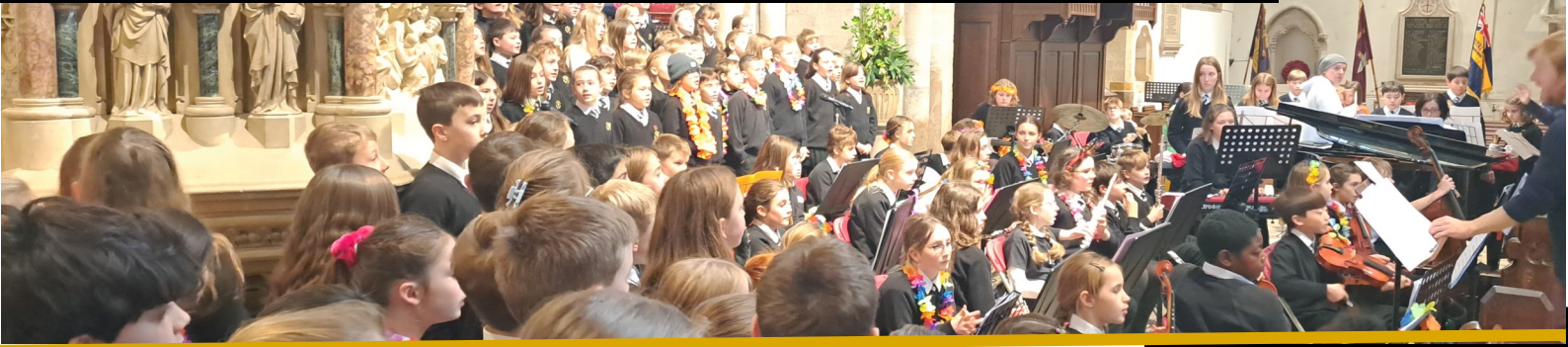




Newsletter December 2023

St. Michael's Middle School

"Each person, uniquely made in God's image, merits the best we can give"



Dear Parents/Carers,

We come to the end of another busy and successful term and are looking ahead to some well deserved holiday time and the Christmas festivities.

When I look back at this term, one of the things that stands out for me is the continuing generosity of the school community when we ask for donations. Whether it has been Harvest Festival or one of the Christmas appeals, we have done so well in the amount we have managed to donate. We know that not everyone has the same Christmas experience and I hope that some of our donations will find their way to those in our school community who need it and that it helps bring some cheer at this festive time.

I am really impressed by the quality of the work that has been done this term. I have seen some outstanding history work from pupils who have visited Corfe Castle, excellent writing from across the school, really competitive PE lessons and great science projects in years 6 and 7. This is just a very small example of what is happening in school on a daily basis.

We were visited by the Executive Officer of the National Middle School's Forum during this term. He goes into many middle schools across the country and was so impressed by the focus of the pupils in lessons and the pride they showed in their work. You will have been sent your child's Autumn Term report today and I am sure that you will see the same focus reflected in their attitude grades.

Finally, a huge thank you to the whole team at St. Michael's for their hard work this term. We all wish you and those you hold dear a very Merry Christmas. See you in 2024!

Mr Ayling

In this issue:

Pupils for Praise

Staffing Update

Sporting News

Wimborne Minster Carol Service

Charity Fundraising Update

Upcoming Dates

Christingle Service



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Learning Trust

Sports News

Even More Footballing Success!

You may remember that our Year 6 boys' and girls' teams won the East Dorset Area Football championships as they were progressing to the County finals.

The boys tried very hard and played well but were knocked out at the County stage. Well done to them as it is still a massive achievement to get this far.

The girls' team however went on to win the County finals and so have been crowned Dorset Champions. They played exceptionally well - massive congratulations to them. The next stage is the South of England finals, at a venue yet to be determined, where they will play other county winners to try and reach the national finals. We will keep you posted on their progress!



One of the fastest growing sports at St. Michael's is Handball. Our team, The St. Michael's Mavericks, recently took part in their first ever tournament where they beat Oakdaliens and narrowly lost to Poole Phoenix (despite them being a much more experienced team). A great result and we wish them the best of luck in their next tournament on December 16th.



Our Rugby teams have been busy competing across the local area. Here are a couple of photos of two of our teams at local tournaments.



Pupils for Praise

Every Friday, two pupils from each year group are selected to go and see Mr Ayling to receive praise and a reward for their hard work. All the pupils below have been selected since the last newsletter.

Year 5
Eva-Bella J
Bethany P
Oliver S
Rhys B

Year 6
Finley W
Iris D
Zach J

Year 7
Evie P
Leah J
Jacob B
Jake W
Karla La R
Joseph D
Jacob H
Calvin C

Year 8
Molly A
Matilda C
Dylan C
Lily Mac N
Patrick T

Congratulations!



