

## NEWSLETTER

Issue 18 - December 2025

### A Festive Message From Across the Community

As we reach the end of this Autumn term, I want to pause and simply say thank you. To our staff, parents, local governors and Directors - you are the heart of our Catholic school family, and everything we achieve is because of the care, commitment, and faith you bring to our communities.

This term has been full of moments that remind us why we do what we do: children and young people learning and growing, acts of kindness that reflect the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching values we all hold dear, and the shared sense of purpose that binds us together. Advent is a time of hope and preparation, and we see that hope alive in our schools—in the joy of pupils, the dedication of teachers, the support of families, and the wise guidance of our governors.

To our staff: thank you for your tireless work and the love you show in every lesson and interaction. To our parents: thank you for walking alongside us, encouraging your children and supporting our schools in so many ways. And to our Governors and Directors: thank you for your leadership and commitment to ensuring our schools continue to thrive.

As we look forward to Christmas, we

pray that our homes are filled with peace, joy, and the warmth of family. May the new year bring fresh opportunities for our children and young people to flourish and for our school communities to grow even stronger in faith and friendship.



### Advent Blessing

May the Lord bless you and keep you during this holy season of Advent.

May His light shine upon you and bring peace to your hearts, joy to your homes, and hope to your days.

As we await the coming of Christ, may we prepare with love and faith, and may His presence fill our lives this Christmas and always.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



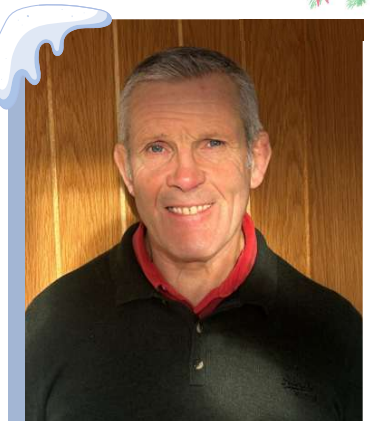
*Christ at the Centre,*

*Children at the Heart*

# Andrew Herlihy, Chair of The Board of Directors



I am a proud Welshman, born and raised in the small coastal town of Penarth, South Wales. After leaving school my first real job was a gravedigger, it being the proverbial “dead end” job led me to explore real career alternatives. In 1983 I joined HMP Prison Service. Once I had completed basic training I was posted to HMP Liverpool. I trained as a physical education officer and subsequently posted to HMP Highpoint in 1988. Despite moving establishments on a number of occasions we as a family remained in the Bury St Edmunds area. I retired from the service after 35 years.



During my career I was proud to have worked with every kind of prisoner in every kind of establishment; from those held in open conditions up to those serving in the high security estate including working with females and juveniles. I consider myself fortunate that this career proved to be my true vocation in life.

Since retirement I became part of the HMPPS National Assessment Team, assessing staff that wish to progress in the service and gain promotion.

I am married to my lovely wife Joanne and we have five children all of who benefitted from the fantastic Catholic education available in Bury St Edmunds. Our four grandchildren are also benefitting from the same fantastic Catholic education, one in the OLOW MAT and three in SJB MAT.

I entered school governance as a Foundation Governor at St Benedict's, progressing to the Chair's role. I was part of the team that led St Benedict's into the OLOW MAT and joined the Board of Directors as a result.

Rugby Union is a true passion of mine and I have been heavily involved in the local rugby club for several years in different roles including player, coach, DOR, honorary secretary and having a keen interest in maintaining the playing surfaces. I like to try to keep fit and I am a regular gym attender.

As the newly appointed Chair of The Board of Directors of The OLOW MAT I look forwards to visiting the schools in the MAT and in doing my best to support teaching and learning within the MAT. I recognize the importance of fostering a Catholic family of schools and in ensuring the Catholicity of all our schools endures.

## Caroline Clarke, Trust Lead SENDCo

From a SEND perspective, as always, our schools have been very busy this term. As Trust Lead SENDCo I have been on hand to help with SEND Learning Walks, book looks, data scrutiny, Annual Reviews, QA of Learning Plans, CPD, Governor Training and SEND reviews. I always love spending time in schools, talking to staff and pupils and am always so delighted with the warm welcome that I receive from colleagues wherever I go.



