

The Convent Chronicle



Friday 8th December 2023

Inspiring Ambition,
Achieving Excellence

Dear Parents/Carers,

On the second Sunday of Advent we light the second purple candle representing faith. It is called the "Bethlehem Candle" as a reminder of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem - and their faith and trust in God. The liturgical colour is purple, as is the candle. Purple has an elite status, stemming from the rarity and cost of the dye originally used to produce it - it was, and still is, worn by royals for these reasons. It reminds us that the most royal person of all, our Lord, is the "King of Kings."

The second Sunday of advent, is one of repentance - expressing regret, or, quite literally, turning back. Being holy isn't about being perfect; rather it's about knowing that when we make mistakes, that we turn back to God to say sorry. During Advent we should seek out the blessing of the Sacrament of Confession and know the joy of being forgiven. Miss Carson led the reconciliation along with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament this week at assemblies.

During advent we pray, give alms to charity and, like many other faiths, fast. We fast as a reminder to prepare ourselves for the celebration of Our Lord's birth. By fasting, we "shift our focus" from ourselves to others, just as we will have done in Lent: spending less time worrying about what to eat, when to eat, how much to eat, and so on in order to use our time in increased prayer and caring for the poor. We learn through fasting that we can gain control over things which we sometimes allow to control us.

As mentioned at the Carol concert, the girls have raised thousands for those in need, at home and abroad - woweee! The Year 7 choir were sublime and the narrators just as fabulous. Well done to all involved. They were truly divine.

Year 7 at one end and Year 12 at the other - we welcomed back all of our past Year 11 students to receive their GCSE certificates. Their advice to Year 11 getting their predicted grades today - work hard and remember that exams do not define you; they are one small part of the picture of you.

God's Blessings at this special time



Advent Poem #2: Peace

In a world gone hysterical with phobia,
Foaming at the mouth about rights and retaliation,
Spewing propaganda and violence
towards flesh-and-blood humans
In a world where God is twisted into a
Thirsting need for power,
Dominating others who tremble
at their version of a kingdom
In a world that blames the victims,
Accusing the innocent of crimes,
Blocking entrance to the outcasts
who cry for shelter from bitter cold.
Into this world came a baby
Struggling in his mangy crib,
Reminding us that the divine
was housed in the humble, the helpless.
So in this world we pray:
Blessed are those who hunger for right,
Righteous are those who strive for peace,
and peaceful are those who learn to Love.
Teryn O'Brien

Next Year's calendar has been agreed by the Governing Body. Please find the link to next year's calendar dates: [Term Dates 2024-2025](#).

