation worth it.



For many of us the most memorable part of the party was Ms Jackson and some of us leading the dancing. The Year 7s followed and this turned into a phenomenal dance battle. The conga was great fun for everyone and doing the macarena on stage!

Thank you Year 7 for coming to our party!

Year 7 Family Mass

On Tuesday the 3rd of October we welcomed our new Year 7s and their families to the school for a welcome Mass. We prayed for God's blessing on our Year 7 students and their families for this year and throughout their journey at St Mark's. The theme for this Mass was: 'I will be with you' and it was lovely to hear the Year 7 students who were able to lead the singing, having



formed a choir, with Ms Jackson. Other students helped with readings and the Gospel drama that was led by Ms Rouse and Mrs McGhee. We are grateful to Fr Damian who celebrated this lovely Mass with us.

Students decorated boats for the mass, offering up their hopes and fears for the year ahead.



Rosary for Peace

Our Archbishop of Westminster Vincent Nichols called us to pray "the great prayer of the Rosary that this conflict, in the homeland of Mary herself, will quickly come to an end." On Tuesday 17th October we answered his call and organised the Rosary for Peace in the school chapel.

November - Month of the Holy Souls

During November, when we particularly remember those who have died, students and staff had the opportunity to share the names of any family members or friends they would like to offer prayers for. Bereavement Mass took place on Thursday 30th November. We are grateful to Fr Ignatius for celebrating this Mass with us.



Memorial Mass for Melissa Angel De Souza

Melissa Angel De Souza
2010-2023

*On Thursday 23rd
November we held
a Memorial Mass
for Melissa Angel
De Souza, beloved
student of St
Mark's Catholic
School.*



*We would like to ask you
to keep Melissa's family
and close friends in
your prayers.*

Emmanuel - Prayer meetings with parents & carers

"Emmanuel"

("God is with us")



A time of prayer with and for the school
community of St Mark's

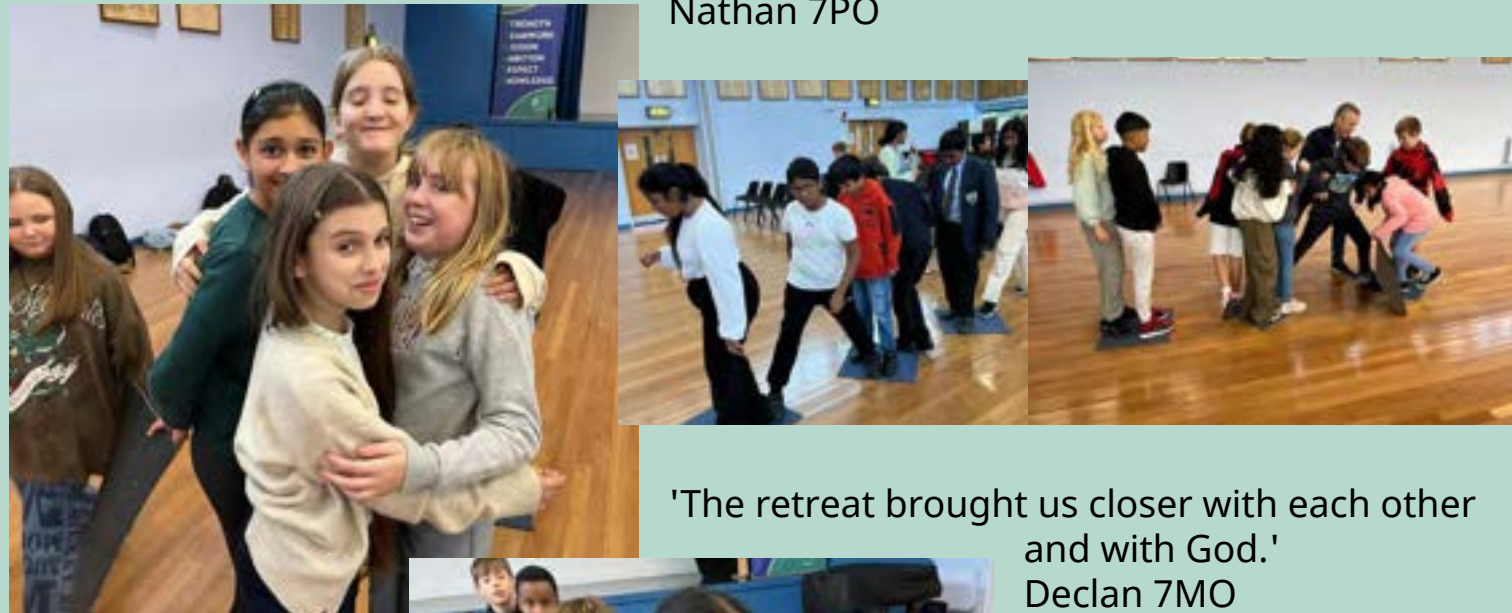
In this period of Advent we were delighted to invite our school community to join us online in prayer for 15 minutes on Tuesday mornings where we asked God to prepare our hearts for the gift of his Son.

