



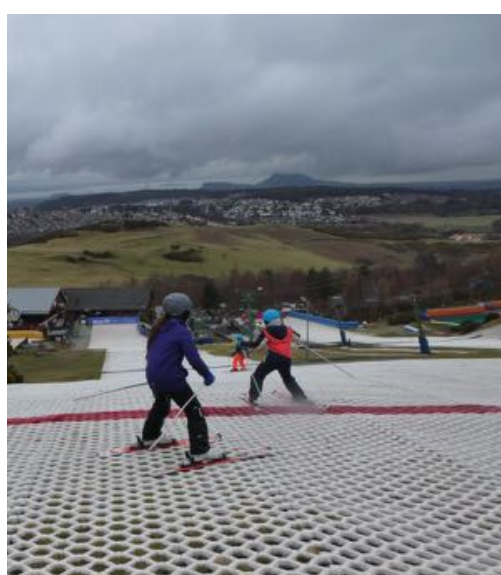
# ST STEPHEN'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

*Word of God, Guide our steps and lead us in learning.*

SPREAD THE WORD



Inside this issue.....	What happens on a teacher training day?
Residential visits to Stratford and Glenshee	Meet the teacher
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**Welcome** to the Spring edition of 'Spread the Word.' As always, when putting this magazine together, we find it amazing just how much goes on in our school across a term. From visits out to visitors in school, the extra curricular activities and clubs which enhance the curriculum and the learning experiences our pupils are engaged in is truly remarkable. I hope you enjoy this edition which contains some special reports on teacher training days and a very interesting look at the poverty proofing audit we carried out with the help of Children North East.

It may or may not have escaped you but the current climate around school funding is now becoming quite worrying. Schools everywhere are faced with making difficult decisions around staffing, resources and services and here at St Stephen's we are no different. This is a massive blow for for us and, more importantly, for our children. In political circles the government claim there is more money being put into education than ever. In actual pounds and pence this is probably true. However, in the last few years we've seen more money go to Free School projects and academy chains and it must be remembered that the school population has risen significantly. Therefore, in real terms, mainstream schools have never been so poor. Schools North East, a group set up to reprint the needs and interests of local schools recognise this and have launched a campaign which I urge you to look at and get behind. The school funding crisis is affecting your children and their right to an education that is properly staffed and resourced. Please check out [www.schoolsnortheast.org](http://www.schoolsnortheast.org) for more information. In the meantime, please enjoy looking back at the Spring term in our school.





# EXPLORE 4 ALL



## Skiing trip to Glenshee March 2019



You may remember reading about the Year 6 ski club starting in the last article of Spread the Word. Since then, the children have continued to attend Silksworth dry ski slope each Tuesday and have really perfected their skills and become competent skiers. As a result, a trip to Glenshee in Scotland was organised to give the children the opportunity to ski on real snow. Unfortunately, when March came round, Glenshee experienced one of the warmest winters in 70 years and there was no snow to be seen! Year 6 weren't going to let this stop their fun though and still had a fantastic trip away.

We set off in our school minibus on a Sunday morning in early March and made our way up to Berwick for our first stop. The children had a great time exploring the local park and showing off the tricks they could do on the trampoline. We drove a little further and stopped for lunch just past the Scottish border - the children were excited now to officially be in Scotland! The rest of the drive was filled with beautiful scenery but still no snow on those mountains! (We were all secretly hoping for a miracle avalanche!) We arrived in time to settle into



the hostel and dormitories before heading out for a fish and chip supper, although the majority of the group opted for chicken nuggets. It wouldn't have been an Explore4All trip without Kev's quiz so after dinner, we learned about some new quiz rules including the 'transfer window' where you can swap team members for points. There was a frenzy when the transfer window opened which was after all of the questions had been answered anyway!



After a good night's sleep, we were up for Kev's gourmet breakfast. This would set the group up for a day of outdoor activities at Gulabin Lodge. Not only was there cereal and toast on the menu but bacon sandwiches too! Gulabin Lodge was only a short drive away and promised a lot of adventure and fun. The first activity was perhaps one of the scariest – climbing up a very tall pole to a tiny platform balancing on the top. It was so impressive how easy the children made it look, darting straight to the top, that even Mr Fallon and Miss Celardi had a go. Other

activities that morning included the 'Leap of Faith'; an obstacle course comprising of ladders and thin beams to walk across; and the swinging scramble net. After an adrenaline pumping morning, it was time for a spot of lunch – another gourmet meal provided by Kev. In the afternoon, the children had a go at archery and a crate climb. Katie managed to stand on the most crates without falling – an incredible 12 and she was steady on her feet with every climb. After a day outside in the lovely Scottish weather, it was safe to say we were ready for a hot



chocolate stop to warm up before returning to the hostel for lasagne tea and an early night ready for another jam-packed day.