Penny Johnson
Headteacher



Rise Above Day – Wednesday 6th December

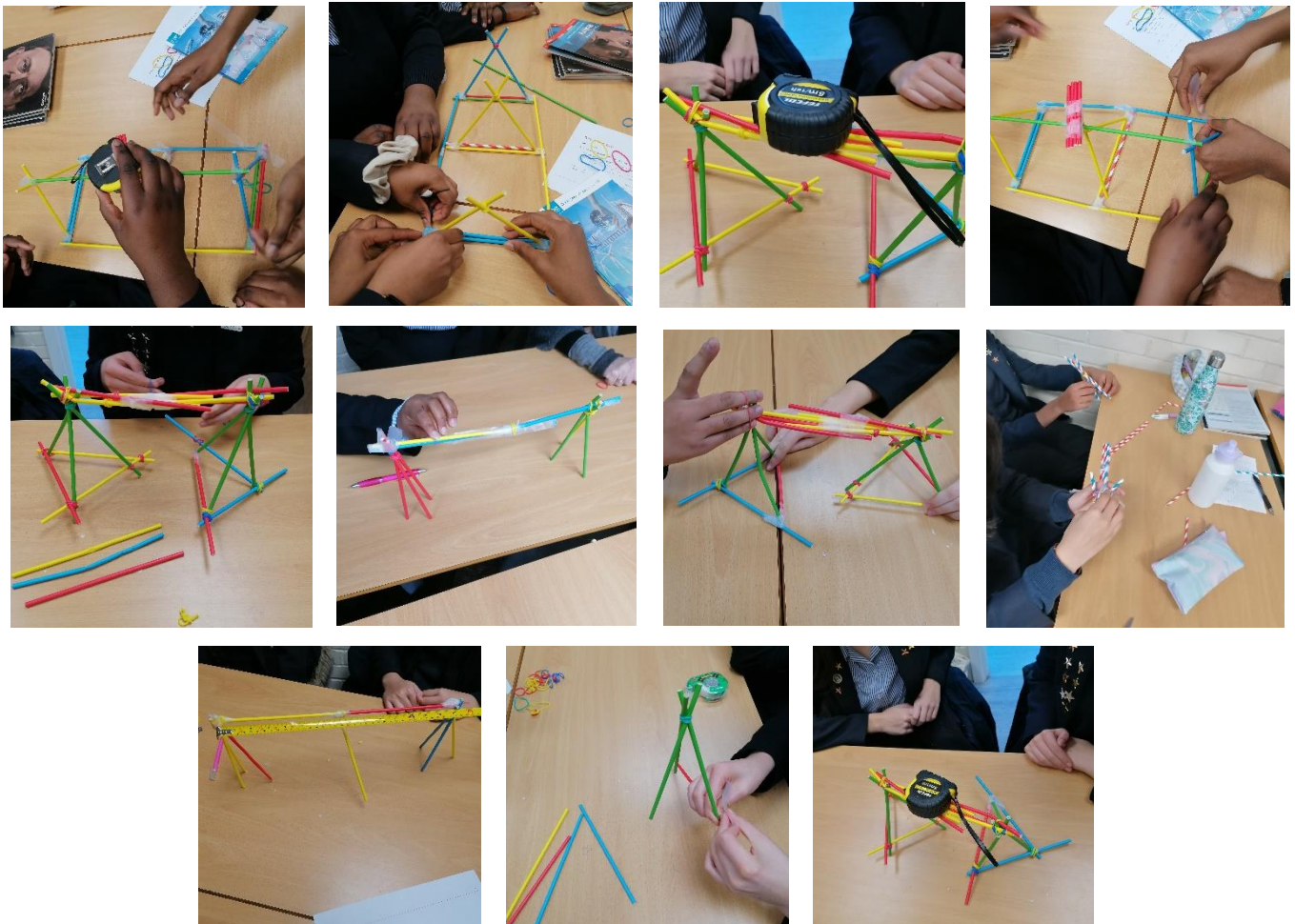


We were delighted to meet Cici Manwa this week as part of our Rise Above day activities. Cici is a local Councillor for Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park and we first met when she attended our Black History Month celebration at the Thameside Theatre in October. Cici is a University Student in her second year but found the time in her very busy schedule to talk to Year 8 pupils about why she wanted to be a local councillor, the nature of the work she does representing the people of Tilbury, her home town, and the different ways she supports her community. In particular she spoke about the need for the voices of young people to be heard and encouraged pupils to get involved in their local communities to bring about the change they would like to see.

I was inspired by Cici's presentation and I hope she has inspired our girls to do their bit. At just 19 she is an excellent role model for our girls and we are so grateful she could join us. Cici is now officially a friend of Grays Convent and we hope to see her again soon.

Mrs Collis

Also on Rise Above Day Year 9 students were asked to get busy building a structure out of straws and rubber bands. This was a fabulous session on Civil Engineering run by one of our own Governors, Ms Kachinga, who is herself a Civil Engineer. Here's how they got on...



Ms Kusion

Christmas Jumper Day for Save the Children - Thursday 7th December

On Thursday this week, we invited students and staff to wear their Christmas Jumpers in return for a £2 donation which will go to the Save the Children charity (You can visit the event website at: <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/christmas-jumper-day> and learn more about Save the Children at: www.savethechildren.org.uk). Here's just a taste of the day...



School interactions experience project



Grays Convent School is proud to present a project where our pupils interact with pupils from Spanish speaking countries.

This term we had weekly online meetings with students from a school in Colombia, where our students practiced their Spanish and learnt about a new culture, whilst at the same time the school in Colombia practiced their English and learnt about our British culture. Here are a few of the comments from some of the students who took part in the project.

My name is Alyssa Gorte-Clarke and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to expand my knowledge in Spanish while meeting new people who are learning English. It was quite interesting learning about differences between schools here in England compared to schools in Columbia and we had some funny moments while discussing this topic. This project in my opinion was fun and I hope to have more opportunities like this in the future.

Alyssa Gorte-Clarke - Year 10 Spanish

My name is Gabriella Okafor. I had the opportunity to work with Colombian students every Monday and Friday after school, where we tested each other's speaking skills in both Spanish and English. It was honestly an amazing experience even though the students were 2 years older than us, we were still able to talk with them casually. This experience benefitted me in my Spanish-speaking skills and helped me build confidence in so many aspects of learning Spanish. This was not only an advantage to my studies but made it fun to learn the language and a great chance to make friends, I learnt so many different things about Colombian culture and the life of students compared to the life of a British student. I would definitely recommend.

Gabriella Okafor - Year 10 Spanish

It was really useful to use our Spanish skills in real conversation and the people we spoke to were very kind and told us a lot about the differences between England and Colombia. Overall, it was a great experience and helped to enhance our speaking and listening skills.

Nuha Ahmed - Year 10 Spanish

If you are doing languages you can take part in our next adventure! Ask to your MFL teacher.

Ms Duque Mora

House Music

A new initiative to the Music Department came this year in the guise of an inter-house music competition, which has seen houses of students in Year 8 and Year 9 compete against each other to be the house music champion 2023-24.



It was a competitive atmosphere on the day with some strong performances. In the end, the scores were...

4th Place 47 points overall Mary House
3rd Place 53 points overall Deborah House
2nd Place 72 points overall Esther House
1st Place 82 points overall Lydia House

Judges, Miss Boller, Miss Warby and Mrs Wilsher were impressed with the high standard of performance and presentation for every house.

Mr White



Thank You!



Thank you for your very generous contributions to the Christmas Hampers for the Thurrock Food Bank which will be very gratefully received. God bless you,

Miss Carson

Jesse Tree: Advent Challenge for KS3 Years 7-9 with rewards

We have a Jesse Tree on display in the foyer and students in KS3 are encouraged to make their own Jesse Tree at home and follow the daily bible readings in the Family Devotions by scrolling down on the link <https://www.faithward.org/jesse-tree/printable-jesse-tree-ornaments/> all the family can be involved in making the baubles/ornaments.

Full details are on their Form Google Classrooms also for those who do not have a computer, so they can take part. They are asked to take a photo and send it to their Form Google Classroom by 6th January.

ADVENT CHALLENGE K.S 3 with rewards.

See <https://www.faithward.org/jesse-tree/printable-jesse-tree-ornaments/>

Make your own Jesse Tree adding a bauble each day 'til Christmas Day.

- Use a branch or twigs in a pot, or draw a Jesse Tree and put it on the wall, or use an ordinary Christmas Tree.
- Read one Jesse Tree Bible story each day by scrolling down to **Family Devotions** or using the list on the slides below to look up the references in your Bible or on Google. Make a symbol for each one and hang it as a bauble on your Jesse Tree and add lights if you wish.
- The baubles could be made by drawing a symbol on a gift tag and hanging it on the Jesse tree or sticking it on the drawn tree on the wall. The pictures could be made very simply by using free printable ones on link and printing them out in colour, or black & white and colouring them in, or drawing your own. They could be in silhouette, or as stained glass or collage or mosaic, or they could be made in 3D. *The whole family can be involved.*
- Take a photo and send it to your Google Form Classroom by 6th January to gain achievement points. The best 3 will receive extra achievement points.

