

January 26

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2026, and I hope it is a happy and healthy one for you all.

The children settled back well after the festive break and we look forward to lots of exciting learning that the teachers have planned for Term 3.



I am going to start with something very exciting that happened last week. I am delighted to share with you a letter received from Bridget Phillipson, the Secretary of State for Education, congratulating the school on our fantastic results for disadvantaged pupils. I am very proud of all our staff, governors, pupils and families as this was achieved through all of us working together – **together we are always stronger!**

Term 3 has already seen lots of exciting learning experiences for our pupils and we have many more planned, including: a science event organised by The Festival of Tomorrow, an author visit, a pentathlon event, various sporting activities both within the school and as part of inter-school tournaments, and online safety workshops. If your child has taken part in any of these events, please do speak with them about it when they get home so that they can share their knowledge with you and share their learning experiences too.

I am sure you are aware that we have had a focus on improving oracy across the school and to support the children with this we have introduced Show and Tell, class assemblies and different public speaking opportunities for our children. I am sure that those of you who have attended your child's class assembly recently will have been so impressed with how confidently the children speak and address the audience. I would just like to say a huge well done to all of our pupils who are showing how amazing they are 😊



Please remember to check your child's class page on our website for information on what is being taught this term, and please do support your child with this learning at home. If you haven't already joined the local library, why not make this the year to do it? They offer a wonderful range of resources including books, magazines, DVDs, computing facilities and story sessions. It's a wonderful facility and in these damp and dreary days when it is difficult to get outside, it can be a lovely way to while away an hour or two. <https://www.swindon.gov.uk/libraries>.

I would just like to remind everyone who might be having a difficult time maybe through illness, loss or the break-up of a relationship, that we are here to support your child(ren) during what might be a difficult time. Whilst I know it can be upsetting to come in and speak about such issues, it does mean that we can support your children during a difficult time whilst they are trying to understand changes that are happening within the family home. Please be assured that I am always here for you to speak to and to offer support both to yourself and your child(ren).

Thank you as always for your ongoing support – together we can achieve great things!

Mrs Dowdeswell

Dear Lord,

We entrust our plans, dreams, and aspirations for the coming year into Your hands, O Lord. May everything we do be guided by Your will and directed towards Your glory. Help us to be a source of love, compassion, and encouragement to those around us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



Learn, Grow, Love, Live

January 26

A message from Bridget Phillipson



Dear Samantha,

Congratulations to you and your team on the excellent outcomes the disadvantaged pupils at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School achieved at the end of the 2024/25 academic year. Your school's performance places it among the very best nationally, and this is a significant achievement.

This success reflects the dedication of your staff and the hard work of your pupils. It shows what can be achieved when ambition and commitment come together. Thank you for everything you do to give children the best possible opportunities to succeed.

Your school's achievements demonstrate what is possible, and I hope you will continue to share your experience and best practice with others. Even the strongest schools can go further. We encourage you to lead the way as a system leader - sharing effective practice, championing networks, supporting collaboration, and helping raise standards across the sector.

There are real opportunities available for you to support improvement for a wider group of pupils including through:

- engaging actively with [your region's RISE networks](#) and partnering with nearby schools and trusts;
- contributing to regional roundtables and professional communities to spread the approaches that are working in your context; and
- sustaining excellence by continuing to focus on disadvantaged pupils

Please pass on my thanks and congratulations to your staff and pupils. I look forward to working with you as we strive together to raise standards for all.

Your sincerely,



Bridget Phillipson
Secretary of State for Education

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RE
Our Catholic Social Teaching principle for this term is Subsidiarity and here is a prayer to share within your family.