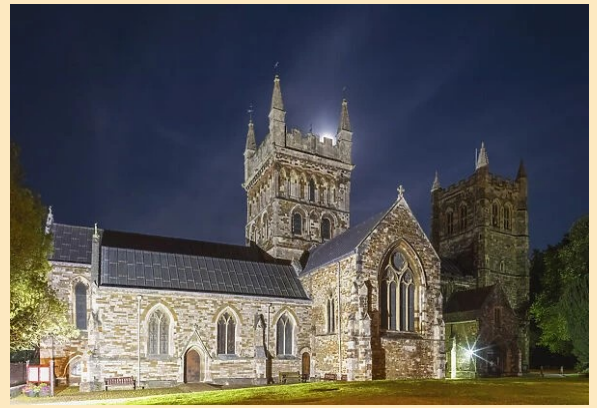
Christingle Service



Following a request from the school worship group, we held our first Christingle service in the school hall. Pupils made Christingles in their classroom earlier in the week and we lit these as part of the worship led by Vicar Suzanne. There was a very spiritual atmosphere in the hall created by the soft glow of over 200 candles. Pupils took home their Christingles and we hope that they enjoyed the experience.



St. Michael's Wimborne Minster Carol Service



We were once again wowed by the musical talent in the school at our annual Carol service that took place in Wimborne Minster last Wednesday evening. The theme for this year was to look at Christmas and how it is celebrated across the world. We used the cultural stories of some of our pupils to look at Christmas traditions in places such as Hawaii, South Africa, Brazil, Norway and Ukraine. The children also sang Christmas tunes from each location we visited. A team of pupils, led by George in year 8, made flags showing each location as part of the Arts Award programme. We also had a group of pupils acting out the Nativity in a rather unusual way. A huge thank you to all of those involved in the event and for the Minster team for allowing us to worship in this magnificent surrounding. Thanks to your generosity, we raised over £350 that has been split between the Minster and the four nominated House charities for this year (NSPCC, Southampton Children's Hospital, Dorset Air Ambulance and Save the Children).



Staffing Update

We are sorry to be saying goodbye to Mr Montacute at the end of this term. Mr Montacute has been an outstanding Head of Year 5 and has built a really effective transfer programme to help pupils settle into the school. He has contributed much to the footballing success of the school (despite being a Liverpool fan)!. He has been a great tutor to his classes over his six years at the school and we are so pleased for his well-deserved promotion into a senior management position at another school. We wish him all the best for the future.

Mrs C. Holmes will be taking over as the Head of Year 5 from January and we all wish her the very best in her new role in school. The teaching commitment for class 5M will be taken over by Mrs Cummins who will be joining the school in the new year. We are also delighted that Mrs Cole will be taking on Mr Montacute's PE teaching timetable and we are so pleased to have her expertise as part of the staff team.

We are also sad to say goodbye to Mrs Wheeler who works as a teaching assistant across the school. She has worked with us for just over two years and often with pupils who find school a difficult experience. We thank her for all she has done and wish her success in her new school.

Lastly, we are sad to be bidding farewell to Mr Lovering who is retiring from his position as the Facilities Manager for the school. Mr Lovering has worked hard to ensure that we are able to maintain the cost of the swimming pool and has ensured that the community make the most of our facilities outside of school hours. He has managed the site team and has been responsible for the upkeep and health and safety of the school. We will miss him and wish him all the best for his future. We delighted to welcome Mr Khan to the school as a caretaker who will be working alongside Mr Jolliffe as our new site team.

House Point Totals

Here are the final house point totals for the year. Pupils earn 'ePraise' points and these are added together to make their house point totals.

Hanham

Bankes

Gulliver

Paget

18,318

17,676

17,571

18,091

You can check your child's ePraise points total by going to www.epraise.co.uk and logging into the parents page.

These are the five students with the most house points in each house - well done!

Rachel K (1493)

Freddie H (205)

Olivia A (182)

Charlotte F (211)

Oliver H (191)

Eve-Bella J (200)

Oliver S (181)

Heidi C (201)

Annie B (185)

Mpho M (193)

Roseanna L (174)

Tom MacK (184)

Oscar W (184)

Alexander B (168)

Jasper B (170)

Oscar J (180)

Dexter J (178)

Thomas A (167)

Edward F (166)

Daisy H (177)

THANK YOU!



WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW ...

A big thank you to all of the parents who came into school for our 'What Every Parent Should Know' sessions last week. The feedback has been universally positive and those who attended came away much more informed about keeping our young people safe from harm in the modern world. We are grateful to the Mental Health in School Team, Escapeline and Mr Taylor for delivering the sessions and to Mrs Warren and the pastoral team for putting this together.