It was an early start on Tuesday morning and another gourmet breakfast was on the cards (sausage sandwiches today). We departed the hostel just after 8am and headed for Edinburgh's snowsports centre (Midlothian Snowsports Centre, Hillend) which hosts the biggest dry slope in Europe. The children had an hour and a half lesson with a ski instructor before lunch then another hour and a half in the afternoon. The tuition that they have been having at Silksworth has definitely paid off and the instructors were not only really impressed by what they could do but also commented on how enjoyable it was to work with them for the day. The children tackled some really steep slopes and longer runs than what they have been used to and even managed to add jumps to their turns. It might not have been snow but it was definitely a great opportunity to further improve their skiing. Sadly, our trip had come to an end and we made our way home from Edinburgh squeezing in a trip to McDonald's on our journey back to school.

We are incredibly proud of all of the Year 6 ski club not only for their conduct on the trip and for making it such an enjoyable experience but for their perseverance to try new things and to acquire a skill that doesn't always come easily. With every fall, the children have got up and tried again and it was striking to see how much their efforts have paid off at our day on Edinburgh's dry slope. We are delighted to hear that the children will be carrying on practising their skiing and that their families are encouraging them to keep up the skill. We are looking into organising a trip to an indoor ski slope in the summer term that will allow the children to have a go skiing on real snow at last! Watch this space....



## A day in the life of Early Years.....

Our day begins with a welcome and we gather to register and pray together. Immediately after prayers and registration, we all have 'Funky Phonics'. During which we play games and do tasks to learn about letters and their sounds to help us to begin to read and write words.

In Nursery, phonics is about encouraging the children to listen and distinguish between sounds in the environment and eventually in letters and words.

I like to do 'choosey'. I like colouring and writing.



Recently in maths, the children in Reception really enjoyed learning a rap to help them know double numbers. They wore shades and caps to be extra 'cool'.



I like counting to ten.

In Reception, the children begin to learn letter sounds and use these to begin to read and write. For all small group directed tasks both Nursery and Reception stay in their own partitioned areas.

Daily in literacy, we follow 'Talk for Writing' and link much of our learning around a book linked to a topic. This term we have worked on 'Whatever Next' and 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'. The children participate in reciting a story from beginning to end with actions to help and the new vocabulary in the story is explored. The children then complete set tasks to gain a deeper understanding of how stories are structured.

Learning through play with songs, props and games, supports the children to understand the concepts in maths developing number and shape awareness.





Nursery children participate daily in physical activity time, in which games are played, often linked with other areas of learning such as maths.



Each week both Nursery and Reception visit the computing room, where they have access to use a computer to play games, paint pictures, and use the internet to research topic related information.

Each day the children have opportunities to actively engage in child initiated learning (Choosy Time) when the classroom becomes an

area that they can move freely through, both indoors and outdoors, in order to take the lead in their own learning. They have opportunities to choose where they wish to play; select their required resources and with whom they want to do this. If the children show a particular interest in something, then opportunities are created to facilitate and extend this through their play .

For Reception, a superhero challenge system has been introduced to encourage the children to independently apply new knowledge and skill that they have acquired in teacher directed tasks. On completion of a set task, they are rewarded with a coloured 'power stick'. If they collect more than two sticks in a week, then they can have some superhero golden time on a Friday afternoon.

I like Metal Mike and sounding out.



I like doing the doubles rap because it helps you know the numbers.





# EXPLORE 4 ALL

## Year 5 visit to Stratford, the birthplace of William Shakespeare AND Harry Potter World







Earlier in the term, Year 5 went off to Stratford to take part in some drama workshops with the RSC. (Royal Shakespeare Company) This work supported learning in English and History as, not only did they get to work with staff from the RSC, they also took a guided tour of Stratford with 'William Shakespeare' himself. As an additional piece of work around authors, the group also visited Harry Potter World as part of their study of J.K.Rowling. As you can see from the photos, the children had a fabulous time, were superbly behaved and, as always, are a credit to our school. A big thank you to the staff at Explore4Aall who helped us plan this visit.







# SPORTS NEWS

It's been relatively quiet term for sport in school with the winter months and dark evenings putting a hold on the normal football fixtures and other outdoor activities. Nevertheless, we have had some success with Year 1 and 2 children proving to be fabulous ambassadors in the North Tyneside Skipping Festival.

The decision to change swimming provision has been fully justified when looking at how much progress the children have made. Originally, lessons were for half an hour each week over a series of about 8 weeks. However, this really didn't help children gain momentum in their lessons and slowed their progress. However, by changing to one hour per day for two weeks, we have noticed quite remarkable improvements and progress. By the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6), children need to be able to swim at least 25m. Under the old approach we would have been lucky to see just over half of pupils achieve this, yet with the new arrangements, almost 75% of pupils participating are near this milestone. Given that the two groups attending have been Year 3 and 4, we're well on the way to ensuring our children can swim the required 25m. Well done everyone!



## Skiing

Our ski club continued right up until our trip to Glenshee. The progress the children have made since taking their first tentative steps in ski boots at Silksworth has been astounding.

They are all now very competent in skiing and it has been really encouraging that many of them have taken to going skiing at Silksworth with their families. Our challenge, going forward, is to explore ways in which we can continue to offer skiing as an activity in school. It was disappointing that the snow conditions meant we were unable to ski on real snow but.....who knows what we might plan in the summer term!