Loving God,
We believe that people who make
decisions should listen to everyone.
Help us make sure everyone is
treated fairly and can have a say.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer



Everyone should have a say
Subsidiarity

The pupils from KS2 continue to take turns in attending the 9:15am public Mass on Thursdays at Holy Rood Church, Groundwell Road. The children really enjoy joining with the community for this service and the congregation regularly comment on the excellent behaviour of the children and say how much they enjoy having them there. If any of our families would like to accompany the children as they walk to church, and then stay to attend the Mass with them, please do speak to the class teacher.

Christmas Fayre

Well, what can I say – a fantastic time was had by all and I would like to offer my thanks to all the staff who worked so hard to give our families an excellent start to the festive period. Special mention must go to Father Christmas who came to visit the children in his grotto – what a lovely surprise! Thank you to all those who volunteered to help on the day and those who made samosas and cakes etc for us to sell – my goodness, they sold very quickly and were completely delicious! Well done to all those who won hampers or prizes and thank you to everyone who came along to support the event. A total of £2,500 was raised through this event which shall be put to excellent use in purchasing resources for the children of our school.



Nativity Performances

I hope you all enjoyed your child's Nativity performance and thank you to all those parents who were able to attend either at the church or at school. We received so many complimentary messages on the performance of the children and I have to agree that they did brilliantly to remember their lines and the songs – it truly was wonderful! Thank you also to all those who donated to the Nativity performance fund. I am delighted to tell you that we raised £584 and this money is being spent on new books for our classrooms and libraries 😊

Chaplaincy



Congratulations to our chaplains who attended the Mass at Clifton Cathedral led by Bishop Bosco. To attend Mass at the Cathedral is always a special and memorable occasion and the children really enjoyed the experience.

Thank you to Mrs Serratore and Mrs Braganza for running the Chaplaincy Club and accompanying the children on these events.

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Weymss Lodge

During the last week of Term 2, our school choir and our chaplains visited Weymss Lodge Nursing Home to sing for the residents and to deliver Christmas cards that our pupils had made. The lovely residents enjoyed singing along with the children and were so grateful for the cards they received. This reminded our children that it is so important to think of others and to share happiness, at every time of the year, whenever and wherever we can. Every child in the school made a card for both the residents and staff at the home and the children who attended were an absolute credit to the school.



The Harbour Project

Thank you to Emma and Hadiza who came to visit the school from the Harbour Project. The children learnt all about the charity and how they raise money to support people who need help. The children made hearts of hope which will be displayed at the Harbour. One child hoped for 'all the extinct animals to come back to life' – what a wonderful wish to have had.

Mini Police



Mini Police is a fantastic opportunity provided by our local police force for children to learn more about the excellent job the police do within our communities. Some of the students of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School recently enjoyed a mini police session with the PCSOs where they learnt about police equipment, vehicles, the phonetic alphabet and practised radio use.



Attendance

Hopefully, this newsletter shows you how hard the staff of this school work to provide your children with a high-quality education. To fully benefit from this, your child needs to be in school and arrive on time. I am so pleased to say that we have seen a real improvement in children turning up to school on time and I wish to thank all those families who ensure their children are in class ready to start their lessons at 8:45am. It makes such a difference for all children to be ready to start together – thank you so much.

Please remember that the DfE changed the guidance on absence and lateness and introduced a new charging structure. Details concerning attendance can be found here:

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20032/schools_and_education/1275/school_attendance

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Year 5 Swimming Lessons

How exciting that swimming lessons have started for the children in Year 5! Swimming is an essential life skill and we are delighted to be able to offer these lessons to our pupils.

Aspen Class

Thursday 8th January 2026 until Thursday 19th March 2026 9:30 – 10:30

Alder Class

Thursday 8th January 2026 until Thursday 19th March 2026 10:30 – 11:30

All children in year 5 will be included in these lessons and will need to bring a small plastic bag containing:

- swimming kit (one-piece swimming costume for girls please);
- towel;
- hairbrush;
- swim hat.

All children with long hair must have their hair tied back and it is advisable for girls not to wear tights on the swimming days as these can slow down dressing/undressing.