Christmas Reverse Advent Calendar

Thank you to everyone who brought something in for the reverse advent calendar to help make some Christmas food parcels for the local food banks. As you can see, we were able to deliver a substantial amount of food and we know that this will be so appreciated by people in our community.



house of opportunity

Christmas Box Appeal

91 Boxes Donated!

A huge thank you for all those families who were able to donate a shoebox gift for vulnerable people in Romania. We were able to collect a total of 91 boxes and these are now on planes on their way to where they will be distributed.



UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES

Tuesday 2nd January	INSET Day (school closed)
Wednesday 3rd January	Pupils return to school
Tuesday 16th January	Selected year 7 pupils Illustration Workshop
Tuesday 23rd January	Collective worship with the Bishop of Salisbury
Wednesday 24th January	Your Health Matters Day - whole school off-timetable for the day
Monday 29th January — Thursday 1st February	Year 6 Mock SATS Week - please avoid taking pupils out of school this week
Wednesday 31st January	Year 8 Holocaust Memorial Day Talk at Allenbourn Middle School
Tuesday 6th February	All day Peter Pan rehearsal at St. Michael's Middle
Thursday 8th February	Year 8 Careers Workshops
Monday 12th February	Half Term starts
Friday 17th February	Half Term ends
Monday 19th February	INSET Day (school closed)
Tuesday 27th February	Subject based parents evening (in school)
Monday 11th March— Friday 11th March	Year 5 Easter Experience at Wimborne Minster (one class each day)
Wednesday 13th March	Subject based parents evening (online)
Monday 25th March	All day Peter Pan rehearsal at Layard Theatre
Tuesday 26th March	Peter Pan Performance Night 1
Wednesday 27th March	Peter Pan Performance Night 2
Thursday 28th March	Peter Pan Performance Night 3
Thursday 28th March	INSET Day (school closed)
Friday 29th March	Easter Holidays start
Monday 15th April	Pupils return to school

12 Top Tips for BUILDING CYBER RESILIENCE AT HOME

As a society, we're increasingly using technology and tech services in the home. Digital assistants which can adjust the heating or turn lights on and off; streaming services for shows and movies on demand; games consoles; smart speakers; phones; laptops ... the list goes on. As we introduce each new gizmo to our homes, however, we increase the level of threat from cyber criminals. It's essential, therefore, that we learn to become more cyber resilient in relation to the devices and digital services that the people in our household use.

WHAT IS 'CYBER RESILIENCE'?

Cyber resilience focuses on three key areas: reducing the likelihood of a cyber attack gaining access to our accounts, devices or data; reducing the potential impact of a cyber incident; and making the recovery from a cyber attack easier, should we ever fall victim to one.

1. PASSWORDS: LONGER AND LESS PREDICTABLE

The longer, less common and predictable a password is, the more difficult it becomes for cyber criminals to crack. The National Cyber Security Centre's 'three random words' guidelines are ideal for creating a long password which is easy to remember but hard to guess.

2. AVOID RE-USING PASSWORDS

When you use the same password across different logins, your cyber resilience is only as strong as the security of the weakest site or service you've signed up for. If cyber criminals gain access your username and password for one site or service, they'll definitely try them on others.

3. USE A PASSWORD MANAGER

A good way to juggle different passwords for every site or service you use is to have a password manager. This software stores all your passwords for you, so you simply need to remember the master password. LastPass, Dashlane, 1Password and Keeper are all excellent password managers.

4. BACK UP YOUR DATA

Keep a copy of your data using OneDrive, Google Drive or another reputable cloud-based storage solution. If it's extremely important or sensitive information, you could even decide to keep more than one back-up version - by saving it to a removable USB drive or similar device, for example.

5. ENABLE MULTI-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION (MFA)

Multi-factor authentication is where you need access to your phone (to receive a code, for example) or another source to confirm your identity. This makes it far more difficult for cyber criminals to gain entry to your accounts and your data, even if they do manage to get your username and password.

6. CHOOSE RECOVERY QUESTIONS WISELY

Some services let you set 'recovery questions' - such as your birthplace or a pet's name - in case you forget your password. Take care not to use information you might have mentioned (or are likely to in future) on social media. More unpredictable answers make cyber criminals' task far harder.

7. SET UP SECONDARY ACCOUNTS

Some services provide the facility to add secondary accounts, phone numbers and so on to help with potentially recovering your account. Make sure you set these up: they will be vital if you're having trouble logging in or if you're trying to take back control of your account after a cyber attack.