Awards: 5 Achievement points for all who participate.

Plus, in each Class: 3rd Place 10 points, 2nd place 15 points, 1st place 20 points

Plus in each Year Gp. There will be a prize for the overall winner.

Resources to help you:

See list below on next 2 slides for Bible Stories and Symbols 1st – 25th Dec.

See printable ornaments and the daily Family Devotions (Bible readings) on

<https://www.faithward.org/jesse-tree/printable-jesse-tree-ornaments/>



I hope all the family will enjoy this activity. God bless you,

Miss Carson

Lunch Money

If your daughter has loaned lunch money from the Finance Office could you please ensure it is paid back the following day.

We have a large amount of outstanding money owing and emails have been sent home. If you have received an email could you please ensure the money is returned as soon as possible.

This service is only available for emergencies and if the money is not returned on time it could lead to us being unable to loan money to another student.

Finance Office

ParentPay Accounts



It is important that our Parents have a ParentPay Account, and that this account is activated. This enables parents to purchase equipment and not to miss out on school trips. If you require another copy of your ParentPay Activation Letter then please email Mrs Wood on:

woodj@graysconvent.thurrock.sch.uk.

Finance Office

Severe Weather Arrangements



We are not anticipating weather, severe enough to close schools, but as it is that time of year we feel it best to keep you informed of the procedure.

In the **very unlikely** event that the school is closed due to snow, Mrs Johnson will make the decision as soon as possible and inform BBC Essex and Essex FM of any school closure. Should we experience severe weather, you are advised to listen to these stations, which list schools that are closed. If we are **not** mentioned – **we are open!**

We will also post a message on the front page of our website, so keep an eye on that too.

BBC Essex - 103.5 FM or 95.3 FM

Essex FM - 102.6 FM or 96.3 FM

If Grays Convent are NOT mentioned on these radio stations, and there is NOT a message on the front page of the website GRAYS CONVENT SCHOOL IS OPEN!

Spelling Bee

Prepare for "*Excellent spelling!*" at **Spelling Tests, ASSESSMENTS and Spelling Bee!**

3 Spelling Bee Competitions:

Year 7- Autumn Term

For Year 8 - Spring Term

For Year 9 – Summer Term

Get ready! – week 12

FOR YEAR 7	FOR YEAR 8	FOR YEAR 9
bridal	frantic	plight
bridle	din	disdain
cereal	chatter	brandish
serial	fumes	valiant
compliment	flounder	dismay
complement	sludge	foe
descent	anthem	flout
dissent	doomed	lavish
desert	mockery	deceive
dessert	sardonic	attire



For Year 7:

bridal: to do with a bride at a wedding.

bridle: reins etc. for controlling a horse.

cereal: made from grain (e.g. breakfast cereal).

serial: adjective from the noun series - a succession of things one after the other.

compliment: to make nice remarks about someone (verb) or the remark that is made (noun).

complement: related to the word complete - to make something complete or more complete (e.g. her scarf complemented her outfit).

descent: the act of descending (going down).

dissent: to disagree/disagreement (verb and noun).

desert: as a noun – a barren place (stress on first syllable); as a verb - to abandon (stress on second syllable).

dessert: (stress on second syllable) a sweet course after the main course of a meal.

For Year 8: Learn the words- they are all from War Poetry:

frantic - marked by uncontrolled excitement or emotion.

din - make a resonant sound, like artillery.

chatter - click repeatedly or uncontrollably.

fumes - gases ejected from an engine as waste products.

flounder - move clumsily or struggle to move.

sludge - any thick, viscous matter.

anthem - a song of devotion or loyalty.

doomed - people who are destined to die soon.

mockery - showing your contempt by derision.

sardonic - disdainfully or ironically humorous.



For Year 9 – in detail. Learn these words - from Macbeth:

plight: A situation where escaping is hard to do; noun.

disdain: lack of respect accompanied by a feeling of intense dislike.

brandish: move or swing back and forth; verb.

valiant: the act of being a hero; adjective.

dismay: the feeling of despair in the face of obstacles; noun.

foe: an enemy or adversary; noun.

flout: treat with disregard; verb.

lavish: expend profusely; verb.

deceive: be dishonest with; verb.

attire: clothing of a distinctive style; noun.



Learn them to improve your spelling!!!

Miss Petrova



Computing

Binary and Denary numbers

Can every imaginable number be converted into binary code?

Yes, bar zero

Yes

No

Only sometimes

Answer: Yes

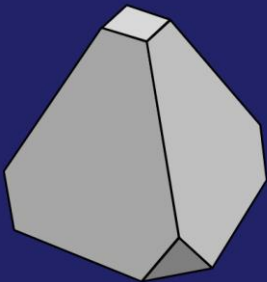
Mr Burr

Maths

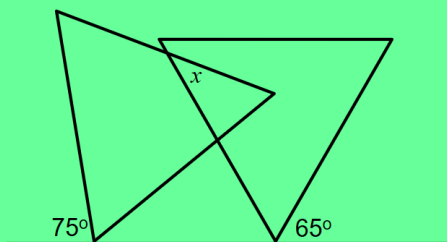


Maths Question of the Week

A solid square-based pyramid has all of its corners cut off, as shown.
How many edges does the resulting shape have?



The diagram shows two equilateral triangles.
Find the size of angle x



Submit your answers by Monday 11th December 2023 at break time and correct answers receive five Achievement Points.

Mr Amenze



RE

Year 10 Jewish Beliefs

In Year 10 RE we are studying the fundamental Jewish beliefs. It has been very interesting, particularly when we compare them to Christian beliefs such as what both religions believe about life after death and how this affects their daily life. Jews are less concerned with the afterlife in favour of obeying God's commandments in this life as a way to become closer to Him.