## Bikeability

This term, Year 3 and 4 have had the opportunity to take part in a full day of cycle safety training. The children were keen to demonstrate their skills on the bike, as well as learn more about the world of cycle safety. The training included a variety of elements, however the primary focus was improving cycle skills. Over the course of the day, Year 3 developed basic balance and control skills, as well as learning how to mount and dismount a bike safely. In addition to this, pupils in Year 4 were introduced to dealing with hazards in the road and more specifically how to react appropriately and safely. Another core skill pupils developed was signalling and turning sharp corners. The children successfully completed the training, raised their awareness of cycle proficiency and also had a great deal of fun too! We will welcome the Bikeability team again next year, where we will see more children benefit from this fantastic opportunity.

## Netball



This term also welcomed the first netball league fixtures held at Blue Flames Leisure Centre. The team was made up of both boys and girls from Year 5 and 6, who were selected following a trial.

The children performed brilliantly in the first round of fixtures dominating all the games. However, despite their dominance, our team were punished for not taking their chances, drawing one game, 0-0 and losing the other two games, 2-0 and 1-0 respectively.

The next round of fixtures were played two weeks later. The children used this time to practise their shooting during dinnertimes. This practise paid dividends with the children

finally finding their clinical edge, resulting in the children winning all three games comfortably with goals coming from Lukas, Sophie, and Isabella.

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## NSPCC WORKSHOPS

Earlier this term, our Year 5 and Year 6 pupils took part in a workshop conducted by the NSPCC. As part of this, children learnt to understand what forms of contact are appropriate from an adult and what would be considered as inappropriate. They also learnt how to identify the different types of abuse. During the session, children watched a series of animated videos about children who had a specific problem. For example, one video showed a boy who was often on his own at home. He was wearing dirty clothes and at one point was searching the kitchen cupboards for food to eat. Our Year 6 children spotted the signs of neglect and discussed how this could affect the young boy. After each video, pupils worked in groups to decide on a possible solution to the problem.



The NSPCC staff were very impressed with the level of maturity and understanding our pupils displayed. Children were able to explain the importance of talking to a trusted adult about a problem that they may have at home or at school. Each pupil created a list of adults who they felt they could confide in, including family and staff from school. Following this, pupils created their own fortune teller that asked them questions based on what they had learnt during the workshop. Pupils also discovered that if they ever have a problem and feel they cannot talk to somebody they know about it, they can call Childline at any time on 0800 11 11 and talk to an advisor.





## Transition visit from St Mary's High School



Danielle Largue, Assistant Head Teacher, at St. Mary's High School, visited Year 6 pupils, on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> February, to discuss transition days as well as life generally, at St. Mary's. In anticipation of Miss Largue's visit, pupils devised a range of questions including: 'How will we find our way around?'; 'How does the lunchtime system work?'; to 'Who will be in my tutor group?'

Miss Largue explained that each subject area has its own corridor, and stems off the main atrium – apparently there is little scope for pupils to get lost! We found out that the library is ticketed and pupils need to get a library pass to enter at playtime or lunchtimes. Also, we learnt that Year 7 have a slightly earlier finishing time than everybody else in school, to ensure that they get home safely and so the nearby roads and metros aren't too overcrowded. Pupils were also eager to hear about each subject department having its own extra-curricular activity and it was great to hear that our friends in Year 7 are having a good time too!

We then heard that there were likely to be two transition days between now and the end of term and that it would give everybody an opportunity to become familiar with the school and its layout. We can't wait for pupils in Year 7 to show us around in June! We were also told that St. Mary's offer mini-retreats to the Diocesan Emmaus Youth Village, at Allensford. Our skiers were particularly delighted to learn that St. Mary's often offer a ski-trip to the Alps. Additionally, adventurous activities are on the agenda and students can visit places like Kielder Reservoir and the Lake District: it all sounds very exciting!

Pupils had so many questions for Miss Largue that she spent nearly two hours with us! Year 6 would like to thank Miss Largue for her time. For those of us embarking on the next step of our journey at St. Mary's in September – we cannot wait to see what lies ahead.

## Reading Recovery - a celebration.....

Children in Year 1, who have accessed Reading Recovery, invited their parents in for an afternoon tea earlier this term. This was part of a month long celebration of how they have developed their reading skills and, more importantly, their enthusiasm for reading. The children baked the cakes and cookies after using their reading and writing skills to devise the instructions to follow. Everyone enjoyed the occasion, particularly the sharing of stories between children and adults.



## Teacher Training days..... (they're not days off school!)

The mention of a teacher training day is often met with disdain, puzzlement or disbelief in that 'they're (the teachers) having another day holiday.' Well hopefully the following article will go some way to explain that teacher training, or INSET days, are anything but a holiday or a Christmas shopping day!

By law, all state schools must devote five days per year to staff development on top of the statutory 190 days of schooling. These five days of training are usually taken as three whole days and the remaining two days broken up into evening sessions after school. The world of education is constantly evolving through government policy changes, reactions to national and international research and also the

changing needs of society. Therefore, schools have a huge task of ensuring that the learning and curriculum provision is fit for purpose and that teachers own professional development enables them to contribute to the ever changing and evolving system. The only way to do this is through professional development. I'd imagine that in all professions, there is a degree of ongoing training required. I have no doubt that doctors and health professionals will take a keen interest in latest medical research in order to enhance their work. In the engineering industry, it is inconceivable to think that employees and employers will not try to access the latest methods and thinking in order to deliver the most modern and efficient projects. Technicians and mechanics in the motor industry will almost certainly have to keep up to speed with the rapid modernisation of engine technology, electric and hybrid vehicles. If the people mentioned above don't ensure personal and professional development they will simply be left behind and their work obsolete or failing to meet the needs of clients. Teaching is no different! If we are to deliver learning fit for consumption in the 21st century, it is imperative that we have a healthy view of learning and staff development. As such, training days at St Stephen's are extremely valuable.

