



Christmas Events

Nativity and Christingles

Thank you to everyone who attended this week, we received some lovely comments from parents / carers afterwards. Also, thank you to staff and children who worked so hard to prepare for these events.

Carol Service

Next week is our Carol Service in the Abbey Church for Fernworthy and Burrator.

If you haven't done so already, please could you return your form requesting up to two tickets to attend the concert, if your child is in Fernworthy or Burrator. We hope that this will go ahead as planned, but we will, of course, keep you updated in the light of any government announcements. Face masks will be required and there is hand sanitiser available to use upon entry to the church.

There will be a retiring collection at the end of the service for the World Food Programme, to add to the money raised from donations from the Art Exhibition a few weeks ago.

Hello Buckfastleigh

Hello Buckfastleigh has received funding for HAF activities over Christmas. More information will be sent out with the newsletter. During the last week of term, fabulous bumper festive art and activity boxes will be available – if you would like one, please let me know and I shall find out how we claim them!

Christmas Jumper Day

Just a reminder that, this year, St Mary's will celebrate Christmas Jumper Day next Friday, 17th December, to mark the end of term. The children may come to school wearing something Christmassy in return for a £1 donation to Save the Children Fund.



Free School Meals

Eligibility for benefits-related Free School Meals entitles support in a number of forms, not just the payment of school meals. This holiday, Devon County Council are distributing supermarket vouchers to the value of £60 per child to help with the cost of food over the Christmas period. Entitlement to FSM will also allow you access to schemes like the Holiday Activities Food programme. You can quickly check if you are eligible by visiting the following website: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/school-information/school-meals> You can also call 0345 155 1019.

If eligible, your child is also entitled to additional funding through the school called Pupil Premium. This continues not only whilst you are eligible for FSM but also for six years afterwards so can be an important help as your child continues through school.

Music Lessons

Next week there will be music lessons with Ryan Carter and Ros Sleath, but not with Sharon Soper or Harriet Oakley.

Safeguarding

With Christmas holidays approaching, children may be spending more time online. Childnet International have produced some resources and videos for children aged 3 -7 using the character 'Smartie the Penguin' to teach children how to stay safe online <https://www.childnet.com/resources/smartie-the-penguin> alongside their Digiduck resources <https://www.childnet.com/resources/digiduck-stories>

The UK Safer Internet Centre have a range of resources, including some for older children, to support online safety <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/young-people/resources-for-3-11s>

Prayer Focus

Each week, we include a short reflection on the Gospel reading for the week. The school also subscribes to a weekly booklet called The Wednesday Word that can be accessed on our website or via the following link:

<https://www.paperturn-view.com/uk/wednesday-word/christmas-holiday-special?pid=MTA101634&v=47.2>

This week the link takes you to a booklet to carry you through to 5th January.

This week's word is "mercy" and the Gospel comes from St Luke's Gospel (Chapter 3, verses 10-18). It reminds us that God is always merciful to us, so we need to show the same mercy and compassion to others. Merciful people do things out of love and care for others and this helps to make the world a better place.

Our prayer this week is:

*Dear Lord Jesus
Help me to grow in the virtue of mercy – to be open to receiving your mercy and showing your mercy to others.
Amen*

Volunteers wanted

We are working with a locally based charity, Go Beyond, (formerly called CHICKs) who offer children and young people breaks and who are based in Higher Mill, Buckfast Abbey. They have asked us to appeal for support, as detailed below:

Go Beyond would welcome volunteers who could spare a few hours each week in the office (at Higher Mill, Buckfast Abbey), or in one of their charity shops in Torquay, Newton Abbot & Exeter.

Their shops are also in need of quality donations, which can be left at their Buckfast office by prior arrangement. If you are interested in finding out more about Go Beyond, their work and how you can support them please visit:

www.gobeyond.org.uk

or email:

info@gobeyond.org.uk

Attendance and Punctuality

These are the attendance figures for the past week:

3rd – 9th December 2021

Meldon	92.76%
Venford	96.32%
Avon	86.25%
Fernworthy	87.60%
Burrator	91.11%
Whole school This week Year to date	90.81% 94.86%

Not surprisingly, given the impact of Covid19, we are struggling to stay on target for attendance. The school's Attendance Policy states that we aim for a minimum of 95%. However, we have been fortunate so far in the relatively low number of children who have had to self-isolate due to illness.

Alongside attendance sits punctuality and this is also important in ensuring that the children fulfill their potential. The following is from the Attendance Policy:

- Morning registration is at 9.00 am. This is the time your child must be in class, so you need to ensure your child is coming through the school gate by 8.55 am.
- It is important to be on time as the first few minutes of the school day are often used to give out instructions, take part in a school assembly or organise schoolwork for the rest of the day.
- If your child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child. We take the view there are no late children, only late parents.
- Arrival after the close of registration at 9.20 may be marked as unauthorised absence in line with the DfES guidance. Between 9.00 am and 9.20 am your child will be marked as "late before registration has closed".

Miss Slack will contact parents / carers where there are concerns about a child's punctuality.