We had an interesting discussion today concerning whether some Christians just believe because they are worried about the consequences of not believing – and Year 10 had some insightful points to make. A massive shout out to our theologian of the week KIRAN KAUR who is very interested in Judaism and has remembered a great deal of knowledge from Year 9.

Keep up the good work ladies – can't wait for our next lesson!

Miss Bird

YOUR NEWSLETTER...



"WANTS
YOU
AND YOUR SUBJECT
NEWS!"

Send your subject news to
admin@graysconvent.thurrock.sch.uk

8th December: Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

This feast is about the conception of Mary herself; celebrating God's plan for our salvation, that God kept her completely pure and free from all sin so that she could become the Holy Mother of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour.

The Divine Office, Lauds. Well done to Year 7 students!

We celebrated this feast in with Advent Morning Prayer (Lauds) from the Divine Office before school at 8:10am, for staff and students who are here early and we had a reflection on the Immaculate Conception in Form Prayers. Some of our wonderful Year 7's who sang so beautifully last night were in early this morning and joined us for Lauds and led their own very thoughtful Intercessions. Very well done!

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

of Mary herself (*not the conception of Jesus*)

God says : Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.(Jer.1:5)

God has a plan for our lives. He had a very special plan for Mary and prepared her soul before she was conceived. **Mary, herself was conceived without sin**, so that she could become the pure, holy Mother of God's Son, Jesus; having been specially chosen and prepared by God in his plan for our salvation.

By God's grace Mary did not inherit the stain of original sin on her soul, from Adam and Eve, as we do. Throughout her life, Mary was kept free from sin and full of God's grace; and so the Angel Gabriel greeted her:

"Hail, full of grace!"
means **full of God's life and goodness.**



God answers the prayers of those who obey him, and so we ask Mary who always obeyed God, to intercede for us, to help us to prepare our hearts to welcome Jesus and to say yes to God's will in our lives as Mary did.

Prayer:

O Mary conceived without sin,
pray for us who have recourse to thee.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.



This Sunday begins the 2nd Week of Advent. We think about Saint John the Baptist who prepared the way for the Lord. He calls us to repent and prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus, by turning away from sin and sharing what we have with the poor.

We are approaching the 2nd Sunday of Advent
Advent: waiting in joyful hope for the **coming** of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Lord.

Jesse Tree: Elizabeth and Zechariah
Tonight Read this exciting story: **Luke 1:5-25**

The Birth of John the Baptist

Luke 1:57-66

Saint John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin and he was 6 months older than Jesus. His parents were Zechariah who was a priest and Saint Elizabeth, the cousin of Jesus' mother Mary.

Elizabeth was 60 years old when she gave birth to John the Baptist, her first child. Her husband Zechariah was a priest in the temple (in the days when priests were allowed to marry.)

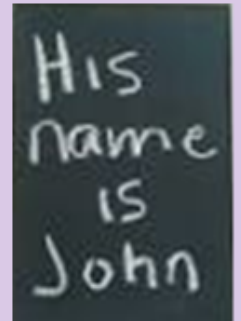


The Angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah in the temple to tell him that his 60 year old wife was going to have a son and that they must **name him John**. Not surprisingly, **Zechariah didn't believe it!** So he was struck dumb, unable to speak, until the child was born. *(Luke 1:5-25)*

It was the custom for the 1st born son to be named after his father, but as soon as Zechariah wrote on a tablet of stone **"His name is John"**, **Lk.1:63** he was suddenly able to speak again. Everyone marvelled, wondering what this child would turn out to be. *(Read Full story Lk.1:57-66)*

Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and praised God in his famous hymn of praise called the Benedictus: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel...*(Lk.1:57-69)*

(Jesus, himself said of John the Baptist, that he was the greatest man who ever lived.)



As an adult, **John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of Jesus** by calling people to repent, to turn away from sin and he baptised them in the River Jordan.

His famous saying was

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

He lived in the wilderness on locusts and wild honey and dressed in camel skin.

He may have looked like a social drop out, but he was such a great preacher the people thought he was the Messiah: but John said no,

"The man who will come after me is much greater than I am.

I am not worthy even to bend down and untie his sandals." Mk.1:7



When Jesus came, John pointed to him and said “behold the Lamb of God” and told the people to follow him. He said:

“Jesus must become more important, while I become less important.” Jn.3:30

Prayer:

Lord, with the help of your Holy Spirit, may you become more important in our lives as we seek to do your will in your power and give less importance to our ‘wants’ and to our own way. Help us to use all our gifts and talents for your service and glory. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



PRINCE OF PEACE CAROL SERVICE 2023 CONGRATULATION!

Congratulations to our wonderful Year 7 Choir for their beautiful singing in German, Latin and English and looking so festive in their lovely Christmas jumpers. A huge thank you and very well done to all our excellent Narrators who worked hard preparing their parts and their recordings for the last day of term. They conveyed the true meaning of Christmas, through their very reverent, presentation of the Christmas story. This helps us to reflect and prepare our hearts in this holy season of Advent as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ, not only at Christmas, but also his second coming. Thank you to all the parents who came to the Carol Service to support the girls, at this very busy time of year.



Our Carol Service theme this year was Prince of Peace. Staff and students were asked “What does Peace mean to You?” Jesus the Prince of Peace, who calmed the storm at sea, can calm the storms in our own lives too.

The prophet Isaiah foretold of the Peaceful Kingdom, and we all look forward to the day when swords will be turned into ploughshares and the wolf will live with the lamb, and there will be no more harm.

