



Newsletter December 2024

# St. Michael's Middle School

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

Dear Parents/Carers,

What a treat it was a few weeks ago to see some snow which allowed the chance to go out and enjoy this rare treat. We had fun building snowmen and throwing snowballs - I'm not sure who was enjoying it more, the staff or pupils! We were so impressed by their behaviour and attitudes and I wanted to say well done for a fun (if unexpected) event.

We have a packed newsletter that covers how active the school has been in the last few weeks in the local community. Thank you to all of the staff and pupils who have taken part and to you all for getting them to each event.

We will be working with other middle schools on the January training day to look at our curriculum and to compare the work produced by our pupils. A reminder that pupils do not need to attend school on Monday 6th January.

We know that some pupils may be getting new devices over Christmas that will allow them access to the internet and social media, maybe for the first time. We advise all parents to closely monitor your child's use of social media but we also recognise that it may seem daunting from a parental perspective. We have included two guides to social media use at the end of this newsletter that we hope might help.

We return to school on Tuesday 7th January and look forward to the new term and all we have planned. Have a lovely Christmas break and I wish all of the school community a very Happy New Year.

Mr Ayling



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Learning Trust



# Sports News

## Panathlon Success!



We were very proud of our Year 5 Panathlon team who recently won the Dorset event at Emmanuel School. The event tests teamwork and skills across a range of sports that you would not normally encounter in school PE lessons. All of the pupils involved were very proud of themselves and received a gold medal and a great trophy for the school.



Congratulations to the Year 7 and 8 girl's football teams who have progressed to the last 16 teams in the national cup. Their last match against opponents from Devon saw a 9-0 win. A school from Truro will be playing us here after Christmas in the next round. To get this far in the national cup is a great achievement and shows the strength of our girl's football at St. Michael's.

Here are a selection of team photos from some of our recent sporting events.



Our Year 8 girls recently had a chance to participate in a boxing taster session. Pupils completed some basic boxing fitness drills and pad work. This was designed to show the conditioning and stamina needed for the sport. The pupils loved the session and put their full energy into it. They felt it was great fun and enjoyed the class.



# Save The Children parade

St. Michael's was delighted to be involved in the annual Save the Children parade for the first time over the weekend. This annual event pulls together lots of organisations from the local community to help raise money for the charity Save the Children. St. Michael's took our Caribbean Steel Band on the back of a lorry and toured through the streets of Wimborne, playing Christmas and other well known songs. There were lots of people taking photos of the band and we managed to get a lot of the crowd dancing along with the music. A huge thank you to Phil Bascombe Transport for supplying the lorry and to all of the staff who decorated the lorry or walked with the lorry as part of the parade.



Save the Children



## *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 of the pupils below have been selected since the last newsletter.

Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
Leonardo G	Amelia E	Inga B	Willow P
Olivia R	Will P	Elsie B	James W
William S	Jesse M	Rosie St Q	Jacob H
Harry P	Lilly J	Lucas S	Jessie M
Amber M	Phoebe W	Heidi C	Freya J
Lily W	Noah T	Finley Y	Esme L
Oliver P	Wilf D	Jack N	Melly F
Chanuli K	Oliver S		Dougie W
Luthando M			Matilda P
Harry S			Molly B
Teddy G			Calvin C

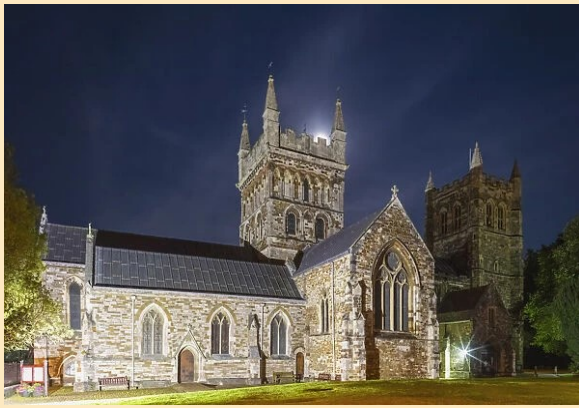
## *Congratulations!*

## MAYOR'S CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Our choir was delighted to be invited to perform at the annual Mayor's Christmas Lunch in the Olive Branch Wimborne. They performed three songs and were recorded then broadcast on Radio Solent. This was one of many events involving our choir over the Christmas period including the switching on of the Christmas lights.