Chaplaincy

Year 7 Retreats

Year 7 Retreats took place on the 9th and 16th October. The theme of each retreat was 'Called by God'. Students always say the retreats are always fun as well as spiritual and this year they were a great success! We are glad the students enjoyed the experience.

I liked how peaceful the day was.'
Nathan 7PO



'The retreat brought us closer with each other and with God.'
Declan 7MO

'I learnt more about God and felt closer to him.'
Joseph 7MO



We are delighted to be able to offer students, who have experienced a significant loss or painful experience, the opportunity to participate in the

Spectrum (Rainbows) programme. This peer support programme is facilitated by trained members of staff and will run for 12 weeks after school.

For more information see: <https://rainbowsgb.org/>

If you think your child would benefit from taking part, please email me or if you have any questions please don't hesitate to get in contact.


**Mr Ivan Gizmarik
School Lay Chaplain
cizmariki@st-marks.hounslow.sch.uk
02085773600 (3207)**

Congratulations.....



Huge congratulations to Eugenie Linhinya who was the winner for KS5 in the Education Service Christmas Card Competition run by the Diocese of Westminster.

She won a £10 Amazon Voucher



On Wednesday 6th December, the Year 12 Faith In Action students organised our annual Senior Citizens Party. To help prepare for the party, we made invitation cards for all the senior citizen homes that we had invited such as Cloisters and Sandbanks Care Home.

Before the event we went around the highstreet to find any possible gift ideas to be able to give as small gifts for all the seniors attending such as socks, cups, gloves and raffle prizes etc.



During the event we hosted and entertained a table, we also distributed food and drinks, making sure that they were comfortable and felt warm and made sure that they had a great night to remember. We enjoyed our roles as we got to interact with people from various backgrounds and they had a lot to share about their families, cultures and plans for the holidays. It made me feel comfortable and warm. We talked to a table that arrived from the Vicarage Farm Care Home, the caretakers and citizens there. We had conversations with both the senior citizens and the caregivers. We understood more of their lives and the personal events and felt a deeper connection with a stranger.



We found the karaoke part of the event quite fun as everyone participated and enjoyed themselves. We enjoyed the overall experience of helping out with the community as they all seemed to enjoy and were participating in all the games, which made me really happy seeing that they are having fun themselves. We enjoyed helping the senior citizens because for them it might be the highlight of their Christmas, and it felt like we were making a difference.

By Shawn D'Souza , Martyna Barnas , Cinsia Julian , Massimo Cruz , Natalia Gubanska and Rihanna Del Rosario.





CAFOD Soup Lunch - Friday, 6th October, 2023

On Friday 6th October we supported CAFOD's Harvest Appeal by holding a soup and bread lunch, prepared by our Year 13 Charity Reps and Prefects. We would like to thank all member of our school community- families, students and staff who generously supported this fundraising event. We are delighted to say that we were able to send CAFOD £ 933.00.



THE COOKS!

'We are proud that CAFOD's values: dignity, solidarity, compassion, hope, stewardship, sustainability and partnership have always been an integral part of our school. As a Prefect, taking part in cooking the soup for the lunch allowed me to reflect on how such a simple thing (leek and potato soup) can have such a big impact - knowing all the money raised will be used by CAFOD to help others, where it is needed the most. Making the soup was a fun experience and seeing the queues at the door was amazing!'

Anneliese



THE PREP TEAM!