12. STAY SCEPTICAL

Cyber criminals commonly use various methods, including emails, text messages and social media posts. Be cautious of any messages or posts that are out of the ordinary, offer something too good to be true or emphasise urgency - even if they appear to come from someone you know.

11. KEEP HOME DEVICES UPDATED

Download official software updates for your household's mobile phones, laptops, consoles and other internet-enabled devices regularly. Security improvements and fixes are a key feature of these updates - so by ensuring each device is running the latest version, you're making them more secure.

10. CHANGE DEFAULT IOT PASSWORDS

Devices from the 'Internet of Things' (IoT), such as 'smart' home appliances, are often supplied with default passwords. This makes them quicker to set up, but also less secure - criminals can identify these standard passwords more easily, so change them on your IoT devices as soon as possible.

9. CHECK FOR BREACHES

You can check if your personal information has been involved in any known data breaches by entering your email address at www.haveibeenpwned.com (yes, that spelling is correct!). It's useful if you're worried about a possible attack - or simply as motivation to review your account security.

8. KEEP HAVING FUN WITH TECH

Consider our tips in relation to the gadgets and online services your household uses. Protect yourself and your family, and don't let the bad guys win: devices are not only integral to modern life but also a lot of fun - so as long as you keep safety and security in mind, don't stop enjoying your tech.

Meet Our Expert

Gary Henderson is the Director of IT at a large boarding school in the UK, having previously taught in schools and colleges in Britain and the Middle East. With a particular interest in digital citizenship and cyber security, he believes it is essential that adults and children alike become more aware of the risks associated with technology, as well as the many benefits.



Source: www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/top-tips-for-staying-secure-online/three-random-word | https://haveibeenpwned.com

Top Tips for a TECH-FREE CHRISTMAS

It can be difficult to stay away from technology and devices, and sometimes this means that people – of any age – can find it hard to be present in the moment. As a period when families are able to spend some quality time together and enjoy each other's company, Christmas is the perfect opportunity to step away from our phones, laptops and consoles and concentrate on the things that really matter. Follow our top ten tips for a tech-free festive period and make the most of this holiday season. Merry Christmas!

1. BOARD GAMES CAN BE FUN (HONEST)

OK, no one wants a repeat of that incident when your youngest had to pay triple rent on Mayfair, but going back to basics with a card or board game can be a fantastic bonding experience. Choose a game that even the youngest members of your family can enjoy and have a fun tech-free time.

2. MAKE YOUR OWN DECORATIONS

Spending time on arts and crafts is a brilliant way to relax and spend some productive time offline. Making your own Christmas decorations as a family can become a wholesome tradition and leave you with some treasured mementos, too.

3. GO FOR A WINTER WALK

Not much beats wrapping up warm on a crisp December day and taking a stroll. Whether alone or with the family, a walk is a fantastic way to clear your head and relish the break from hectic normal life. As an extra festive treat, why not make a flask of hot chocolate to take with you?

4. BAKE SOME FESTIVE TREATS

Not all Christmas cooking has to be a stressful chore that's timed with military precision. Baking some simple festive treats like cookies doesn't have to take hours – and will make sure you're stocked up on tasty things to offer any friends or family members who pop round.

5. READ A FAMILY STORY TOGETHER

Turn story time into an event. Make the living room or bedroom into a tech-free space, light some candles, make some hot drinks and reach for a classic Christmas tale. It's a fantastic way to relax before bed, and the right story will help to get the whole family into the festive spirit.

6. TURN OFF NOTIFICATIONS

It sounds obvious, but turning off email and app notifications can give you more control of your relationship with technology. Getting into the habit of checking your phone periodically – rather than reacting every time a notification arrives – helps you to stay present in the moment.

7. FEED THE BIRDS

Food's hard to come by for wildlife in winter, so helping our feathered friends is a very worthwhile reason to put down those devices and reconnect with nature. Fill a bird feeder in the garden or take a snack for the ducks in your local park (but ditch the bread in favour of oats, rice or birdseed).

8. SET DAILY LIMITS

Many apps and devices let you set reminders to let you know how long you've used them for that day. Setting daily limits puts you firmly in charge of your time and will help to ensure you don't miss out on any family Christmas memories because you're engrossed in your phone or laptop.

9. GET ON YOUR BIKE

Exercise, such as going for a run or a bike ride is an excellent way to burn off some of those Yuletide calories while giving your brain and eyes a break from screen-based activity. Physical exertion also helps reduce anxiety and releases endorphins which can improve your sense of wellbeing.

10. MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

There can be a lot of pressure to meet up with friends, make video calls and check in with people at Christmas – but remember that you need time to relax as well. Don't feel guilty about not replying to messages and emails immediately – the holiday is your chance to drop down a gear or two.



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#WakeUpWednesday