# *St. Michael's Wimborne Minster Carol Service*

We were once again wowed by the musical talent in the school at our annual Carol service which took place in Wimborne Minster a few weeks ago. The theme for this year was to look at the Christmas story through the eyes of the animals. Alongside performances from the different music groups (steel drum band, Re-Sound choir, clarinet, flute and saxophone ensembles), Year 5 pupils performed songs from Christmas movies to help tell the story of the first Christmas day. A special mention to Bethany L from Year 8 who made two giant animal heads for the main characters as part of her work towards a silver Arts Award. A huge thank you to all of those involved in the event, the Minster team for allowing us to worship in this magnificent surrounding and to our music department and staff for all of their efforts. Thanks to your generosity, we raised money 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

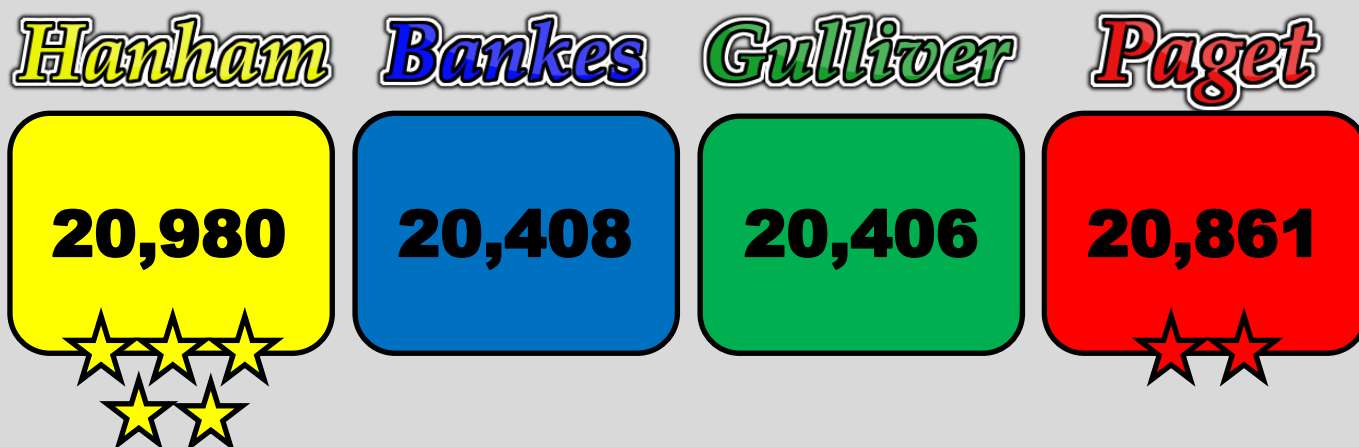
We are very sad to be saying goodbye at the end of this term to our front desk receptionist Mrs Jakeman. She has worked in the school office for just over three years and in that time has been the first person you see when you come into the school. She has been a big factor in managing attendance at school. During her time, we have been awarded 5 national attendance awards and as part of the attendance team she ensured that this was recognised during the last inspection. She is leaving us to take on a new role out of education and we all want to wish her the very best for the future. We are currently recruiting for her replacement and if you are interested, the job advert can be accessed via this link.



We are delighted to welcome two new members of staff to St. Michael's. Mrs Baynham has taken over as our new cover teacher manager. She has a tremendous amount of experience in education, working for many years in leadership and teaching at Ferndown Middle School. She will also be doing supply teaching from time to time. We also are pleased to welcome Mrs Jordan who has joined us as a teaching assistant. Mrs Jordan has a lot of experience in this role and previously worked at Hampreston First School.

## 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.



You can check your child's ePraise points total by going to [www.epraise.co.uk](http://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!

A Morton (248)	S Gandiwa (244)	T Goldsmith (252)	B Peck (265)
H Pope (220)	C Spence (241)	S Walker (246)	S Hull (219)
L Jackson (217)	W Buckman (239)	E Nippard (242)	S Clark (217)
S Green (216)	I Reynolds (216)	F Allison (232)	F Haysom (215)
L Mathe (214)	C Benham (224)	O Mawdsley (227)	A Harrison (214)



house  
of opportunity

Christmas Box Appeal

**61 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 61 boxes and these are now on planes on their way to where they will be distributed.



# Christingle Service



Following on from the very successful event last year, we recently held our special Christingle worship service. 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 special atmosphere in the hall created by the soft glow of over 200 candles. Pupils took home their Christingles and we hope that they enjoyed this very spiritual experience.





# UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES

Monday 6th January	INSET Day (School Closed)
Tuesday 7th January	First Day of Spring Term for Pupils
Wednesday 22nd January	Year 7 Arts Award Illustration Workshop
Monday 27th January	Year 8 Options and Choices performance
Monday 3rd February— Thursday 6th February	Year 6 Mock SATS Week 2
Monday 17th February— Friday 21st February	Half Term Break
Monday 24th February	Staff Training Day (School Closed)
Tuesday 25th February	Academy Committee Meeting
Wednesday 26th February	10 Y6 Pupils visiting Bournemouth University for a celebration event
Thursday 27th February	HPV Vaccinations
Tuesday 4th March	Wimborne Minster Shrove Tuesday Pancake Race
Tuesday 11th March	Chelsea's Choice drama for Year 8 pupils
Tuesday 11th March	Spring Term Parents' Evening (in school)
Friday 14th March	Year 6 Viking Day
Monday 17th March—Friday 21st March	Year 5 Experience Easter lesson at Wimborne Minster
Wednesday 26th March	Spring Term Parents' Evening (online)
Wednesday 26th March	Escapeline Year 8 talk
Friday 28th March	ePraise non-uniform day
Monday 7th April—Monday 21st April	Easter Holidays
Tuesday 22nd April	INSET Day (School Closed)
Wednesday 23rd April	First Day of Summer Term for Pupils



# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

An estimated one-third of children have a social media account, so it's important that trusted adults know what content young people are consuming, what they're posting and the interactions they're having. On social media, it can be easy to go down 'rabbit holes' that aren't beneficial to our wellbeing. As platforms grapple with managing such 'legal but harmful' content, lives are being impacted – sometimes to tragic effect. We might be daunted by the scale of the tech giants and their content which so enthralls young people, but we can still help children to be aware of their mental wellness: recognising when something isn't OK... and knowing what to do about content that upsets them.

## 1. UNDERSTAND THE ALGORITHM

Algorithms rank content by user interest: someone who regularly interacts with sports news, say, will see the latest results at the top of their feed. Likewise, if a user browses content that can cause harm, that's what will be recommended to them in future. Someone who's had a bad day and looks for posts which reflect their mood will find similar content being suggested to them more and more.

## 2. AVOID THE MAIN FEEDS

Avoiding the default feeds on social media platforms limits the amount of recommended content that's shown. Users can opt to only scroll through the accounts they follow, use restricted modes, or highlight posts that they don't want to see more of. Explore the platform safety settings to see how you can take control of what your child's phone shows them when they open the app.

## 3. DISCUSS WHAT THEY'VE SEEN

Chatting about what your child's seen online keeps you aware of the content they're interacting with. Don't assume that platforms are screening out inappropriate material, or even that your child would recognise content as being harmful. Discuss who they follow, what posts they like and what comes up in their feeds: if alarm bells ring, it could be time for a more in-depth talk or to seek support.

## 4. LEARN HOW TO HIDE CONTENT

If your child stumbles across unsuitable content on social media, there's the option to hide that post as well as indicating you'd prefer any similar material not to be suggested in future. On some platforms, you might also be able to block posts that contain specific words, which is an excellent way to start taking control of what your child sees online.

## 5. SET DAILY LIMITS

Phones and most apps can tell you how much they're being used. Spending too long online can mean a child misses out on other activities that are important to all-round wellbeing. You could set some family rules – for everyone to follow – around device use, such as screen time limits and tech-free spaces: Involving your child in creating this agreement makes them more likely to stick to it.

## 6. MONITOR THEIR ACTIVITY

Keeping a discreet eye on how your child is using social media can help ensure they're not entering potentially dangerous situations. As they grow up, of course, children need space to exercise their independence – but you can still occasionally ask to see what they're looking at. Be transparent about your own social media use and try not to sound judgemental about your child's.

## 7. TURN OFF PUSH NOTIFICATIONS

Even for adults, it's tempting to check an email or message as soon as the alert sound pings. Push notifications encourage people to open their apps and spend time on their device, so turning them off will help your child to practise mindful use of tech. Most of us have other things that we need to focus on as a priority – and those notifications will still be there later, when we have more time.

## 8. USE DEVICES TOGETHER

Giving children internet-enabled devices and complete freedom to explore platforms on their own can result in exposure to hugely damaging content. You could consider making a particular area at home a designated space to use phones, tablets and so on – making it much easier to monitor what content your child is viewing and (if necessary) steer them away from any potentially harmful paths.

## 9. ENCOURAGE OTHER ACTIVITIES

Mental health professionals often highlight the importance of exercise, quality time with loved ones, a balanced diet and restful sleep for our mental wellbeing. Spending hours on social media can cause us to sacrifice other activities that our brains need to feel well – so encouraging your child to put down their phone and enjoy something that doesn't involve a screen can be immensely beneficial.