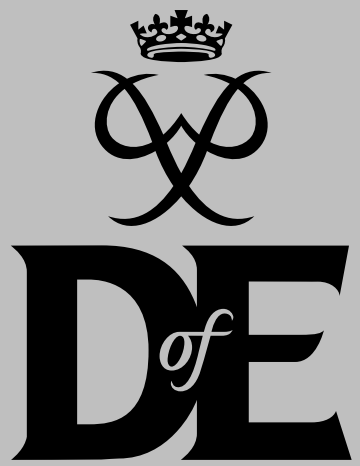
'It was lovely to see the whole school community get involved. I know the Sixth Formers enjoyed organising this event for CAFOD.'

'The CAFOD soup lunch was an incredible experience! Seeing our community coming together to help and support those in need was such a lovely thing to see. I had a great day and definitely learnt a lot about making soup!'

Rachel



THE PROMOTERS, SHOPPERS AND STEWARDS!



Our new cohorts of year 10 and 12 students have signed up this term to start their Bronze and Silver awards respectively. So far they have been learning map and compass skills, and have been planning their Physical, Volunteering and Skills sections to start. Our year 11 and 13 students who took part in D of E last year are now at various stages of completing their awards. 7 year 11 students have now completed their Bronze awards, so huge congratulations to Ritvik Afonso, Coleen Barry-Atherly, Raphaella Briones, Jade Rodrigues, Rachel Rodrigues, Marcelino Simon and Zofia Straczek, as this represents an impressive level of commitment, and contribution to various clubs and activities. Our year 13 students have longer commitments to their sections, so at the moment only 4 have completed - but we're looking forward to seeing many more of them complete in the new year - and what an achievement it is to gain the Silver D of E award. Huge congratulations to Isabella Decataldo, Ellen Duenas, Jack O'Flaherty and Jayden Rodrigues. We are delighted that Mrs Martinez-Lopez has taken on the role of Award Verifier in the school, and has now completed the required training.

POLITICS

Competing against 388 schools from both the state and private sector, year 12 and year 13 A Level Politics students have been taking part in a weekly politics quiz league. With questions covering British, American and global politics, the quiz is both fun but a reminder to students that A Level Politics is a dynamic and constantly evolving subject. Both year 12 and year 13, with their competitive spirit, have been gradually improving their score. Impressively, year 13 students end the year having secured 38th spot in the league.

With a US Presidential election definitely happening next November, a possible UK General election on the horizon and many twists and turns on the route to both, Mr Crouch hosts a weekly politics society, open to all years, every Wednesday lunchtime in room 55 where the latest political developments are discussed and debated.

Westminster Cathedral

When we went to Westminster Cathedral my peers and I were filled with anticipation for the upcoming concert as we had heard amazing things about this phenomenal experience including live animal performances. The journey was a very simple one considering the distance from the school but the long wait was worth it. My favourite part was definitely the donkey and the goat's live performances as they paraded through the central isle and meeting them afterwards.



'The Silence That I Seek' by Raphaëlle Briones

Key Stage 4
and 5 Winner

In a world that never stops talking.
The laughs of the wicked.
The cries of the innocent.
The shouts of the powerful.
The whispers of the oppressed.
Where is the silence that I seek in this world?

Blink. I'm standing in a room.
The walls are pure plain white.
A loud silence echoes through the space,
So vast yet so empty.
Like how the magnificent world is never quiet.
Blink. Two doors on opposite sides.

The left door: pitch-black and small, as dark as death.
A voice speaks. *Yin*. And the door opens itself.
An army of shadows invades the murky sky.
Crows observe the damage and destruction.
Shrieks of pain from corrupted souls resonate.
Suddenly the door shuts.

The right door: silver and grand, shining like a star.
A voice speaks. *Yang*. And the door opens itself.
A golden medallion sparkles in the landscape.
The chorus of birds play a sweet melody.
Vivid flowers and trees sway to the symphony.
Suddenly the door shuts.

Everything is a choice; a game - *pick your next move*.
A loud silence echoes through the room again.
The choice between bad and good.
The choice between Yin and Yang
Which door will you choose?
Where will you find the silence that you seek?

I choose the in between Yin and Yang - the room.
Why? It is my Refuge. It is my Home.
My mind - the place I control. The place I feel hope.
It is the balance between the good and the bad.
My mind is the silence that I seek. Blink.
In a world that never stops talking.