Peace begins in our own hearts; the Choir reminded us of this as they sang **‘Let there be Peace on Earth and Let It Begin With Me.’**



The Peaceful Kingdom Isaiah 11:1-9



Prince of Peace 3rd Reader



V1 Let there be peace on earth

Miss Carson

Advent Reconciliation and Exposition Assemblies

Every Year Group had an assembly on Monday with a Reconciliation Service (*the **Sacrament** is available in the Parish Church*) followed by Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in thanksgiving. We read the parable of the Prodigal Son in which Jesus reveals the loving mercy of God our Heavenly Father, who longs for us to return to him, no matter how far we have strayed. He is so happy to have us back safe and sound that he throws a party for us. Students were encouraged to hand over to God any hurtful or negative words that have been said to them and to silently reflect during Exposition on God's positive affirmations. Girls were asked to choose one of the affirmations listed below and to write it on a mirror at home to remember it.

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

All Roman Catholics are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during this season of Advent. In this Sacrament we receive forgiveness and healing for the wounds of sin.

St Thomas of Canterbury

Wednesday, 20th December

7.30pm Advent Reconciliation Service

Our Lady Star of the Sea, Tilbury RM18 7BT

Wednesday 20th December

Reconciliation 7.30pm

Our Lady and St Joseph, Stanford Le Hope SS17 OPF

Friday 22nd December

Reconciliation 7.30pm

Some of God's affirmations to choose from, write and remember:

You are Beautiful Psalm 139:14

God calls you 'Beautiful One' Song of Solomon 2:10

You are Chosen 1 Peter 2:9

You are Made for a Purpose Ephesians 2:10

You are a Precious Child of God John 1:12

You are Loved Forever Jeremiah 31:3

She who kneels before God can stand before anyone Romans 8:31

"I can do all this through Christ who strengthens me."

You are precious in my eyes and honoured and I love you. Isaiah 43:4

I am clothed in strength and dignity and laugh without fear of the future.

Romans 8:28 In all things God works for the good of those who love him.

Isaiah 41:10 Do not be afraid for I am with you...

Joshua 1:9 Be strong, brave... You are never alone.

God bless you,

Miss Carson

Safeguarding our Children at Grays Convent

At Grays Convent our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Mrs Collis, and our Safeguarding Officers are Mrs Wells and Mrs Bishop. Students can contact any of our Safeguarding Team during the school day.

Worried about a child?

You can phone or write to The MASH about your concerns. Phone immediately if you believe it is urgent.

- Thurrock MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding hub), Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL, Tel: **01375 652802**.
- Emergency Duty Team (for out of hours) **01375 372468**.
- Police Child Abuse Investigation Team **01277 266822** or call **999** if you are concerned a child needs immediate protection.
- Childline **0800 11 11** www.childline.org.uk
- NSPCC **0808 800 5000** www.nspcc.org.uk; www.facebook.com/nspcc

Mrs Collis

Pope Francis - Tweet of the Week



Pope Francis @Pontifex · 2d

We have entered **#Advent** full of hope. We fervently implore the Prince of Peace to bring comfort to our wounded hearts and to nations suffering from wars and crises of every kind, so that all may live a dignified and peaceful life.

486



1.3K

7.1K

340K



Key Dates and Events

Tuesday 12 th December	Christmas Dinner – Canteen	Whole School
Thursday 14 th December	Christmas Cracker Event	Years 7-11
Wednesday 20 th December	School Carol Service	Years 7-11
Wednesday 20th December	Early closing for Christmas break Students dismissed at 11:45am	Whole School
Thursday 21st December - Wednesday 3rd January 2024	 Christmas Break 	Whole School
Thursday 4th January 2024	Spring Term commences Students to arrive for 8:25am start	Whole School



Privacy and Safety Checklist

Do you know how to report content?

If you see something that's not following Instagram's Community Guidelines (ex nudity or self-harm), you can report a photo or video right from the Instagram app or when you see it on [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com):

- 1 Tap (iPhone & Windows Phone) or (Android) below the post
- 2 Tap Report Inappropriate
- 3 Select why you're reporting the post

If you want to report someone that is impersonating you or someone you know, you can do that right from the Instagram app.

- 1 Go to their profile by finding them in your followers list or by searching for their name or username.
- 2 Tap their username to open their profile and then tap (iOS) and (Android).
- 3 Tap Report Inappropriate.
- 4 Select "I believe this account violates Instagram's community guidelines" to report an account.

Mr Burr

Get the Studybugs App the quick and easy way to report your daughter's absence



Please get the **free Studybugs app** for reporting your child's absence due to illness.

<https://studybugs.com>



Report sickness, receive guidance, help improve children's health

See what illnesses are going around

Secure system, all communications encrypted



Working in partnership with:



Studybugs

Mrs Burrow

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

SNAPCHAT

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Snapchat is an instant messaging app which allows users to send images, videos and texts to people in their friends list. One of Snapchat's unique features is that pictures and messages 'disappear' 24 hours after they've been viewed; however, this content isn't as temporary as many believe – with some users saving screenshots or using another device to take a photo of their screen. This year, Snapchat added 'My AI': a customisable chatbot with which people can chat and share secrets, as well as asking for advice and suggestions of places to visit.

CONNECTING WITH STRANGERS

Even if your child only connects with people they know, they may still get friend requests from strangers. The Quick Add option lets users befriend people the app recommends – but these 'friends' are merely a username, which could have anyone behind it. Accepting such requests reveals children's personal information through the Story, SnapMap and Spotlight features, potentially putting them at risk from predators.