## 10. TALK ABOUT PEER PRESSURE

Most platforms default children's accounts to private, so only people they've accepted as friends can see their posts. This reduces the risk of bullying or unkind comments, but – just like offline life – the digital world can still make children feel as if they need to act or look a certain way to fit in. Talk to your child about peer pressure, and listen to any concerns so you can provide the support they need.

## Meet Our Expert

Shazia Sarwar-Azim is executive headteacher at a specialist primary school and, as an emotional therapy coach, works with school leaders to focus on the SEND, mental health and wellbeing agenda. A passionate advocate for vulnerable learners, Shazia is a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching and the author of *The Rainbow Within*, a book which supports children with SEMH needs.



**NOS**  
**National Online Safety**  
#WakeUpWednesday

Sources: <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-53245655>  
<https://iproutilsocial.com/insights/social-media-algorithms/>





National  
Online  
Safety®

#WakeUpWednesday

# 12 Social Media Online Safety Tips FOR CHILDREN WITH NEW DEVICES

With Christmas only a few weeks away, many of you will be using social media to share your excitement with friends and family. Being active on social media is a great way to show others how much fun you're having, but it's important that you know how to use these apps safely and securely so that bad things don't happen. By following our safety tips below, you can make sure that your personal information stays private, your postings are positive and that your social media use overall is responsible, healthy and most of all enjoyable.

## 1 DON'T ACCEPT FRIEND REQUESTS FROM STRANGERS

Make sure that you set your profile to private so that people you don't know can't find you online. Always tell a trusted adult if a stranger or somebody you don't know sends you a message or a friend request.



## 2 NEVER SHARE YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION WITH PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW

Keep your personal information personal. Sometime people online aren't always who they say they are and might ask you to share things that you don't feel comfortable sharing.

## 3 DON'T SHARE EMBARRASSING PHOTOS OR VIDEOS OF OTHERS ONLINE

This could really upset them and could get you into a lot of trouble. Always think twice before posting anything on social media and treat people online as you would in real-life.



## 4 NEVER SEND NAKED PICTURES OF YOURSELF TO OTHERS

This is illegal if you are under 18 and you could get into trouble with the Police. If you are being pressured by someone, always say no and tell a trusted adult. Even if you think it is innocent fun, the photo could be shared with other people and you won't be able to control who else sees it.



## 5 CREATE A POSITIVE ONLINE REPUTATION

Always be kind and polite when posting comments on social media and only upload pictures and videos of things you are proud of. This forms part of your digital footprint. Everything you do online can be tracked and monitored and could affect what people think of you in real-life if it is negative.



## 6 LIMIT YOUR SCREEN TIME

Social media can be addictive, and it is easy to keep checking newsfeeds or your notifications every 5 minutes which can affect your behaviour and stop you from doing other things. Remember to only use your phone at certain times of the day, turn notifications off at bedtime and go out and have as fun as much as possible. This will keep you fit and healthy and make you appreciate there's more to life than just what's on social media.



## 7 BLOCK ONLINE BULLIES

Sometimes people might say nasty things to you online or post offensive comments on your pictures or videos. If this happens, always tell a trusted adult who will help you block them from your profile and support you in taking further action.



## 8 REPORT INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

If you see something on social media that you don't like, offends you or upsets you, you should always report it to a trusted adult. You should also report it to the social media app who will be able to remove the content if it is against their user policy and can block the person who posted it.



## 9 ONLY USE APPS WHICH YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO USE

Before downloading any new social media app, always check the age-rating. If you need help, ask your parent or carer to make sure that the app is safe for you to use and never download anything which you are too young for as it may contain content that isn't safe for you to see.



## 10 ALWAYS SECURE ALL YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILES WITH A PASSWORD

This will help to keep your private information safe and won't allow others to access your profiles without your permission. Make sure your passwords are memorable and personal to you but something which other people can't guess, and always share them with your parents just in case you forget them.



## 11 ASK PARENTS TO SET-UP 'PARENTAL CONTROLS' FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

When you download a social media app, you should always ask a trusted adult to help you set it up for the first time. This will help you control who sees what you post, who can contact you and make sure you are able to enjoy using the app safely and securely.



## 12 ALWAYS TALK TO YOUR TRUSTED ADULT IF SOCIAL MEDIA IS MAKING YOU UNHAPPY

Sometimes, social media can make us feel bad about ourselves or sad that we aren't the same as someone else or doing the same things as someone else. Remember, if you ever feel this way, it's really important to talk to your trusted adult(s) like your parents, carers, other adult family members or a teacher, all of whom will be able to support you and discuss your feelings with you to help make you feel better.