'Refuge I Seek' by Sylvia Wojton

Year 7
Winner

Refuge I seek when I am alone,
Refuge I seek when I want to go home.
Refuge I seek but you're not always here,
Refuge I seek but when I want you, you're never near.

When I want to run away and escape,
I go and hide under my cape.
My shelter surrounds me with safety and calm,
I feel comfort with no harm.

Entering my home I feel a new road,
I'm welcomed and don't want to go.
Seeing my friends gives me happiness and joy,
And all this gives me a new home.

As I slowly increase in age,
I feel like I'm getting stuck in a cage.
I wish I was a bird and would swiftly fly,
I realise how much time has gone by.

Refuge I seek when I'm locked away
Refuge I seek during all of my day.
Refuge I hope that you finally find me
Refuge I hope that then I'll be happy.

Huge congratulations to the winners of the National Poetry Day Competition

'Home' by Saoirse Kingsland

Year 8
Winner

My house sat quietly in the middle of the road,
The darkness shadowed over it,
Engulfing it in gloom,
The black gnawing through the cracks and nooks,
Of the beige wall.
Eating the crippling paint away,
Until it's immersed fully by the shadows.

Hour by hour,
Day by day,
Year by year,
I've lived here.
Here.

A house:
Not a home.

Though its walls are solid,
The foundation of its family
Are not.

October 17th:
The day I found it.
The first glimpse of sunlight,
Flooding into the pool of darkness
That surrounded my existence.

The thick trunk stood there solidly planted,
Marking its territory.
It looked as if it had seen the leaves fall
A thousand times
Over and over and over.
Yet it didn't look old
Just wise.

The broad wooden planks,
Surfaced over the branches firmly,
There I sat rigid
For
3
Whole
Hours

It felt like the first thing that was truly mine
The treehouse.
My treehouse.

When I returned
To my house
That's not a home,
They got angry
I smiled.
They shouted
Burning tears ran down my face,
Like a boiling red hot poker that scarred my cheek.
I fled to my room.
And I wept as I felt the four walls close in on me.
Would I be trapped here,
Forever?

I ran to it.
I don't know why.
The branches wrapped around me
Just like the hugs I never got
Its comforting leaves had grown on me like ivy.

Now I was here
I didn't want to leave.

My sanctuary.

My haven.

My home.

'Before, During, and After' by Evannah-Marie Dioquino

Year 9
Winner

I can hear the birds chirp
And the wind blow
Through the vast infinite of land that I don't know
The flowers bloom too,
Making time seem so soon
Nevertheless of that peaceful sight,
Something to play, a meteorite
And in that meteorite, there is something I can still recall
Of what I theorise the worst of all

Screams, gunshots, horrors and fright
Keeps me from sleeping at night
I can still remember it as those cried attach to the back
Of my throat
A faint memory where people I knew
Became opposing magnets to me
Even if it weren't meant to happen
Could we forgive each other on our ends?
In this kind of world is one where there is also
A hidden type of shell
With all kinds of sorrow and negativity
'Promise me we'll meet again in another life'
That Goodbye I never expected
Stabbed me in the heart with a sharp-bladed knife

I shoot back to the present
Both of my swollen and puffy eyes open
And in the thickness of my sorrow, I pray
That everything wasn't real
And that everything was in my own ideal
But better me than those who suffer
Those who have lost more, mother, father.
Or even lover.

O found my shelter and safety
Which others can't tend to lately
For which I am most grateful of
A place that holds virtue in honour of 'us'
And a place to regain
All those good and bad memories
To pain, or to remember my long journey
However, one stands still on top of all
The vivid memory of my Youth
And the undeniable truth,
Refuge.

Sasu's on fire your defence is terrified...

A last gasp goal from Kelvin Sasu was enough to send the Year 7 football team through to the Middlesex Cup quarter finals after a 4-3 win over an excellent Vyners school side.

In a game where St. Mark's had to take the lead 3 times in order to win, St. Mark's started well by taking a 2 goal lead with one being a goal of the season contender from Max Stakhiv.

St. Mark's were then pegged back to 2-2 before again taking the lead before minutes later Vyners equalised to make it 3-3. It then required Kelvin's late intervention to see the game secured and book a place in the quarter finals.