EXCESSIVE USE

Snapchat works hard on user engagement, with features like streaks (messaging the same person every day to build up a high score). Spotlight Challenges tempt users into spending time producing content in search of cash prizes and online fame, while it's easy for children to pass hours watching Spotlight's endless scroll of videos.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some videos and posts on Snapchat aren't suitable for children. The hashtags used to group content are determined by the poster, so even an innocent search term could still yield age-inappropriate results. The app's 'disappearing messages' feature also makes it easy for young people (teens in particular) to share explicit images on impulse – so sexting continues to be a risk associated with Snapchat.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

My AI is Snapchat's new chatbot, which replies to questions in a human-like manner. However, the software is still in its infancy and has significant drawbacks, such as biased, incorrect or misleading responses. There have already been numerous reports of young users turning to AI for medical help and diagnoses, which could be inaccurate and therefore potentially dangerous.

ONLINE PRESSURES

Although many of Snapchat's filters are designed to entertain or amuse, the 'beautify' effects on photos can set unrealistic body-image expectations – creating feelings of inadequacy if a young person compares themselves unfavourably with other users. Snapchat now also has 'priority' notifications (which still get displayed even if a device is in 'do not disturb' mode), increasing the pressure on users to log back in and interact.

VISIBLE LOCATION

Snap Map highlights a device's exact position on a virtual map which is visible to other users. There are options to restrict who can see this information: all friends, only you (Ghost Mode) or selected friends. Snapchat also has real-time location sharing, which is intended as a buddy system to ensure friends have reached home safely – but which could also be used to track a young person for more sinister reasons.

Advice for Parents & Carers

TURN OFF QUICK ADD

The Quick Add feature helps people find each other on the app. This function works based on mutual friends or whether someone's number is in your child's contacts list. Explain to your child that this could potentially make their profile visible to strangers. We recommend that your child turns off Quick Add, which can be done in the settings (accessed via the cog icon).

CHOOSE GOOD CONNECTIONS

In 2021, Snapchat rolled out a new safety feature: users can now receive notifications reminding them of the importance of maintaining connections with people they actually know well, as opposed to strangers. This 'Friend Check Up' encourages users to delete connections with users that they rarely communicate with, to maintain their online safety and privacy.

DISCUSS AI

Although My AI's responses can often give the impression that it's a real person, it's essential that young people remember this certainly isn't the case. Encourage your child to think critically about My AI's replies to their questions: are they accurate and reliable? Remind them that My AI shouldn't replace chatting with their real friends, and that it's always better to talk to an actual person in relation to medical matters.

CHAT ABOUT CONTENT

It may feel like an awkward conversation (and one that young people can be reluctant to have) but it's important to talk openly and non-judgementally about sexting. Remind your child that once something's online, the creator loses control over where it ends up – and who else sees it. Likewise, it's vital that children understand that some challenges which become popular on the platform may have potentially harmful consequences.

KEEP ACCOUNTS PRIVATE

Profiles are private by default, but children may make them public to gain more followers. Snap Stories are visible to everyone your child adds, unless they change the settings. On SnapMaps, their location is visible unless Ghost Mode is enabled (again via settings). It's safest not to add people your child doesn't know in real life – especially since the addition of My Places, which allows other Snapchat users to see where your child regularly visits and checks in.

BE READY TO BLOCK AND REPORT

If a stranger does connect with your child on Snapchat and begins to make them feel uncomfortable through bullying, pressure to send explicit images or by sending sexual images to them, your child can select the three dots on that person's profile and report or block them. There are options to state why they're reporting that user (annoying or malicious messages, spam, or masquerading as someone else, for example).

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing Internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



Sources: <https://help.snapchat.com/en-gb/article/328578035602-What-is-My-AI-on-Snapchat-and-how-do-I-use-it> | <https://valuesnap.com/en-GB/news/early-learnings-from-snapchat-and-new-safety-enhancements> | <https://nccnec.com/2020/04/snapchat-lives-location-sharing-challenge/> | <https://help.snapchat.com/en-gb/article/70000488044>

NOS National Online Safety®
#WakeUpWednesday

@natonlinesafety

/NationalOnlineSafety

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Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 17.05.2023



Christmas Closure

Make sure to place your order by **Monday 4th December** to ensure you receive it before our Christmas closure.

Our shop will be closed from **Sunday 17th December to Monday 1st January**. If you have selected Click & Collect from our shop, please ensure your parcel is collected before then.

While our physical store will be closed, you will still be able to place an order through our website. All online orders will be processed on **Tuesday 2nd January when the shop will re-open (10am-2pm)**.

[Shop Now!](#)



Late Night Shopping Evening & Walton Hall Farm Christmas Market!

On Friday 1st December from 6pm-8pm

(The shop will be open as usual during the day between 10am-4pm)

Late Night Shopping Evening Special Offer

5% OFF ALL OFFICIAL SCHOOL WEAR COLLECTIONS

Applicable on orders over £50 (in-store & online) between 6pm-8pm on Friday 1st December only.

Enter Code: Late Night Shopping



Gift Card

A Gift Card makes a great gift as the recipient can select what they want to purchase from our website and we can ship it directly to them.

We don't just do school uniforms - we also offer a huge range of every day clothing, jackets, hats, personalised merchandise and much, much more!

You can purchase our Gift Cards in a range of different values, and these will be sent to you in an email (digital format) so you can share it by email and SMS.

**** If you require a physical card, we can issue one upon request.**

Mid-Season Sale!

3 for £30 on selected primary school Sweatshirts & Cardigans*

3 for £18 on selected primary school Polo Shirts*

***Offer valid on selected styles & sizes only, until stocks last. Discounts automatically applied at checkout.**

The Den! An online engagement opportunity for 11-16 year olds with SEND

CALLING ALL YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 11-16 WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

The Den is an informal virtual hangout for young people aged 11-16 providing an opportunity for young people to share their experiences and work together to improve services for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, living or attending education in Thurrock.

