



Newsletter March 2024

St. Michael's Middle School

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



Dear Parents/Carers,

A lot has happened since the last newsletter, as you will be able to see in this issue. Whether this is having a chance to dress up for World Book Day or for Year 6 pupils and staff to be Vikings for two days last week. We have continued to have great success in various sporting events and we are well into the final touches for our biennial production (which this year is Peter Pan Jr.) ...and we also had a visit from Ofsted.

We have received the draft copy of the Ofsted report and have returned this to them for final checking. I am hopeful that we will be able to release the final report before the Easter break.

I want to thank all of those in the school community who were involved in the inspection in some way, whether this is as a pupil, parent, staff member, governor or trustee.

We are unable to share full details of the inspection until publication of the final report but we can highlight the outcome of the Parent View surveys (full results can be found on the Ofsted Parent View website). A few of the notable results are:

- 99% positive result for 'There is a good range of subjects available to my child at this school'.
- 98% positive result for 'My child can take part in clubs and activities at this school'.
- 97% positive result for 'My child feels safe at this school'.
- 93% of parents would recommend this school to another parent (the most positive result of all the schools in the Initio Learning Trust).

We look forward to sharing the full report with you in due course and we hope that you have a lovely Easter break.

Mr D.Ayling

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initio
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Sports News

Year 6 Girls Football Finals

Our Year 6 girls 7-a-side football team recently took part in the FA South West Regional Finals near Bristol. They were competing as the Dorset Champions against the county winners from 7 other areas including Cornwall, Devon, Hampshire, Somerset and even the Channel Islands. The event started with pupils receiving their medals as county winners and posing for a quick team photo.

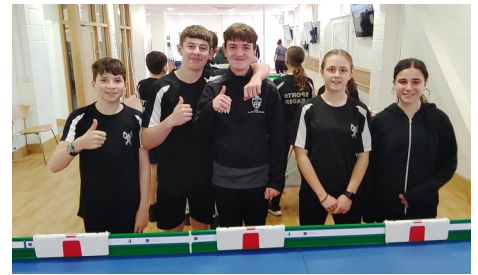


We were in a group with 4 other county champions and played four games overall. Each game was 7 minutes each way which made scoring quickly a priority. The girls drew their first game and then won the next two. Their last game saw them against a very physical Cornish team who gave us our first defeat. The group was tight with 3 teams tied on points going into the final group game where goal difference was going to be the deciding factor.



A late goal moved us to third place and we narrowly missed out on the semi-final. The girls were disappointed but did the school and Dorset proud. Well done!

Our Year 8 sports leaders recently hosted a number of local schools who came to try out some sports designed to be played by disabled athletes. They led sessions in boccia (pronounced 'bot-cha') and table top cricket. The visiting Ofsted inspector was impressed with their leadership and sports coaching skills.



Despite the endless rain the Year 8 netball League was finally completed! With half the team practicing for our upcoming show Peter Pan and therefore unable to play it was fantastic to see our Year 7 putting themselves forwards to fill the gaps. With some tough competition we did really well winning over half of our games-they should be very proud of themselves. We have also been involved in the KS2 netball league with some of the KS2's competing in a competition for the first time. They played brilliantly and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

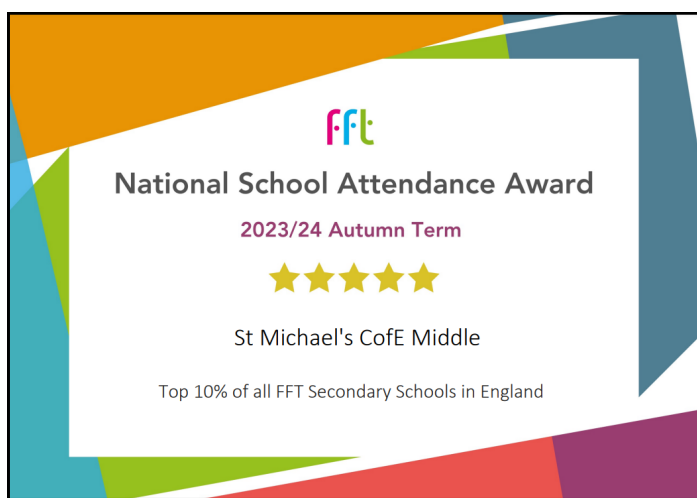


Good luck on Friday for our gymnastic tumbling team competing at Ferndown.



School Attendance

We are delighted to have been recognised in the recent round of School Attendance Awards for the excellent attendance of our pupils compared to national benchmarks. We have been shown to have the highest attendance of similar schools in the local authority area for all pupils, pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. Thank you to all parents for making your child's attendance at school a priority as we know that this is where continued success at school starts.