I would just like to focus on two events this term that schools have found really helpful. Firstly both St Mary's and St Pancras Primary Schools held a Governor Strategy Day for all their governors. I delivered CPD to each LGB and then SLT and I took the governors on a SEND Learning Walk so that they could see what they had heard about in practice in the classrooms. The governors and the schools found this day invaluable and would thoroughly recommend it to other schools. Secondly at St Louis Primary School I carried out a SEND Review. This took one day and involved a real deep dive into SEND policy, practice and provision. Working closely with the SENDCo we observed teaching and learning, looked at books, talked to Subject Leads, the SEND Governor and pupils. There were also discussions with SLT and the school completed a SEND SEF. Again, the school found this day extremely helpful in helping them plan next steps for SEND across their school. If any school in the Trust would like either of these activities please do contact me and I will be very happy to help.

A huge well done to all our SENDCos who are heroes each and every day. We really appreciate your tireless efforts and I look forward to working with you again in the New Year.

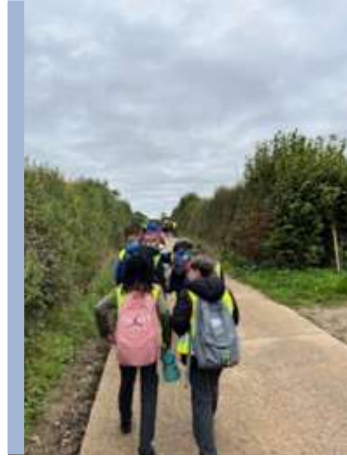
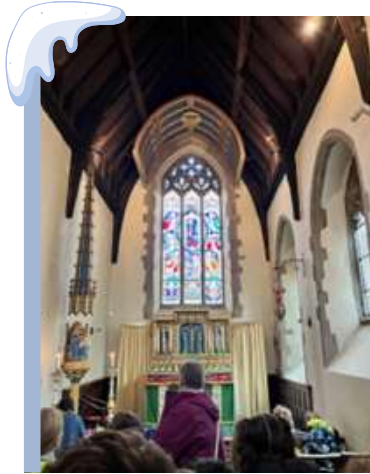
## St Mary's and St Pancras Year 6 Pilgrimage to The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham

We visited the Catholic and Anglican Shrines in Walsingham. We began by looking at the 14 Stations of the Cross crosses, carried from up to 236 miles away in 1948. We spent time in the Slipper and Holy Ghost chapels before walking the Holy Mile.

"I liked how they told us about the Chapels and we got to experience the Holy Mile walk," Aurora-Mae.



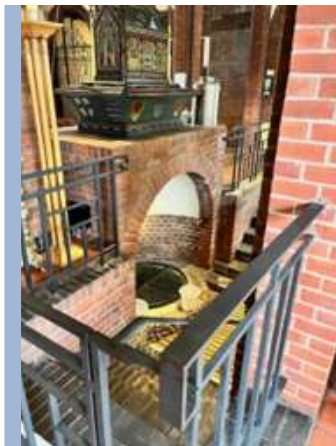
"I enjoyed the holy mile because we were walking on a path where people had in the past walked bare foot," Reeva.



After arriving at the Our Lady of Walsingham Shrine, we spent time in the Holy Shrine, listening to Father Graham and Father Ben. We undertook a 'Sprinkling' at the Holy Well, built of 11th century stonework and discovered in 1931. We were offered Holy Water to drink, received the sign of the cross with Holy Water and received Holy Water in our hands.

"We enjoyed the sprinkling and felt intrigued and very holy after visiting Walsingham," Finn and Claudia.

"What I liked about Walsingham were the stories we were told and the history of the place," Laurie.



We then went into the Holy House, which represents the Holy House in Nazareth, in which the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary at the Annunciation. We lit candles and had a period of reflection.

"I really liked Walsingham because we got to experience how people go on pilgrimage and lit a candle for someone," Ravenna.

"At Walsingham I liked the Holy House and in the chapel when they explained what everything meant," Maisie.



We received the following feedback from Jane, the Education Officer at the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham:

*Along with my colleague, Emma, we had the privilege of working with your children and staff yesterday. I wanted to email to commend them on their behaviour, engagement and questions. It was a real joy to be with them and to see their enthusiasm, but also to witness such respect for the Shrines and at Sprinkling. All the staff who had the pleasure of meeting them were of the same opinion.*

## Foundation Governor Recruitment

If you are interested in becoming a school governor or would like to find out more about the fantastic impact that you could make within our Trust schools then please visit the Trust website by scanning the following QR code.