The team are no strangers to late drama, with the previous round going to penalties before securing the win. On this occasion, it was Jan Wronka with an injury time equaliser before shoot out heroics from keeper Illia Godun ensuring progression to the next round.

Year 8 Football

The Year 8 football team have also made progress to the last 16 of the Middlesex Cup and are awaiting the next round.



They overcame Chiswick school 4-3 with Liam Mascarenhas-Gahlen scoring a hatrick and a late winner from Jibin Joby to seal the win. They are due to play Bishop Ramsey in the next round and we hope to report positive news from that game in the next issue!

Year 7 Netball

The enthusiasm and team spirit of the Year 7 netball team has been fantastic since the start of the year. The squad is improving every practice and have played brilliantly in the league games so far. Well done to all of you. I look forward to the games coming up and the annual borough tournament!



Rowing Partnership

We have been fortunate to welcome coaches from Team Keane rowing club in Brentford who have run some taster indoor rowing sessions with our Year 9 students. We are hoping to develop this partnership further when the club will be rebranded Brentford Boat House after Christmas which will allow our students to access high quality rowing and watersports coaching during the summer term. More details about this will be shared via School comms for parents/students to register their interest



Girls basketball

We have been running a successful basketball club for girls after school on Mondays, with over 50 girls participating over the last 10 weeks. Recently, the Key Stage 4 girls entered the Borough tournament and the 2 squads finished a creditable 3rd and 5th.

The Key Stage 3 girls have some upcoming

fixtures against some other schools so will also get a taste of some competitive basketball action.

Junior Girls Football Team

A great start to the football season from the Junior Girls football team. A narrow loss at Gumley and then a triumphant win for both teams at Heathlands School (4-1 wins). Fantastic football and amazing team spirit. I am looking forward to the remaining league games and the annual football tournament to come. Well done to all involved!



BOOK CLUB:

To help celebrate Black History Month this year, Ms Quigley relaunched the ever so popular Book Club which takes place every Wednesday morning in the LRC.

To tie in with this year's theme of 'Celebrating Our Sisters', students have been reading *The Elemental Detectives* by renowned author Patrice Lawrence.

Darius Dias 10 Fisher:

The book is set in eighteenth century London that is filled with Elemental spirits: the fiery Dragons, airy Fumis, earthbound Magogs and the watery Chads. It follows the story of Marisee and Robert who are chasing down clues as they battle to save London's residents from a mysterious sleeping sickness.

An interesting fact about the book is that the character of 'Robert' is based on an enslaved teenager named Jonathan Strong who worked in London in the eighteenth century. Patrice Lawrence had wanted to give Jonathan a voice for a while but wanted to wait for the right story to do him justice.

My favourite character in the book so far is Grandma because she's a bit mysterious and she's very peculiar in her ways.



Book Club



Join Ms Quigley and Ms Nawaz every Wednesday morning in the LRC from 8-8:30am for book club!

We will be reading
The Elemental Detectives
by award winning author
Patrice Lawrence.



The author of YA classics *Orangeboy* and *Eight Pieces of Silva* paints a vividly imagined portrait of a fantastical London lit up by elemental spirits in this spectacular magical adventure.

BOOK BUZZ - YEAR 7

Our year 7 students finally received their free book from the Book Buzz Trust. They were all extremely excited to start reading their new book.

TEEN READ 2024 LAUNCH

10 Students attended the launch of the Hounslow Teen read 2024. The group have to read 6 shortlisted books by March 2024, they will then vote for their favourite book along with the other Hounslow Borough schools. The launch was held this year at Isleworth and Syon School.



BOOK FAIR

The LRC successfully ran the Scholastic Christmas Book Fair. We managed to sell over £500 of book which means FREE books for the school library!