On Friday 5th April, school is closed for one of these days. All our staff will gather, with staff from all of the other North Tyneside Catholic schools, for a conference being led by Professor John Lydon who is travelling to the North East from St Mary's University, London. We also be joined by a senior HMI for Religious Education, Mark Evans. The day will see teachers listen to talks and presentations around the distinctive curriculum and nature of catholic schools. Following this, they will engage in discussion, reflections and evaluation in order to establish how they can improve personally and also how we, collectively, can implement new ideas to help improve our school. The days, although quite long, are very enjoyable and a timely opportunity to reflect on our work, our strengths and what we need to do in order to bring about improvement.

In May, we will be welcoming Mr Robert Carpenter, a CEO of a multi-academy trust (The Inspire Partnership) in South East London, who will be discussing curriculum design for the 21st century as well as effective school communities. These high calibre speakers help ensure that we, the staff at St Stephen's, are keeping our knowledge and thinking up to date with the latest educational thinking. In turn, this is applied to our work in school so that the real beneficiaries are our children.

Watch out for the tweets on Friday and you'll see the teachers going 'back to school' for a day of learning with our colleagues across the North Tyneside Catholic schools when we explore.....

*The Intent of a Catholic Curriculum - A day of reflection on the main themes and challenges of creating a distinctive Catholic Curriculum for our children, which will serve them both now and in the future.*

*So, Teacher training days at St Stephen's are anything but a 'day off,' instead they're exactly what they say they are, a day of training and development.*





## Meet the Staff - Mr Fallon.....

**Nickname:** Not got one, friends just call me Fallon or leftie.....when they're being nice!

**Born:** Newcastle Upon Tyne

**Family:** Married with two daughters, one in Year 9 and one in Year 6

**Education:** University of London BA(Ed) Hons Education and Physical Education

**Favourite food:** Steak and chips

**Favourite book:** Oooh!!! Tough one, I have a mild obsession with Irish history (last count over 70 books), favourite one is probably 'Presumed Innocent' by Gerry Conlon. Also enjoy books on faith, favourite one read recently was '10,000 Reasons: Stories of Faith, Hope, and Thankfulness' by Matt Redmon - brilliant book, you must read it!

**Favourite film:** Not really into films but ..... 'The Way' a film about walking The Camino de Santiago, or 'In the Name of the Father' the film version of my favourite book.

**Favourite holiday destination:** Skiing in France

**Favourite subject at school:** Physical Education and History

**Proudest moment:** Becoming a teacher (all those years ago) and then becoming a Dad!

**Biggest inspiration:** My family and the children in our school.

**If you didn't work at Stephen's, what would you do?** If I wasn't a teacher I'd probably have been a plumber like my Dad was, I think that's what he wanted me to be. When I was younger I wanted to be a footballer but that went out of the window by the time I was fifteen! Nowadays..... I'd like to be a politician....can't believe I said that.....

**What would you sing at Karaoke?** Have you heard my singing??? ok then....The Fields of Athenry or Piano Man by Billy Joel.

**Two pet dislikes:** Rude aggressive people and average speed cameras.

**McDonald's or Burger King?** Neither, much prefer Greggs!

**Dog or Cat?** Dog.

**Newcastle or Sunderland?** Oh Come on..... Had a season ticket at Newcastle since Ossie Ardiles was manager back in 1992. Also have a massive soft spot for Celtic, I had a season ticket there for 4 years...then I got married!

**What's the most daring thing you've done?** Stood in the Fulwell end of the old Roker Park to see Newcastle play, thankfully we got moved out after about ten minutes.

**Biggest fear?** Michael Gove becoming Prime Minister!

**Tell us a joke....** Did you hear the one about a football team in Sunderl.....oops can't tell that one!! Ahem, ok,  
Q: What goes tick-tock and woof-woof?  
A: A watchdog



# Music News

## School Choir

We have exciting news! The reputation of our highly regarded and acclaimed school choir rapidly spread, and as such, they were invited to sing with seventy members of the Newcastle Choral Society, in a performance of 'Carmina Burana' (written by Carl Orff), on **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March** at the **Banqueting Suite at Newcastle Civic Centre, at 7:30pm**. Many of you will be familiar with 'O Fortuna' (used on X Factor – one of the most widely heard classical pieces), which comes from one of the movements.

The choir were excited to perform three pieces with the Newcastle Choral Society called: 'I believe in the sun' – written for first inaugural Holocaust Memorial Day, by Howard Goodall. The lyrics: 'I believe in the sun, though it is late in rising. I believe in love, though it is absent. I believe in God, though he is silent.', were found written as graffiti in a cell wall in Cologne, where Jews had been found hiding before deportation to a concentration camp, in 1941. Pupils from Year 5 sang in a small group alongside pupils from St. Godric's RC Primary School, Durham, to introduce the main melody of the song to the audience.