Please share with anyone who is interested in learning more about the positive impact of good governance on pupils' life chances and might be interested in joining one of our school boards.

[www.ourladyofwalsingham.co.uk/governorrecruitment](http://www.ourladyofwalsingham.co.uk/governorrecruitment)

*Christ at the Centre,  
Children at the Heart*



[www.ourladyofwalsingham.co.uk](http://www.ourladyofwalsingham.co.uk)

# Volunteers Sought to Support School Admission Appeals



The Diocese of East Anglia Schools' Service is seeking volunteers to serve as school admission appeals panel members, helping ensure parents' rights are upheld when a child is not offered a place at their preferred Catholic school.

Panel members play a vital role in considering cases where parents wish to challenge a refusal of admission. Each hearing typically lasts between 20 and 30 minutes, although some may take longer depending on their complexity. During the busy summer term, multiple appeals may be scheduled on the same day, and volunteers may occasionally be asked to sit for two or even three consecutive days. Importantly, panel members are always able to decide their own availability, making this a flexible opportunity suited to those available during school hours.

Appeals may be heard in person or via video conferencing, and volunteers can express a preference for the type of hearings they are comfortable with. All panel members will receive training from the Diocese.

To ensure a balanced and fair process, each panel is made up of both lay members, people without professional involvement in education, and education members, people with experience working in or understanding schools. Individuals cannot sit on panels for schools with which they have a personal connection, for example being a parent, governor or staff member.

Anyone interested in volunteering or finding out more is invited to contact Helen Bates, Assistant Director (Schools' Service), at the Diocese of East Anglia, 21 Upgate, Poringland, Norwich, NR14 7SH, by email at [ssc@rcdea.org.uk](mailto:ssc@rcdea.org.uk) or by telephone on 01508 495509.

## Remembrance

Our Year 6 class took part in the local Remembrance service, representing the school with maturity, respect, and thoughtfulness. The visit was an important opportunity for the children to reflect on the significance of Remembrance Day and to honour those who have served and sacrificed in conflicts past and present.



During the service, the pupils listened attentively to readings and prayers, and joined the community in observing the two-minute silence. Staff accompanying the class were incredibly proud of the children's behaviour and the respect they showed throughout the morning. It was clear that Year 6 understood the importance of the occasion and valued the chance to be part of such a meaningful community event.

## Solar for Schools

Our school was delighted to welcome the Solar for Schools team for an exciting and informative workshop all about renewable energy. The visit gave pupils the chance to learn how solar power works and why sustainable energy is so important for our planet's future.

During the sessions, children discovered how sunlight can be transformed into electricity and explored real-life examples of solar installations. They took part in hands-on activities, including measuring energy output, experimenting with mini solar panels, and discussing how we can all play a part in reducing carbon emissions.



The presenters were impressed by how engaged and curious the pupils were, asking thoughtful questions and sharing ideas about protecting the environment. Many children said they were surprised to learn just how much energy the sun can provide. The visit has sparked plenty of discussion across classes and has strengthened our school's commitment to sustainability.

## St Mark's Joins the OLOW Family

St Mark's has recently joined the OLOW family and is looking forward to working closely with its partner schools to deepen evangelisation and strengthen the Catholic ethos that lies at the heart of everything we do. This new chapter brings exciting opportunities for collaboration, shared mission, and continued spiritual growth for our pupils and wider community.

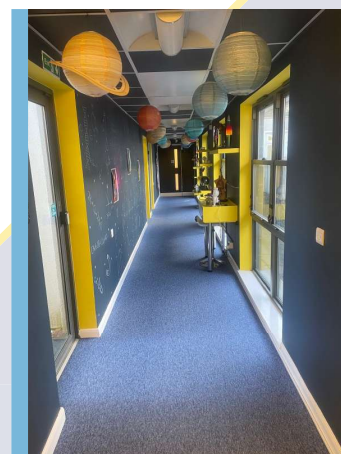


Alongside this milestone, St Mark's has completed a series of major improvement projects that have transformed the school environment. One of the most visible achievements is the installation of the new school gate. Its modern, polished design offers a welcoming first impression and reflects the school's commitment to creating an attractive and contemporary learning environment. The car park has also been fully refurbished, making access smoother and more organised for everyone who visits the school.