News from the LRC

St Mark's Christmas Card Competition Winners 2023

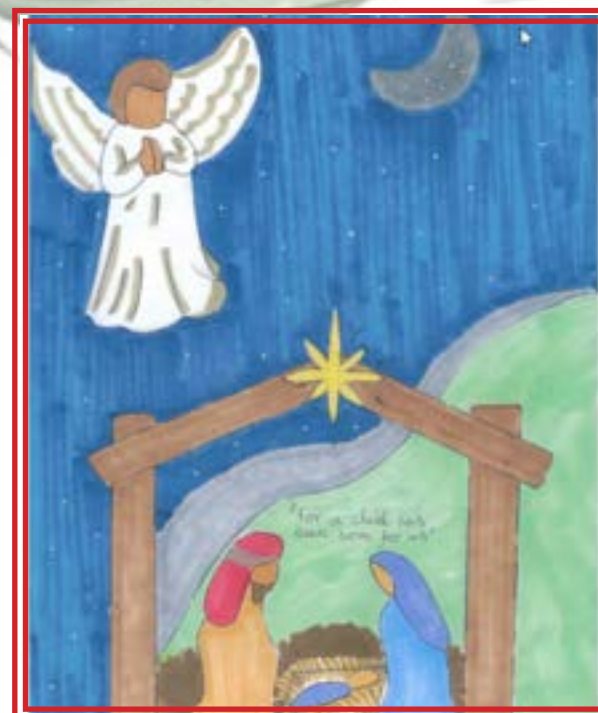
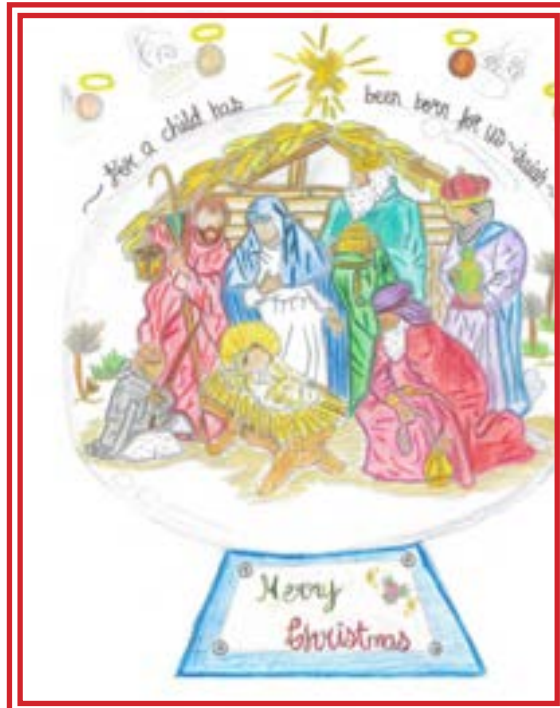
Holly - 7 More

Davia - 8 Becket

Valanka - 8 Becket



Ian - 7 Fisher



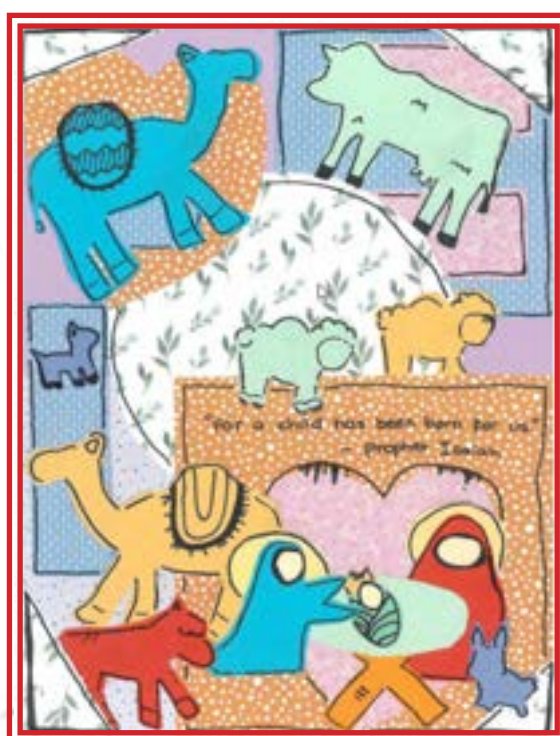
Snyder - 8 Becket



Phoebe - 9 Pole



Emily - 7 Becket Sophia-Rose - 8 Fisher



Sera - 7 Becket



Gabriela - 7 More



**FROM ALL THE STAFF AND
STUDENTS AT
ST MARK'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

**WE WISH YOU ALL
A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND
A HAPPY NEW YEAR!!**