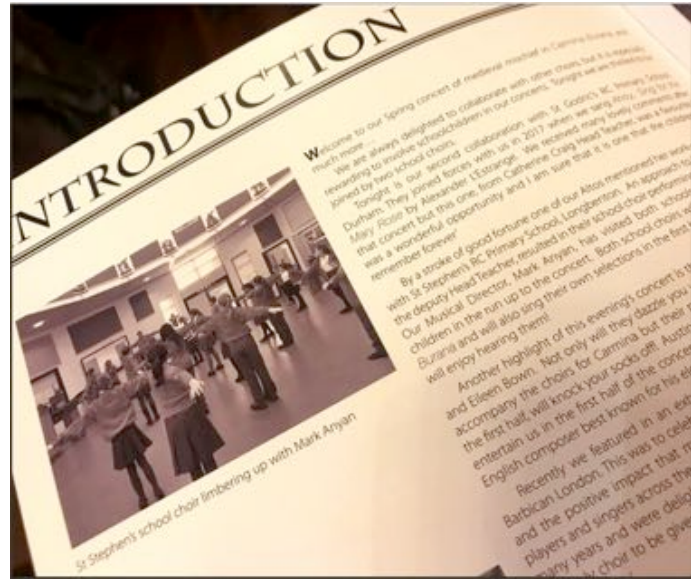
Our choir also accompanied the Choral Society in Carmina Burana in two pieces: Tempus est locundum and Cour D'amours, with very staccato Germanic-Latin pronunciation, which they had been practising regularly - during rehearsals.

In addition to the pieces with the Choral Society, we also sang three pieces of our own including: some old, some modern and something new. We started off our suite of pieces by singing: 'Riptide' by Vance Joy, with Carly Scott, Olivia Lowery and Martha Rodgers singing solo sections. The next piece was a well-known Rodger and Hammerstein Classic: 'The Lonely Goatherd' – with Bella Gutteridge singing solo. To conclude our set, the final piece was one selected to fit with the 'Latin' theme of the evening and was written by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in 1791. 'Ave Verum Corpus' is a short Eucharistic chant meaning 'Hail true body', and is only fort-six bars long and was composed six months before his death.

St. Stephen's would like to say a huge thank you to Newcastle Choral Society's Musical Director - Mark Anyan – who eagerly rehearsed with us in school, prior to the performance. Mark is a hugely talented musician and heads up the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain.

### ***In his own words:***

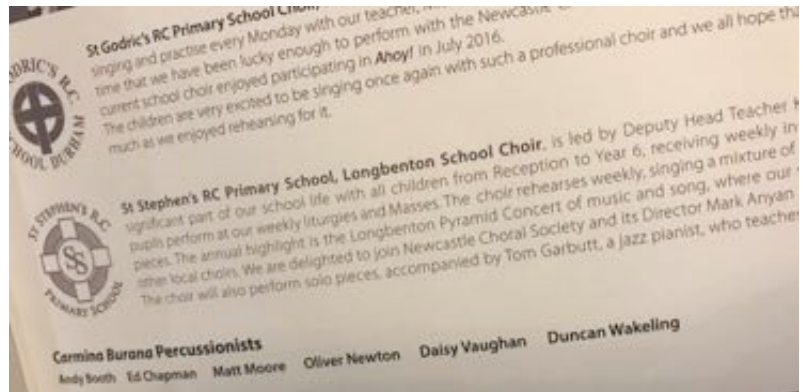
"I've been involved in music for as long as I can remember, initially as a pianist and trumpeter (and tuba player) before switching to voice whilst at Huddersfield University. It was there that I was introduced to the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain, becoming a member of the National Youth Choir and the Chamber Choir before moving 'upstairs' to become the Choir





Administrator, eventually moving to my current role of General Manager. Alongside my work with NYCGB I have always worked as a freelance musician. As a conductor, I have been Musical Director for the Huddersfield Choral Society Youth Choir, the Michaelmas Singers and Durham Cathedral Young Singers, and I currently hold the posts of Musical Director for Newcastle Choral Society and the Quay Lasses at Sage Gateshead. As a singer, I have been a singing teacher for Cheshire Music Service and Durham County Music Service and continue to sing as a tenor soloist for choral societies and ensembles in the North East."

We would also like to thank Mr Garbutt, our piano teacher, formally, for rehearsing with us and performing with us on the evening. Every pupil sang fantastically and has shown total dedication and commitment to our rehearsals, which have often taken place 3 times a week! We must also say thank you to our parents, who bought tickets and transported pupils to and from the event.



**Comments from the evening included:**

Dear Mrs Swaddle,

Thank you very much for bringing the choir to sing last night, they were marvellous and it was a real pleasure to work with them. Please do pass on my thanks to them - they should be very proud of their achievement. I have received lots of lovely feedback from many of our regular concert goers who commented on how much their contribution brought to the concert. Thanks also to you for all the time you have put into the project, it was greatly appreciated.

I hope all the children manage to recover today and aren't too tired tomorrow!!