Inside the building, the impact of the renovations is just as impressive. The hall has received a brand-new floor, giving the space a fresh and welcoming feel. Thanks to the extraordinary dedication of our parent volunteers, the hall has also been repainted and thoroughly deepcleaned. Their hard work has transformed it into a vibrant, uplifting space the whole school can enjoy.

The improvements continue throughout the Key Stage 2 area, where a new carpet and extensive refurbishment have refreshed classrooms and corridors. These upgrades were made possible through generous donations and the hands-on commitment of many parents who gave their time and skills to support the school's vision.

One of the most remarkable accomplishments is the creation of the new science corridor. This project, once again driven by the incredible effort of parent volunteers, has provided pupils with an inspiring environment that nurtures curiosity and supports high-quality learning. Together, these achievements not only enhance the school's facilities but also showcase the strength and unity of the St Mark's community.





## St Pancras Primary, Ipswich

### Mountain Class Visit St Mary & St Botolph Church for “Experience Remembrance”

Last week, Mountain Class were fortunate to be invited to St Mary & St Botolph Church, part of Whitton Parish, to take part in a thoughtful and beautifully organised “Experience Remembrance” event. The children moved through six themed stations, each combining a Bible story with reflection, role-play, hands-on activities and powerful visual displays. These immersive stations encouraged our Year 6s to pause, think deeply and make meaningful connections with the themes of remembrance.

The stations included:

#### Sacrifice



#### Courage



#### Peace



#### Remembrance



#### Conflict



#### Freedom



The afternoon concluded with a lively question-and-answer session. The children were full of curiosity, asking about everything from the church's history and architecture to deeper questions about faith and remembrance.

It was a truly enriching visit, and Mountain Class represented St Pancras with maturity, curiosity and kindness. A huge thank-you to St Mary & St Botolph Church for providing such a meaningful and memorable experience.

*We are Loving and kind,*

*We Pray and we Play*



[www.stpancrasschool.co.uk](http://www.stpancrasschool.co.uk)

## Supporting Newmarket Rotary Club

St Louis having been supporting the Newmarket Rotary Club in raising awareness about the continued work to eradicate polio across the world. On Thursday 23rd October, Colin and Bernard from the Rotary club, gave an assembly to the Year 5 and 6s about the history and current work being done to completely eradicate Polio. Colin and Bernard shared with Mrs Martin, how well engaged the children were and complimented the children on the quiet dignity of their behaviour when addressing this subject.



Then a class of Year 5 children supported the Rotary club in planting thousands of purple crocus bulbs on the Severals near the War memorial garden. This planting is done each year to raise awareness of the disease, as well as the Newmarket Clock-tower being lit up in the colour purple. The children thoroughly enjoyed planting all the bulbs and we were blessed with good weather and the support of the Mayor of Newmarket, Philippa Winter.

The school choir will also be singing at the Newmarket Rotary Club's Carol concert at the Tatterstalls on Friday 12th December.

## All Saints Day

The St Louis school community came together to celebrate All Saints Day in a very special way. Pupils arrived dressed as both well-known saints and everyday heroes who inspire us through their kindness and service. Our students reminded us that sainthood is not only about the more famous names from history. It's also about ordinary people who show love, courage, and compassion in their daily lives.



Classes spent time learning about the qualities that make someone a saint: generosity, patience, bravery, and a heart for helping others. Pupils shared stories of the people they chose to represent, explaining what makes each of them a role model worth celebrating.

Thank you to all families for your creativity and support in making this celebration meaningful and memorable. It was a beautiful reminder that we are surrounded by inspiring figures—past and present—who show us how to live with kindness and purpose.



## An Advent Update from St Laurence

This Advent, we have had some wonderful events, in preparation for Christmas.

Our Reception Class kicked off the Advent season by writing their letters to Santa, showing off how well their writing skills and phonics knowledge have grown.

Last week, we were extremely busy with our annual Advent Craft Morning. We had lots of parents join our children, in their house teams, to create a variety of items organised by Mrs. Chalklin, our Head of School. St. Laurence also sent a choir of children to Arbury Court, again, to sing carols at the switching on of the Arbury lights. Their singing was lauded and applauded, with one of the organisers saying,

"Thank you all so much, it was a triumph!"