Meeting via MS Teams from 5.30pm on the following date:

Wednesday 13th December 2023

You can join 'The Den' and participate in regular online meetings and share thoughts and feelings on our online pinboard. Parents and/or guardians must complete this online registration form:

<https://forms.office.com/e/xECdu8uE5A>

Thurrock Children's Services

thurrock.gov.uk

Empowering Parents
Empowering Communities

The Centre for Parent and Child Support



Become an EPEC Group Leader
Join us for a 10 week training programme
Starting 16th January 2024 9.30am-2.30pm
(Term time only)

Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC) is a successful, popular, unique parenting approach. EPEC is for local parents, led by local parents and those with parenting experience. As an EPEC parent group leader you will:

- * Receive amazing free training and support from local EPEC team.
- * Learn to lead practical, caring groups for local parents and those with parenting experience.
- * Share tried and tested methods that give children the best start in life.
- * Join a group of like-minded parents to make a difference to your local community.
- * Develop your skills and confidence.
- * Gain experience that will help you to fulfil your ambitions.
- * Please contact Angie Holland at Chadwell Family Hub on 01375 840433 for further information



NHS
Essex Partnership University
NHS Foundation Trust

FLU VACCINE CATCH-UP CLINICS

Time is running out to vaccinate your child with this season's flu nasal spray*.

The flu vaccine reduces the risk of serious illness and will top up their protection even if they've been vaccinated before.

Drop into one of our Essex catch-up clinics for primary and secondary aged children:


16 December, 10am – 2pm
Thurrock Hospital (Thameside House), Thurrock.

21 December, 10am – 2pm
The Hermit Youth Centre, Shenfield Rd, Brentwood CM15 8AG.
(Please note no parking available on site Please park at Brentwood Sainsbury's and walk to the Youth Centre).

**No booking required.
Just walk in.**

*flu injection is offered as an alternative to the nasal spray

#DOYOURBITESSEX



Family Learning in Thurrock

Thurrock Adult Community College

Join us for **FREE**

Fun filled sessions

At Stifford Family Hub

A fun after school activity for children and their parents/carers. Use and develop your number skills to create a fun exciting gift for a loved one this Christmas.

Suitable for 2 - 11 year olds

Enrol now - Call 01375 372476 | visit www.tacc.ac.uk

READY STEADY Christmas!

Date: 14/12/23
Time: 3:30pm - 5:00pm
Code: MULTI9ENY2



If you are not a member of the Family Hubs, please contact them directly before enrolling on these workshops to obtain the PIN code to enrol.

Thurrock Adult Community College
Inspiring futures through lifelong learning | Book online www.tacc.ac.uk

MAKE YOUR MARK TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Make
Your Mark



Youth Parliament
MAKING OUR MARK

2024

Involving Thurrock schools, colleges and youth groups

Running since 2011, Make Your Mark has reached millions of young people. It gives young people aged 11-18 the opportunity to vote on topics they feel are the most important issues facing young people locally and across the UK.

Make Your Mark voting period will run from Monday 29 January – Friday 1 March 2024. During this time we want Thurrock schools, colleges and youth groups to encourage as many young people to vote. Every vote matters!

Get involved! Here's what you need to do.

Now - 22 Dec 2023



REGISTER

For Thurrock schools, colleges or youth groups to take part in the 2024 Make your Mark consultation you need to register with Thurrock Youth Cabinet.

Register your school, college or youth group now by dropping us an email at

youthcabinet@thurrock.gov.uk

Registration closes on Fri 22 Dec.

From 15 Jan 2024



PRE-VOTING

From 15 Jan 2024 we will send you the resources you need to support the vote in your school, college or youth group. This will include printable tally sheets and explainer videos.

29 Jan - 1 Mar 2024



VOTING PERIOD

Voting is live across the UK! During this time use the tally sheet to capture students / young peoples vote.

By 1 March 2024



SUBMIT RESULTS

The deadline to return completed tally sheets is Friday 1 March by 5pm.

Please scan in and send all completed tally sheets to

youthcabinet@thurrock.gov.uk

22 March 2024



MAKE YOUR MARK RESULTS ANNOUNCED

We'll let you know the outcome so you can announce the results in your school, college or youth group.

Thameside Family Hub

Manor Road, Grays, RM17 6EF
Email: thamesidecc@thurrock.gov.uk Phone: 01375 387 894



thurrock.gov.uk

What's on in December 2023

Mondays

Start	End	Activity	Age groups	How to join in
8.30am	12.00pm	Housing Advice for Council Tenants		Book in advance 01375 413820
9.00am	11.00am	Local Area Co-Ordinator – Helen Catterick		Book in advance 07710950318
9.30am	10.30am	Baby Rhyme Time 4th December	0 to 12 Months	All welcome
9.30am	10.30am	Bring a Story to Life 4th - Stick Man 11th - The Gingerbread Man 18th - Dear Santa	24 to 60 Months	All welcome
11.00am	12.00pm	Baby Massage	0 to 12 Months	Book in advance
11.00am	12.00pm	Bookstart Toddler	12 to 24 Months	Book in advance
1.30pm	2.30pm	Lets Talk to Your Baby	0 to 12 Months	Book in advance
2.00pm	3.00pm	Stay and Play 4th December	24 to 60 Months	All Welcome

Tuesdays

9.30am	10.30am	Stay and Play 5th and 12th December	12 to 24 Months	All Welcome
10.00am	1.00pm	Reducing Parental Conflict Surgery John Singh		Book in advance 07566774325
11.00am	12.00pm	Fun with Mark Making – 5th December Fun with Painting – 12th December	12 to 60 Months	All Welcome
1.00pm	4.30pm	Domestic abuse and violence support Call 07494167408		Book in advance
2.00pm	3.00pm	Sensory Play 5th – 12 to 60 months 12th – 0 to 12 months		All Welcome

Wednesdays

9.00am	4.00pm	Midwife	Ante Natal	Book in advance
10.30am	11.30am	SEND - Just For You 6th and 13th December	0 to 60 Months	All welcome
11.00am	12.00pm	Stay and Play 6th and 13th December	0 to 12 Months	All welcome
1.30pm	2.30pm	Let's Talk to your Toddler	12 to 24 Months	Book in advance
4.00pm	5.30pm	Young Carers		Referral only