Sport

Football Tournament Success



Our team had a fantastic morning at a football tournament, finishing unbeaten in all their matches. The children showed excellent teamwork, behaved impeccably, and most importantly, had lots of fun. Well done to everyone involved—amazing teamwork and excellent sportsmanship.

Hockey Success



Well done also to our hockey team who played so well in a recent inter-school hockey tournament.

The HCCPS team played really well, especially in the last two games – well done all involved!

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Year 5 – DT Cooking Workshop



Linked to their history topic on Benin, Year 5 recently took part in an exciting DT lesson where they cooked delicious jollof rice. The children thoroughly enjoyed the learning experience and worked enthusiastically throughout the session. They developed a range of valuable skills, including measuring ingredients, following a recipe, working safely and hygienically, and working effectively as part of a team. A huge thank you to those parents who generously gave their time to help with the cooking sessions; it made such a difference to our children who really benefitted from your help.

The end result was a tasty success, and Year 5 learnt a great deal along the way.

Year 6 Junior Literacy Festival



“Earlier this term, Year 6 visited St Joseph’s to meet the author Gareth P. Jones. We were delighted to meet him, as he is a truly funny and creative writer - and also a musician. He shared how one of his teachers inspired him to become an author. At the end of the visit, we had the opportunity to buy some of his books, which he kindly signed for us.”

Benzema and Pearson, Year 6

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Governors of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

I am delighted to introduce you to some of our most recent school governors. As headteacher, I am so privileged to work with our governors. They are an amazing bunch of people who work tirelessly for the pupils of Holy Cross Catholic School.

Vanessa Fernandes

I am a Parent Governor at Holy Cross School. I currently work in a bank and bring several years of experience in the banking and financial sector. I also support many vulnerable customers, which has deepened my empathy and strengthened my commitment to helping others.

As a parent to two young girls, I am passionate about fostering an inclusive and nurturing school environment where every child feels valued, seen, and empowered to reach their full potential academically, emotionally, and spiritually. During my GCSE years at Kingsley Academy in Hounslow, I formed a peer-support group for students facing language barriers in English and Maths. That early experience shaped my belief in the power of encouragement and community and continues to inspire me.

I love celebrating Catholic and various festivals, as they are a beautiful way to honour our faith. I truly believe children are a perfect gift from the Lord, each with unique potential and purpose. With the right support, there's no limit to what they can achieve. Outside of work, my hobbies include swimming, dancing, writing articles, and cooking that also help me connect with children in joyful and meaningful ways.

It's a privilege to have been elected as a Parent Governor and contribute positively to the ongoing success of our school.



Maria Barreto e Fernandes

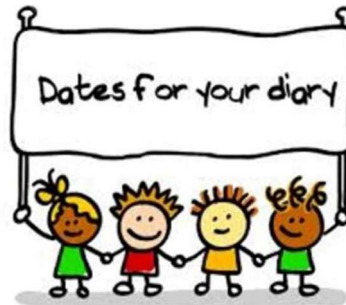
I am a Foundation Governor and joined the board from October 2025. I am passionate about educating the children and supporting them in their learning journey to build confidence and achieve to the best of their ability.

I have been teaching Mathematics and Science in secondary schools since 1992 in India. When I came to England, I have carried out different roles like Teaching Assistant, Higher Level Teaching Assistant, Senior Learning Manager and Mathematics Teacher in secondary schools. Presently, I am teaching in a Catholic School, and I enjoy being the part of the Catholic Community teaching students from various backgrounds. I am eager to share my experiences and values with our community.

I enjoy singing and I was a member of Holy Family Church Choir. I believe by singing we praise God twice. I love to be in nature and so I spend my holidays hiking, travelling and knowing about diverse cultures.