Our week concluded with 2 performances of the YR/KS1 Nativity - The Nativity.

The children were marvellous and full of enthusiasm, bringing their own interpretation of this special story which was written and directed by Y2 teacher, Mrs. Groves. This was Mrs. Groves' first production and we were all very impressed.



We will conclude our Advent celebrations, this Friday, with a visit from Santa and our carol service. We'll be joined by our wider school community and Fr. Robin from St. Laurence's Parish.



## An overview from St Felix

We were truly honoured to welcome the Jubilee Year of Hope Icon into our school- one of only a handful chosen to host this special visit! The icon was brought in by Jane Crone, our local CAFOD representative, who shared the inspiring story of its painter, a student from a CAFOD sponsored school in Ethiopia. Jane explained the rich symbolism in the artwork, and our children were thrilled to have the chance to admire it up close.



Excitement is building as St Felix prepares for the Haverhill Carnival on Saturday 29th November. Pupils have been rehearsing two lively dances and can't wait to shine in their colourful costumes.



We were delighted to help design a brand-new residential park in Haverhill. Our children were the very first to try it out, enjoying activities that encourage strength, resilience, and fun.



To support Children in Need, staff and pupils donned their pyjamas and raised an amazing £156. In our Gospel assemblies, we continue to celebrate Catholic Social Teaching, helping children connect their actions to scripture and live out their faith joyfully while being mindful to always support those in need.







## St Alban's Students on Pilgrimage to Rome

Students from St Alban's Catholic High School in Ipswich recently completed a four-day pilgrimage to Rome, marking the Jubilee Year of Hope and the start of the school's 60th anniversary celebrations. Accompanied by Fr Jude Belnas, the group experienced a journey filled with prayer, history, and unforgettable moments.



The pilgrimage began with a Welcome Mass at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, setting a reflective tone for the days ahead. Students then explored Rome's sacred treasures, including the Basilica of St Mary Major, where they entered the Holy Door and prayed before ancient relics. A visit to the Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel left the group in awe of Michelangelo's masterpieces, followed by time in St Peter's Basilica, where many paused in prayer at the tomb of St John Paul II.



The highlight came on the third day with a personal audience with Pope Leo XIV. His Holiness greeted students, blessed the school prayer, and received a zucchetto from the group. For many, meeting the Pope was a spiritual milestone and a moment they will never forget. Later that day, the group visited the Pantheon, reflecting on centuries of faith and history.

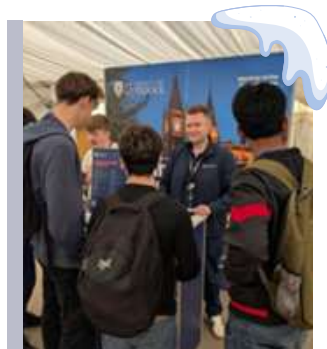
The final day combined history and celebration, with visits to the Colosseum, Trevi Fountain, and a joyful gelato-making workshop, ending with bowling—a chance to relax after days of spiritual intensity.

School Chaplain Paul Gilbert described the trip as "a journey of a lifetime," while Headteacher Mr Corless praised the experience as "a formative moment our students will carry forever." This pilgrimage stands as a milestone of faith, unity, and joy for the St Alban's community.



### A Round Up at St Alban's Sixth Form

This month all of Year 12 participated in the University and Apprenticeships Fair in Chelmsford. This was a great opportunity to get our students thinking about post-18 pathways in their first year in the Sixth Form. Students were excited to see the many opportunities available while engaging directly with representatives from a broad range of post-18 providers. Congratulations also to our Year 13 university applicants who have received offers for universities such as Warwick, Bristol, York, Nottingham and Birmingham, as well as students who have been invited to interview for Medicine and courses at Cambridge.



This month we say goodbye to our international placement students from Brazil and thank them for the fantastic contributions they have made to our school. We were recently visited by Alessandra, one of our international programme alumni, who is also featured on our school website. We wish her the best of luck in her exams back in Italy.

In December we are excited to welcome back our 2025 leavers who achieved so fantastically in their A-Levels for our Certificate Presentation Evening. We are also pleased to have received 100 applications to the Sixth Form so far for 2026 and wish our Year 11s as well as our Year 13s the very best of luck in their PPEs. With RAG Week also taking place in December, we are glad to have some light relief in what has been a busy month in St Alban's Sixth Form.