Many thanks again,

Mark.

St. Stephen's - it was such a pleasure yesterday! Your pupils behaved immaculately and did your schools proud! It was a long day for them so I hope they had a lie in today!

We've had some great comments both by email and on the way out! Mainly the 'Carmina was amazing, a 'tour de force' and the children's input to the whole concert, brilliant'

So, we look forward to the next time! I know Mark enjoys his sessions with the children and it's such a benefit for them in their young lives! The stuff of memories! We saw at least two of the children looking totally awestruck at the flying fingers of our brilliant pianists.

Enjoy the rest of this term, you will be looking forward to the Easter break, as are we!

All the very best to you

Charmian Marshall (from the Newcastle Choral Society)

A message to the choirs of St. Stephen's and St. Godric's RC Primary Schools.

A few of us (experienced choir members) were in the audience at Newcastle Civic Centre on Saturday night to hear Carmina Burana. We were delighted to hear the two school choirs in the first half.

We were amazed to hear them take part in the second half. They all watched the conductor and knew all the words (not easy!) Their behaviour throughout was immaculate. It was a long time for them to sit and quite late for them. Whilst it is an exciting piece, parts are not the easiest to sit through.

As retired primary school teachers, we know standards like this don't just happen... a lot of hard work would have been done so many congratulations to their conductors and all staff involved but mainly to the children..... very, very well done.

An amazing night!

Yours sincerely,

Mrs P. Richardson.

*Spaces are available for woodwind and piano tuition. Should you require further information, then please speak to the office who will provide you with the relevant forms.*

## Brush Up

This term, as part of our science topic, 'Animals including Humans', Year 4 had a visit from Northumbria University's 'Brush Up' team. We had a fantastic afternoon exploring the life of a dentist and the importance of our teeth with the 'Brush Up' team, a group of trainee dentists. Throughout the afternoon, children explored a variety of activities learning about: the importance of dental hygiene; the effect sugar has on our teeth; the everyday life of a dentist; and the correct way to brush and take care of our teeth.

Children spent time asking the dental students questions about the gruesome side of dentistry, exploring the different instruments they use and dressing up in the different dental scrubs and uniforms. Children learnt why dentists cover up and why they use each instrument and tool.

Children also got the opportunity to practise brushing teeth, learn about the importance of flossing and compete to find out who had the best brushing technique!

Following this, children explored a variety of sugary foods and drinks. They learnt how to identify the sugar content in different foods and drinks and sorted them into those which are friendly and harmful to our teeth, successfully identifying which caused the most damage.



## Sandringham Court Visit

This term, Year 4 have been learning about the importance and power of community. As part of this, children visited the residents of Sandringham Court Extra Care Home, Longbenton and spent a morning singing songs, reading books, playing games and discussing how school life and technology has advanced.

After introductions, Year 4 began by singing the Sound of Music's 'The Lonely Gathered' and a few of our favourite hymns, such as 'Shine Jesus Shine'. This set the tone for a very enjoyable morning and residents and children were eager to get to know one another. It wasn't long before residents and children were discussing the differences in school life, the development of technology and sharing their interests.

This was followed by residents and children sharing and discussing their favourite books. Children had chosen to bring along books about World War 1 and 2 and this sparked some fantastic conversations about life in Britain during these times. Children were keen to show off their reading skills and many spent time reading books about the world, nature and different animals.

Throughout the morning, children also shared their favourite games and it quickly became apparent that the residents of Sandringham Court were indeed very competitive! Some residents had





brought along their favourite games, such as dominoes and draughts, and it was fantastic to see many children learning and playing these new games.

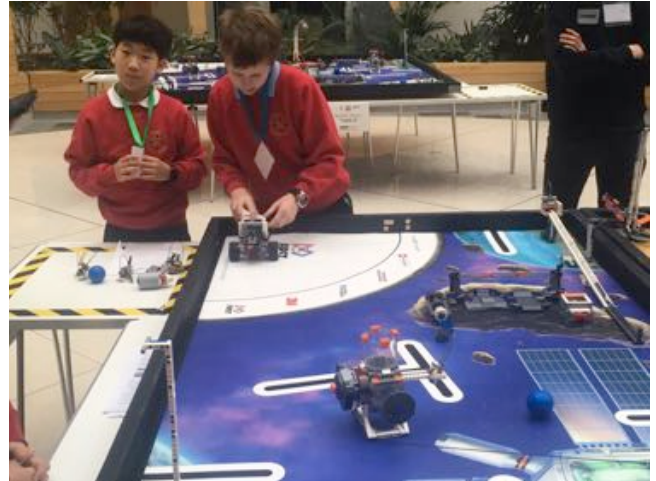
Many of the residents we met were longstanding members of our community and it was fantastic to see the children so engaged in making these links and developing their understanding and sense of community. The children are a real credit to St. Stephen's school and we look forward to strengthening these links within our community.



## Lego League

Seven children from Years 5 and 6, were selected to represent the school in the biggest STEM competition in the world, The First Lego League. This involved the children creating and programming a robot to perform various tasks based around space; creating a project in order to solve a real life problem around improving the life of an astronaut in space; and working together to solve a task using teamwork.