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
Freddie G
Freddie B
Harriet N
Florence L
Holly B-H
Olivia A
Albie S
Moby S
Oliver S

Year 6
Charlie M
Anthony H
Ralph C
Izzy G
Toby S
Caitlin J
William K

Year 7
Daisy D
Olivia M
Chloe H
Esme L
Evan H
Sophia J
Roman V
Jack S
Harriet J
Jackson L
Ava F

Year 8
Zack H
Amelia N
Bobby H
Riley L
Rose L
Ava T
Millie L
Amy O

Congratulations!



YEAR 6 RE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Year 6 have been studying a unit of work based on the importance of the early stories in the Bible and the covenant (agreement) that God had with the Jewish people. As part of this work, pupils looked at Moses and how he was given the Ten Commandments by God.

For their end of unit assessment, pupils were asked to create a modern day version of the 10 commandments based on what they felt would make the world a better place. We thought that it would be nice to share a few of their ideas. For each commandment they created they needed to explain their thinking. To help their thinking, pupils looked at modern day examples of rules to follow such as human rights, Millennium Development Goals and the UN Charter on the Rights of Child.

- **Young people should be trusted and listened to** We often have great ideas and we often do try and tell people we're apparently 'too young to understand'. We often do tell the truth, but no one believes us.
- **Women and children have equal rights** This one is no-brainer—we're humans too—we deserve to earn as much as men, work as much as men and generally just give us rights that are equal to men.
- **You shall be kind** Everyone deserves and needs kindness in their lives, both giving it and receiving it.
- **Nobody shall be judged for who they choose to be** Everyone on Earth should be able to be themselves, and who they want to be without fear of being judged.
- **You shall have time to relax and play** People should have a chance to take a break from hard work.
- **Respect and treat fairly everybody around you** This would be impactful on the world as this would prevent war, bullying and generally make the world a better place.

This is just a small selection of the pupil's work and we were impressed by the depth of thinking in their responses.

Staffing Update

We are very sad to be saying goodbye to three of our staff.

Madame Hughes has been covering the teaching timetable for Madame Minne. She has done a fantastic job with these classes and we are sorry to see her leave. Madame Minne will return just before Easter and will work alongside Madame Hughes for a couple of weeks to ensure an effective handover of information. We wish her all the best for the future.

Mrs Armstrong is also leaving the school at Easter to take up a full-time job at West Moors Middle School. This is the second time that Mrs Armstrong has been a member of staff at St. Michael's and she has most recently been teaching textiles to pupils in Year 5 and Year 8. We are delighted to be joined by Mrs Smith who is joining us until the end of the summer term to fill the textiles teaching role on a Wednesday. Mrs Smith is currently works for the Trust at Emmanuel Middle School and is continuing her job there whilst working one day a week for St. Michael's. We look forward to welcoming her to the school.

We have welcomed Mrs Johnson to the staff for the remainder of the year as she covers part of the timetable with class 5M.



Madame Hughes



Madame Minne



Mrs Atkins

We will also be bidding a fond farewell to a member of staff who has been at the heart of the school for over 26 years. Mrs Atkins has been our school librarian since joining the school in September 1997. During this time, she has helped countless numbers of pupils with their reading and ensured that we have a well stocked and effective library for pupils to use. She has also been responsible for constructing and maintaining our school wildlife pond whilst also taking the lead in the creation of the many beautiful murals around the outside of the school. She has been a key member of the team that helps put on school performances, making the sets and sourcing props for the shows and acting as a stage manger for each performance. Countless numbers of pupils have very happy memories of participating and watching our school productions and I am sure that they would join us all in wishing her the very best for her retirement. St. Michael's will not be the same without you!



Mrs Armstrong



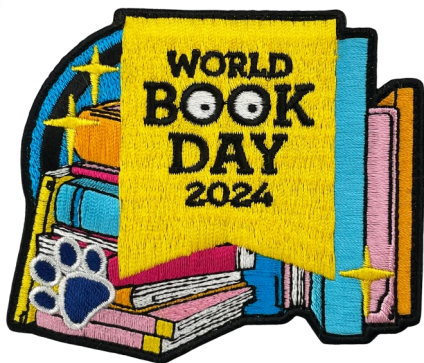
Mrs Johnson



YEAR 6 VIKING DAY

Last week, Year 6 dressed up and celebrated two days as Vikings. We welcomed staff from the Ancient Technology Centre in Cranborne who taught us how to make textiles the Viking way, we learnt how to battle like a Viking and we learnt how to play games like Vikings did. Pupils heard some Viking mythology stories and had a chance to feel the atmosphere of a Viking settlement in our Ancient Roundhouse. They also handled some of the furs that Vikings would have used as clothes. Pupils designed individual shields as well as life-sized wooden class shields, we made some model Viking boats and we learnt about what happened when the Vikings first came to Great Britain. Pupils did this in preparation for their next novel, *Viking Boy* by Tony Bradman.