## Remembrance Art Competition

This week, we were honoured to welcome judges from the Royal British Legion to review the entries for our Remembrance Art Competition. They were truly impressed by the heartfelt and personal responses from our students, and the evident care and thoughtfulness in every piece.

Well done to all contributing artists.

There is such a wealth of creative pieces created by so many students: Olivia McGeorge, Patrycja Golonka, Chloe Schorer-Nixon, Ruby Smith, Daisy Farrant, Francesca Monteith, Finley Eastwood, Elsie Brandon, Maggie Matthews, Niamh Walsh, Iris Gurrell, Ainslee Breske, Erika Welch, Phaino Olugbemi



A huge congratulations to the winners featured here—each will receive a certificate and prize in recognition of their hard work.

## Suffolk School Cross Country

On 16 October we took 54 students from years 7 to sixth form to the Royal Hospital School on the Suffolk Coast, for the first round of the Suffolk Schools cross country competition. It was a perfect day for running, not too hot, windy, or raining, unlike previous years. The course at RHS is lovely, with a section along the sea wall followed by a path through some woods, before sweeping around in front of the very impressive school buildings back down to the finish line.



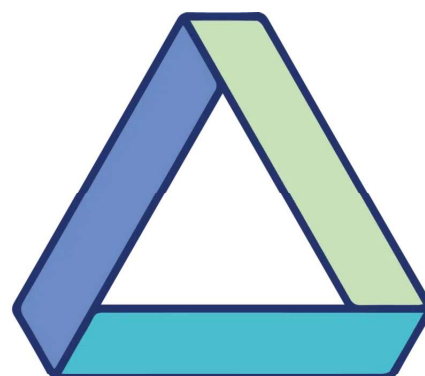
The races are split into minors (years 6 & 7), juniors (years 8 & 9), inter (years 10 & 11) and finally seniors (sixth form) and we had students competing in nearly all the races, so it was a busy morning. Students finishing in the top 50 in each race qualify for the next round at Woodbridge School in January. St Benedict's also did well in the school competition (scores are made up from the top four finishers in each race) with the following results: Minor Girls 4th, Junior Girls 2nd, Junior Boys 2nd, Inter Girls 1st and Inter Boys 1st, so some great team work as well as individual performances.





## Senior Maths Challenge

On 9th October we had 39 A Level mathematicians take the Senior Maths Challenge. This is a 90-minute, multiple-choice competition aimed at high ability Maths students across the UK. It encourages mathematical reasoning, precision of thought, and fluency in using basic mathematical techniques to solve interesting problems.



In this year's SMC we were awarded 4 golds, 9 silvers and 16 bronze certificates! To recognise the highest performers in the Challenge, UKMT awarded the top-scoring 66% of participants Bronze, Silver and Gold certificates in the ratio 3:2:1. Please see below for those who secured certificates!

## UK Maths Trust

### Gold

Amy John(Best in School), Adam O'Flynn, Asir Iswiassi and Isaac Spiller (Best in Year)

### Silver

Hilly Atkinson, Joe Ferdinand, Kuba Kluczynski, Tia Martin, Portia Ratcliffe, Finn Senior, Naomham Walker, PJ Warden and Maxim Zak

### Bronze

Helena Bulacz, Raf Calumpiano, Lettie Davy, Jace Duffy, Alice Ellison, Oliver Green, Oliver Hayes, Piotr Ignaciuk, Matthew Jobbins, Brook Lerner, Michael Maciejak, Nataniel Migula, Viktoria Pawlowski, Jakub Poczapinski, Kiara Suthakaran and Ben Warner

Following this challenge, UKMT have invited 6000 of the highest performing students to take part in the Senior Kangaroo, all four of our gold award students have qualified for this next round. Our outstanding mathematicians will sit this further round on Wednesday 19th November. We await the results and are proud of the achievements of all our pupils that took part in the Senior Maths Challenge. If you think that you could match the results of our award-winning students then try out one of the questions from their paper, I have included the question that Mr Jogee challenged all of the Maths teachers to complete.

*I have come that they may have life,  
and have it to the full*





# *Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year*



*Christ at the Centre,  
Children at the Heart*



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