The children had a great day at the Sage, Gosforth. During the day, they got to show off the skills and knowledge they had acquired during the huge amount of time spent during dinnertimes perfecting their project. They also learnt new things through their interactions with the professionals at the event from the Sage and numerous other companies. Despite the children not winning the overall competition, they did brilliantly to win the Best Project category with their project on using algae as a potential food source as well as an alternative to electrolysis to producing oxygen.



## Just. Is Conference

At the end of February, Year 5 visited St Mary's High School for their annual Just.Is conference. The day consisted of numerous workshops, activities, quizzes, liturgies and lots of information around this year's theme of climate change.

Throughout the day, our children learnt from students and staff from St .Mary's High School about the importance of looking after our world for future generations in order to show love for all God's creations and for other people too. As well as providing the children with the important message about climate change, the conference also provided the children with an opportunity to look around St. Mary's fantastic facilities, meet some of the teachers and even catch up with some friends and former pupils.



## Welcome Bishop Robert Byrne.....

On the 26th March, representatives from the school council attended a welcome service for our new Bishop, Robert Byrne. Every school from the diocese was there in a packed cathedral for what was a very special service. Bishop Robert replaces Seamus Cunningham who has now retired. Bishop Robert is the 14th Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle. He was ordained a priest in 1985 and, prior to his appointment here, he was an auxiliary Bishop in Birmingham.



## Poverty Proofing

At the end of last year, in partnership with Children North-East, we engaged in an audit around current school provision with a view

to establishing ways in which we can 'poverty proof' our school day. The bulk of the audit, which took two days, mainly involved speaking to children; in fact the views of every child were taken into consideration. The findings, which will be summarised later on, were quite startling.

**Why the need for poverty proofing?** Here is an extract from the first part of our report which explains the need for such an approach.

*We live in a time where there are real concerns about the impact of poverty and inequality in our society. In one of the richest countries in the world, the numbers of children living in poverty are predicted to hit 5.2 million by 2022.*

*And yet we hope – perhaps even expect – our schools to be able to address or compensate for this situation. We aim to improve social mobility, but the link between being poor in childhood and being poor in adult life is stronger now than at any time since the 1970s. Research overwhelmingly shows that there is a significant gap in attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils, at every stage of their education. At the end of Primary School poor pupils are eight months behind their peers in reading, writing and maths. Students eligible for Free School Meals are half as likely to achieve a good pass at GCSE in english and maths in comparison to other students.*

*The Education Policy Institute has recently reported that at the current rate of progress it will be 2155 before the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is eradicated.*



*The unequal outcomes of English education reflect, to a large extent, the unequal outcomes in our society, but we still expect schools to 'close the attainment gap'. Schools have been given the Pupil Premium to target support to children and young people in order to improve outcomes.*

*So can education compensate for society? If we have low expectations of children from disadvantaged backgrounds our education system is likely to continue to produce and reproduce a highly unequal society. We know that there is a stigma and shame attached to poverty, with people in receipt of benefits being portrayed as 'scroungers' or 'shirkers'. But if we can ensure justice and fairness in schools, we can begin to move towards a more just and fair society. If we can ensure that policy and practice in schools do not repeat the same mistakes that are made outside the school gates, we can begin to build a society that is more inclusive and less discriminatory.*

*Schools do not have to mirror the society in which they are situated and, one might argue, should 'aspire' to achieve a lot more than this. Poverty Proofing the School Day was developed by children, young people and teachers and is built on the following guiding principle:*

**All activity and planned activity in schools should not identify, treat differently or make assumptions about those children whose household income or resources are lower than others.**



Following the audit we received a comprehensive report highlighting the views of pupils, staff and parents. These findings and recommendations are currently being used to shape future policy around lots of different aspects of school provision from school meals, extra curricular clubs, rewards and sanctions, educational visits and also day to day resources. Some elements have already influenced our approaches. For example, non-uniform days are no longer considered as a useful means of supporting charity events. This is because analysis has shown that a number of children are absent on such days as, quite simply, they don't have the option of other clothes. Non-uniform days really do highlight the differences in what children have in terms of the latest fashions and branded clothing. Additionally, the concept of non-uniform days has seen parents dashing off to Tesco or Asda and spending a small fortune on costumes. World Book Day is a prime example of this. Surely this money would be better spent on books rather than costumes unlikely to be worn again.

The children were very candid in expressing their views. For example, a lot of children said they felt uncomfortable in class if they didn't have their own pencil cases and stationery because 'lots of other kids have Smiggle stuff.' On reflection, there is no need for children to supply their own pens and pencils etc - going forward, this is, and will be, the responsibility of the school. Additionally, some children said they felt bad when others bring sweets and cake in on their birthday for the class. Such instances only serve to highlight the differences and it is really unnecessary. As a result, we are currently looking at ways in which we can take on board the advice offered through the audit so that our school provision is poverty proofed and no child is left out or made to feel different.

## First Holy Communion Programme update

It's amazing to think that we've had nearly six family catechesis sessions, in school, to help pupils in Year 4 prepare for their First Holy Communion programme. In September 2018, school embarked on new Sacramental preparation programme and it has been a tremendous success.