Thursdays

9.00am	4.00pm	Midwife	Ante Natal	Book in advance
9.30am	10.30am	NICU Parent & Carer Meet Up 28th December		Book in advance
9.30am	11.00am	Chatterbox	24 to 60 Months	Referral only
9.30am	11.00am	Parental Outreach advice session 28th December	Parents/Carers	Book in advance 01375 387894
1.30pm	2.45pm	Baby Weighing Clinic- Drop In	0 to 60 Months	All Welcome
1.30pm	2.30pm	Play and Learn	24 to 60 Months	Book in advance
2.45pm	3.45pm	Baby Massage Acorns Community Centre, Headon Hall, Crawford Avenue, Stifford Clays, RM16 2AS	0 to 12 Months	Book in advance

Fridays

9.00am	1.00pm	Speech and Language Drop-In 1st December		Referral Only
9.00am	1.00pm	Early Interaction Advice Sessions	24 to 60 Months	Referral Only
9.30am	11.00am	Festive Fun Day 22nd December	0 to 11 years	Book in advance
10.00am	12.30pm	Job Club – Supported Families Employment Adviser		Book in advance 07776245301
1.30pm	2.30pm	Parent/Carer Panel 8th December		Referral only
1.30pm	3.00pm	Festive Fun Day 22nd December	0 to 11 years	Book in advance

Stifford Family Hub

(In the grounds of) Belmont Castle Academy, Parker Road, Grays RM17 5YN
Email: stiffordcc@thurrock.gov.uk Phone: 01375 652653



thurrock.gov.uk

What's on in December 2023

Mondays

Start	End	Activity	Age groups	How to join in
8.30am	12.00pm	Housing Advice for council Tenants		Book in advance 01375 413 820
9.30am	10.30am	Stay and Play 4th, 11th and 18th December	12 to 24 Months	All welcome

Tuesdays

9.30am	11.30am	Triple P Baby Parenting Programme	Ante-natal or parents with a child aged 0-12 months	
11.00am	12.00pm	WellComm – Lets talk together	24 to 48 Months	Referral only
1.00pm	4.30pm	Domestic abuse and violence support Call 07494167408		Book in advance
1.30pm	2.30pm	Stay and Play 5th, 12th and 19th December	0 to 12 Months	All welcome

Wednesdays

9.00am	12.00am	Local Area Co-Ordinator Donna Burnett 29th		Book in advance 07584 345 551
10.00am	4.30pm	Substance misuse support – Drop in	18 + Years	
10.00am	12.00pm	EPEC - Living With a Teenager Parenting Group	Parents/Carers	Book in advance 01375 652 653
10.00am	12.30pm	Job club – Supported Families Employment Advisor	Parents/Carers	Book in advance 07776 245 301
1.30pm	2.30pm	Stay and Play 6th, 13th and 20th December	24 to 60 Months	All welcome

Thursdays

10.00am	11.00am	Childminder Support Group -		Referral only
3.30pm	5.00pm	Ready Steady Christmas Multiply – Maths Skills Course code - MULTI9ENY2 14th December	2 to 11 Years	Book in advance 01375 372476 and press option 1

Fridays

10.00am	11.30am	Baby Weighing Clinic	0 to 60 Months	All Welcome
11.00am	12.00pm	Let's Talk to your Toddler	12 to 24 Months	Book in advance
1.30pm	2.30pm	Lets Talk to Your Toddler	12 to 24 Months	Book in advance

Saturdays

10.00am	1.30pm	Dads and Partners Antenatal Group	info@parents1st.org.uk	Book in advance 01268 525 758 info@parents1st.org.uk
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Brighter Futures – Family Hub Offer

Please use this link to see the Family Hub's offer and activity details –

www.thurrock.gov.uk/family-hub-activities

Please see the Thurrock website for details of each Family Hub and what is on offer each month and Face Book for information:

www.facebook.com/groups/thurrockchildrenscentres

Are your registered with the Family Hub? If not, you can do this online.

Visit: www.thurrock.gov.uk/family-hubs

Become an EPEC Parent Group Leader



Empowering Parents
Empowering Communities



The Centre for
Parent and Child
Support

ARE YOU A PARENT LIVING IN THURROCK?

ARE YOU THINKING OF GOING BACK TO WORK?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BUILD YOUR SKILLS AND
KNOWLEDGE?

HAVE YOU GOT TIME TO SPARE TO BECOME A
VOLUNTEER?

We would like to invite you to our coffee morning on
Tuesday 9th January 2024 10-12pm at

Chadwell Family Hub, Claudian Way, RM16 4QE

To share information on Being A Parent Group (BAP)
running at Family Hubs across Thurrock and how to
become a parent group leader (PGL) and support the
delivery of these groups in your community.

Can you please contact Chadwell Family Hub on
01375 840433 to book a place

GRANGEWATERS OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE FESTIVE FUN DAY

Saturday 2 December 2023 10am to 3pm

Kick off the festive season
with outdoor fun for all ages.



Activities include:

Archery, Campfire, Sailing, Crafts,
High Ropes and lots more!

Early bird offer,
book by Friday 24 November

Under 6free
Age 6 to 17 years£11
Age 18+£15
Family ticket£45
(2 adults and 2 under 18s)	

From Saturday 25 November
prices will be

Under 6free
Age 6 to 17 years£14
Age 18+£18
Family ticket£55
(2 adults and 2 under 18s)	

Cost of entry includes unlimited
access to all available activities.

Web: thurrock.gov.uk/grangewaters
Email: grangewaters@thurrock.gov.uk
@Grangewaters

To book your tickets call:
01708 855 228

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