Staff and pupils at St. Michael's joined many across the country in celebration of World Book Day 2024. We held a costume competition and had a special assembly where we found out that we had raised over £700 in our recent Readathon competition in aid of 'Read for Good', a charity which provides books and storytellers for children in hospital. Thank you for all your generous sponsorship and well done to all our dedicated readers!



Here are some of the pupils who made it through to the finals of the costume competition.



There were some great costumes across the school including from some of the staff.



There were four winners of the costume competition and each pupil won a £10 voucher. Well done to Megan (Year 5), Annie (Year 6), Jack (Year 7) and Rose (Year 8). The prizes were awarded in a special assembly where we heard excerpts from Mr Bush's chosen book this year, Wonder by R.J. Palacio.

Last Few Tickets Available

ST. MICHAEL'S MIDDLE SCHOOL
PRESENTS...
PETER PAN JR.
A MUSICAL BASED ON THE PLAY BY
SIR J.M. BARRIE
TUESDAY 26 MARCH 7PM
WEDNESDAY 27 MARCH 7PM
THURSDAY 28 MARCH 7PM
**HOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW
THE CROC IS TICKING!**
SCAN THE QR CODE OR CLICK THE LINK FOR TICKETS
<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/the-layard-theatre>

Balcony tickets now available using the code 'RELEASE' when booking.

Gothic Horror Writing

One of the most popular units in Year 8 English is the writing work based on Gothic Horror. Here are a few examples of the descriptive writing from our pupils.

The footsteps became louder and louder... I stopped. They stopped. I walked faster - so did they. Pandora N

Old shattered windows hang from the house. Black ravens fly over my head. Slowly, I open the rotten door. Lucy W

The little cottage was submerged by the rolling fog on a dark eerie night. The vines, which were like snakes, strangled the house. The only light was coming from a small flickering candle casting shadows up the wall. Chloe R.

I the hear scream and then run...as the crying of souls chase after me... Toby S

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

32,589

30,985

31,515

32,073

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!

Freya W (340)

Freddie H (340)

Edward F (327)

Charlotte F (364)

Matilda C (333)

Eva-Bella J (329)

Oliver S (322)

Heidi C (364)

Oliver H (330)

Thomas A (312)

Oscar M (321)

Hetty R (333)

Annie B (329)

Mpho M (299)

Kai L (319)

Constance H (316)

Lily S (313)

Alyssa C (292)





Roseanna L (313)

Jack S (315)



Mobile Phones

You will have seen in the press that the Department for Education has developed new guidance for schools on prohibiting the use of mobile phones during the school day (the full document can be found on the DfE website). We have always had a clear expectation that mobile phones should not be used on school premises at any time but we thought, with it recently being in the news, that it was a good time to remind parents and pupils of the rules at St. Michael's.

 <p>or</p>  <p>The DfE guidance gives schools the authority to take one of four actions regarding phones in school. We have chosen option C - Mobile phones kept in secure location, which the pupil does not access throughout the day. Phones are to be kept in bags, on pegs, throughout the day. If a pupil prefers, they can be handed in at the school office for safe keeping.</p>	  <p>There is never an occasion where pupil can use their phones on site to listen to music (via earbuds or headphones) or take photos of staff or pupils. Should a pupils use a phone to take pictures or sound recordings of any pupils or staff, this will be treated as a serious breach of the schools behaviour code and the pupils concerned will be sanctioned.</p>
<p>Schools are able to confiscate mobile phones if they are found on pupils during the school day, whether or not the phone is switched on. Our school policy states that on the first occasion, a phone will be confiscated and should be collected by the pupil at the end of the day. On a second occasion, the phone will be confiscated and parents will need to pick this up from the school office and a lunchtime detention issued. On the third occurrence, the phone will have to be handed in at the office every morning or a ban issued on bringing the phone to school and an after-school detention issued.</p>	<p>Pupils who refuse to hand over their phones when asked or refuse to hand in a phone at the school office if required will be sanctioned in line with the schools behaviour policy for defiant behaviour. The use of mobile phones in school is specifically covered in the Online Safety Policy, section 8.</p> <p>A single exception to a pupil being allowed a mobile phone in school is for a medical reason (for example for diabetes monitoring), and is at the discretion of the Headteacher.</p>

We are pleased that the need to enforce these rules with pupils is very rare as the vast majority understand and follow the rules. We understand why parents may want their child to have a phone for safety purposes and thank you for ensuring your child follows the rules as set out above. Lastly, all phones are brought to school at your own risk.

UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES

Monday 25th March	All day Peter Pan rehearsal at Layard Theatre
Tuesday 26th March	Peter Pan Jr. Performance Night 1
Wednesday 27th March	Peter Pan Jr. Performance Night 2
Thursday 28th March	Peter Pan Jr. Performance Night 3
Thursday 28th March	INSET Day (school closed)
Friday 29th March	Easter Holidays start
Monday 15th April	Pupils return to school
Tuesday 23rd April	Year 8 Visit to Bournemouth University
Wednesday 24th April	Year 8 Visit to Bournemouth University
Wednesday 8th May	Year 8 Trip to Paultons Park
Thursday 9th May	Year 8 Chelsea's Choice PSHE Production
Monday 13th May—Thursday 16th May	Year 6 SATS Week
Monday 13th May—Friday 17th May	Year 7 Holme Park Residential Visit
Monday 27th May	Half Term starts
Friday 31st May	Half Term ends
Thursday 6th June	Year 8 Mayflower Theatre Trip to see 'Wicked'
Thursday 20th June	Year 7 Geography Trip Part 1
Friday 21st June	INSET Day (School closed)
Thursday 27th June	Year 7 Geography Trip Part 2
Monday 24th June—Friday 28th June	Year 8 France Residential Trip
Friday 28th June	Transfer Day for all schools in Dorset and BCP
Monday 1st July—Wednesday 3rd July	Year 6 Activities Week
Monday 22nd July	Year 8 Prom Event
Tuesday 23rd July	Last day of term

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

DEVELOPING HEALTHY SLEEP PATTERNS

Quality sleep is paramount for wellbeing as it impacts our cognitive function, emotional balance and overall health. A World Health Organisation study highlighted that 44% of young people reported difficulty sleeping – potentially affecting their mood, concentration and immune system. Our guide offers expert tips for helping children to sleep more healthily.

1 MINDFUL TECH USE

Encourage a balanced approach to screen time. While phones, laptops, tablets and so on can serve as a helpful means of stress relief, it's advisable to minimise their use right before bed. These devices can keep the mind racing long after they're switched off, impacting how easily and how well a person can sleep.

2 EFFECTIVE SLEEP PRACTICES

Offer practical advice on reinforcing certain habits that have a positive influence on sleeping patterns. Children could start keeping a diary which they add to each evening, for example – or they could use up excess energy by exercising during the day.

3 HYDRATION HABITS

Underline the importance of drinking plenty of water throughout the day, while limiting drinks close to bedtime to prevent disruptions during the night: it's a lot harder to switch off if you keep needing to get out of bed for the toilet. Avoiding caffeinated drinks later in the day also allows the body and brain to slow down naturally, without any chemicals firing them back up.

4 CONSISTENT BEDTIME SCHEDULE

Assist children in developing consistent bedtime routines that tell the body it's time to wind down, promoting a more relaxed state. Establish specific activities for young ones right before going to bed – such as brushing their teeth – to set up an association between that action and falling asleep.

5 OPTIMAL SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

Ensure that the bedroom is comfortable, dark and free from distractions, fostering an ideal space for quality rest. The room's temperature should also be suitable for sleeping – that is, not too hot and not too cold – while rooms should be kept as tidy and free of clutter as possible.

6 RELAXING EVENING ACTIVITIES

Recommend activities that have a calming effect on the mind – such as reading or gentle stretching – in the lead up to bedtime, to prepare the mind for a peaceful night's sleep. Doing something quiet, relaxing and low intensity signals to the brain that it's time to rest and makes falling asleep much easier.

7 PRIORITISING ADEQUATE SLEEP

Emphasise the crucial role of sleep in maintaining physical and emotional wellbeing. It's especially important to sustain a healthy sleep pattern during challenging and intensive periods in our lives: during the exam season for children and young people, for instance.

8 NUTRITIONAL BALANCE

Highlight the significance of a healthy, balanced diet – and its role in establishing a more consistent sleep pattern. Try to lean towards preparing meals with plenty of fruit and vegetables, served in reasonable portion sizes: not only is this a lot healthier, but it also reduces the chances of feeling too full to be comfortable in bed.