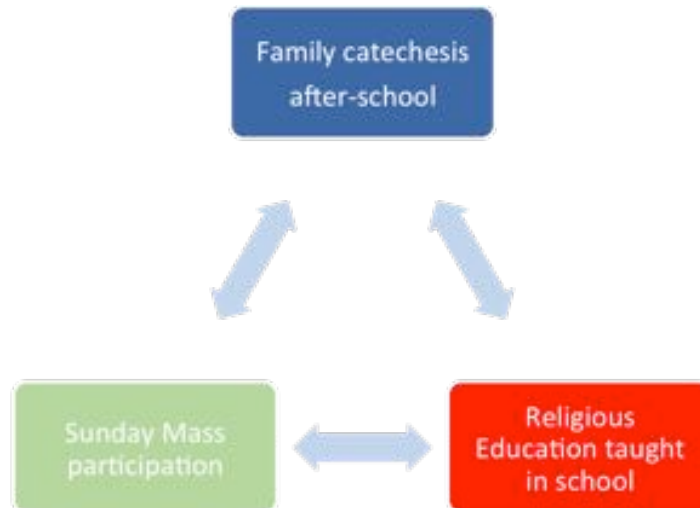


The evenings are a chance to explore the different aspects to the 'With You Always' programme, created by the Archdiocese of Liverpool. 'With You Always' allows children and parents to work together, to develop and deepen their faith as a family. The sessions also provide families with a chance to 'catch-up' and work together, particularly when life can be very busy and demanding. As part of the units of study, pupils and parents have different booklets, which guide them through different sessions.

(See left - child example; see right - the parents' guide has additional yellow box prompts to help parents explain aspects of the church's teaching)



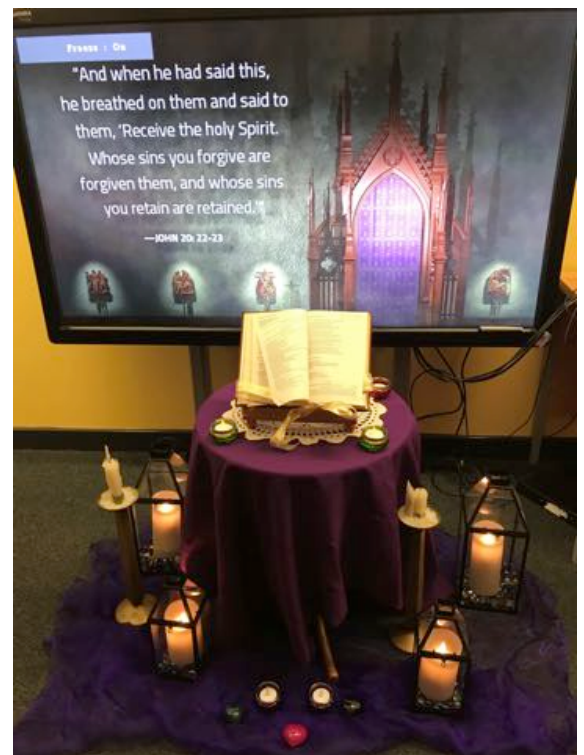
Firstly, **seven catechesis preparatory sessions** take place after school, on Tuesdays (as soon as school finishes) 3:20pm approximately – 4:20pm. The sessions are facilitated by teachers from St. Stephen's, who liaise closely with each other to ensure continuity.



The second aspect of the programme is participation in Year 4 Religious Education units (which take place in RE lessons, during the day). Pupils are made aware of the theory of Reconciliation, which is taught prior to Christmas, and a focussed unit of work around Liturgy of the Eucharist takes place in the run up to Easter. The final part of the Sacramental Preparation Programme is **regular attendance at Mass**, on the Sundays, following the Tuesday night sessions. The purpose is so our children and families feel at home worshipping in the church where they will make their First Holy Communion.

This year, we have ten children studying on our catechesis programme; all of whom celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to Christmas in a beautiful and personal service, in school. Fr. Mariadass enjoyed celebrating the intimate occasion with us and we were delighted that parents were also able to participate in the liturgy.

There's one more preparation session left, on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> April, before the children receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May, at 10:30am. Please join us at St. Aidan's, for this wonderful occasion.





I hope you found the Spring edition of Spread the Word an enjoyable read and look back at what has been, yet again, a busy term. Don't forget that you can keep up with the news on a regular basis by following our twitter account..... @ststephensrc



On behalf of the staff, pupils and governors, please enjoy your Easter break and we look forward to what I'm sure will be another productive and enjoyable term after our holiday.

**break open the tomb**

Lord of Easter's Promise,  
I live in faith of the Resurrection,  
but such is the nature of my faith  
that so much of me remains entombed.  
Break open the tomb.

Where I've buried my compassion, break open the tomb.  
Where I've buried my sense of mercy, break open the tomb.  
Where I've buried my humility, break open the tomb.  
Where I've buried my humanity, break open the tomb.  
Where I've buried my love for my Heavenly Father, break open the tomb.  
Where I've buried my sense of joy, break open the tomb.  
Where I've buried my willingness to forgive, break open the tomb.

Lord, in you I've found a Savior no grave can withstand.  
Help me to roll away this stone  
And find the miracle of new life  
That I may live more fully in your saving grace.

Amen