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Mon 26th Jan
Mon 2nd Feb
Tues 3rd Feb
Weds 4th Feb
Weds 4th Feb
Mon 9th Feb
Thurs 5th Feb
Fri 6th Feb
Tue 10th Feb
Wed 11th Feb
16th – 22nd February
Weds 25th Feb
Thurs 5th March
Mon 9th March
Mon 9th March
Fri 13th March
Tues 17th March
Thurs 19th March
Tues 24th March
Thurs 26th March
Thurs 26th March
Fri 27th March

National Storytelling Week
Pentathlon Challenge
PCSO coming in to speak to children in EYFS
Y6 parents KS2 SATs information session
Festival of Tomorrow No Nonsense Science Workshop
Dance Festival at The Wyvern Theatre
Year 6 Literacy Festival
NSPCC Number Day
Safer Internet Day
Wind Instrument Roadshow
HALF TERM
Reconciliation Service
World Book Day
STFC sessions with Y4,5,6
Y1 walk to Queen's Park
Y1 trip to STEAM
Parents' Evening and Book Fair
Parents' Evening and Book Fair
Lent March
Easter Egg Hunt
Easter celebration in school
TD Day – school closed to all pupils.



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Cultural Capital

Definition of cultural capital:

- The values, knowledge or ideas that parents can pass on to their children, which can then influence their success at school and later in life.

In school, we work hard to give the children as many first-hand experiences as we can; however, we would love for the children to experience more. The term 'cultural capital' refers to the real-life experiences children have with their families, and these experiences have been proved time and again to have a huge impact on a child's learning. Here are some ideas of places to visit in and around Swindon which you might enjoy with your child(ren):

Lydiard Park



Lydiard Park is a wonderful place to spend a few hours and provides lots of space for children to run around, play football or walk amongst the trees. There is a play park that will help the children burn off their energy and a couple of cafes where you can buy drinks and snacks. Other than the cost of parking, Lydiard Park is free. More information can be found here: <https://www.lydiardpark.org.uk/>



Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



An amazing museum that is free to visit – we are incredibly lucky to have this so close to Swindon. Oxford can be easily reached by car, bus or train and the museum is right in the centre and so easy to find. The museum is extremely popular and can get very busy; therefore, they recommend you book tickets in advance to guarantee entry. Their One World Family Festival is on over half term. Well worth a visit at any time of the year.

<https://www.ashmolean.org/>.

Lechlade



Lechlade is a short drive outside Swindon and is a very picturesque place to visit. You can walk along the Thames Path to St John's Lock and watch the boats go through one of the shallowest locks on the river. The Lock Keeper is often there and will happily explain how the lock works whilst you watch the water levels rise and fall. The lock is named after a priory dedicated to St John the Baptist and is home to 'Father Thames',

the famous statue made in 1851 for the Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace at Hyde Park. If it has been raining, it can often be a little muddy and so wellington boots are a good idea.



I hope you manage to visit one or more of these places as a family 😊

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Holy Cross Catholic Primary School



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At Holy Cross we are committed to ensuring that your child's time at school is inspiring and productive so they move confidently through each stage of their education.

We are a happy and inclusive school with a friendly, loving and caring community.

We work closely with parents, children, governors, staff and the church community to ensure that each child is given the best possible start on their educational journey.

We provide amazing facilities:

- *An exciting Early Years environment to stimulate curiosity and excitement to learn
- *Fresh healthy hot meals cooked on site daily
- *Wrap around care with an early morning Breakfast Club and After School Club
- *Many after school clubs – chess, football, Lego, sewing, art, dance, Chaplaincy
- *Outdoor climbing frames
- *Large and small school hall for sports and gatherings
- *Two well-resourced libraries
- *Large school field
- *Swimming lessons
- *Specialist sports coaching
- *Private music lessons – piano, guitar, drums and violin
- *Opportunities for children to lead through our Chaplaincy and School Council teams
- *Learning bays attached to each class to support group and independent study outside the classroom



Visits to our school are warmly welcomed. Please contact the school office to arrange.



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