9 PARENTAL SUPPORT

Parents and carers, of course, are uniquely situated to support their children in establishing and maintaining healthy sleeping habits. Parents can review their own sleep habits (incorporating anything from this list that they don't do already) to model a balanced bedtime routine and reinforce the importance of self-care.

10 MILITARY SLEEP METHOD

Look up 'the military sleep method': it's a technique for falling asleep quickly, which incorporates deep breathing exercises. You could encourage children to try it or even use it yourself. While it can take a good deal of practice to perfect, eventually it will start to feel natural – and the results are often extremely impressive!

Meet Our Expert

Minds Ahead design and deliver the UK's only specialist postgraduate mental health qualifications. Winner of the Social Enterprise UK: 'One to Watch' award, the charity provides training and support to education organisations and local authorities. This guide has been written by Adam Gillett – a learning and development specialist who is also Associate Vice-Principal for Personal Development at a large secondary school.



10 Top Tips on Supporting Children with SELF-REGULATION

Children need to learn to understand and recognise their emotions, while finding healthy ways to process them. Emotional self-regulation, however, depends heavily on age and development. While very young ones or children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) may find it particularly challenging to self-regulate, nurturing these important skills can be hugely beneficial. Here are ten top tips for supporting children with their self-regulation.

1. DESIGNATE A TRUSTED ADULT



It's vital that children feel safe and know that there's someone they can always go to for help if they need it. Schedule consistent times for the child to develop a relationship with this person – ideally through play and games – allowing trust to grow and ensuring that the child is more likely to come forward if anything is wrong, rather than hiding their emotions.

2. MEET CHILDREN HALFWAY

Unless you know where a child is developmentally and tailor your approach to their needs, you're less likely to have an impact. In particular, younger ones and children with SEND can struggle to self-regulate and instead rely on others to help them. We call this 'co-regulation'. Rather than offering strategies for self-regulation, it could be better to start co-regulating with a trusted adult first.

3. FACTOR IN THEIR BASIC NEEDS

Remember that for a child to develop emotional regulation skills, their basic needs must be met first. Children who are hungry, tired, cold and so on – as well as those who have experienced adverse childhood experiences – may struggle to self-regulate. Before you develop strategies with any child, make sure they feel safe, secure and comfortable in themselves.

4. REMAIN PATIENT

If a child is struggling with their emotions, it can often become difficult to stay calm. Remember that dysregulation is beyond their control, so a display of frustration or anger could negatively impact the situation. Instead, children need to be met with comfort and understanding to help them manage these problematic feelings.

5. BE 'A DYSREGULATION DETECTIVE'

While some children can tell you why they become dysregulated, many others can't. You could investigate potential triggers by observing the child and talking to their family. When the child becomes dysregulated, note down details like the time, what they're doing and who they're with – the trigger may be someone they sit near, an unmet sensory need or something else entirely. Once we identify some triggers, we can help to avoid or overcome them.

6. USE SUITABLE LITERATURE

There are some wonderful books that can help you teach self-regulation to children. Reading these with a child can be especially powerful. Take time to discuss the content: ask questions about what feelings the characters had, why they felt that way and what strategies helped them. It can also be useful to refer back to snippets of these books at appropriate moments.

7. TRY SENSORY RESOURCES

An overlap between sensory needs and emotional regulation is possible. Children may struggle to self-regulate if they're experiencing sensory overload (a noisy classroom, for example). Positive sensory input can help calm them down. Use resources such as weighted blankets and fibre-optic lights. Of course, what works for one child might not work for another – so it's important to offer a choice of resources to discover which they prefer.

8. NURTURE INDEPENDENCE

If you feel it's appropriate, let children try out these strategies alone. Always offer them a choice: they could listen to music when they're feeling stressed, for example, or they could write down their worries or draw something to represent how they feel. This may take time for the child to get used to, so be patient. Encourage them to share any helpful strategies with a trusted adult.

9. MODEL GENUINE FEELINGS

Children learn a lot just from watching grown-ups. Don't be afraid to show your own emotions and self-regulation strategies. While you'll obviously want to avoid sharing anything too personal with children, they should still see us experiencing and handling our own feelings. Tell them how you are feeling, then show them how to respond in a healthy manner.

10. FORMULATE A PLAN

As much as we try to prevent children from experiencing dysregulation, it's always wise to have an appropriate plan for when it does happen. Discuss this strategy with the child (if appropriate) and their family. The best approach for an individual child is often a bespoke one; it's hugely important to know in advance what might help and what could worsen the situation.

Meet Our Expert

Georgina Durrant is an author, former teacher, Special Educational Needs Coordinator and the founder of the award-winning SEN Resources Blog, where she shares activities, advice and recommendations for parents and teachers of children with SEND.



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