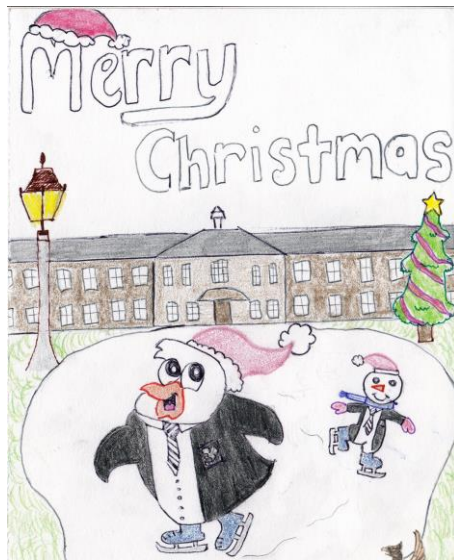


## Christmas Newsletter 2024



Dear Parents and Friends of Balshaw's

I am writing to you all as we reach the final three weeks of a 15 week term. For our Year 7s they have settled in brilliantly and have moved from the sunshine of summer school to celebration worship, silent disco and our Act of Remembrance. For our Year 11s this has been the term of their mock examinations for which they have been working hard.

In this newsletter you will find information about upcoming events, services in and around Leyland over the Christmas period, the very serious risks associated with vaping, what we do in school to educate your child about this sort of life issue and a lot more.

### Awards Night



It has been a busy term and one of the highlights was our awards evening when we saw our Year 11s return to collect their GCSE certificates in front of the Mayor of South Ribble and be inspired by our speaker, Mark Cowley.

Since leaving the RAF where he served from Afghanistan to the Falklands, Mark has remained passionate about empowering people to be able to save

lives and keep safe. He founded his company First4Training North West to ensure that "everyone can become a life-saving hero." Mark's ultimate aim is to "build a world where everyone is equipped to handle emergencies with confidence and compassion." In this respect, Mark embodies the values of Balshaw's ultimate aim: "to create students whatever their faith or world view to reflect Christ's love in the wider community."

## Our GCSE Results 2024

We were delighted with the results that were achieved by our Year 11 leavers. The rates of progress made by our students mean that there is only one other school in all of Lancashire where your child could have done better without taking an entrance examination or having to be baptised/attend a church as part of the admissions criteria. I am very proud of their hard work and the dedication and commitment of the staff at school who support their learning.



## Growing up: PSHE

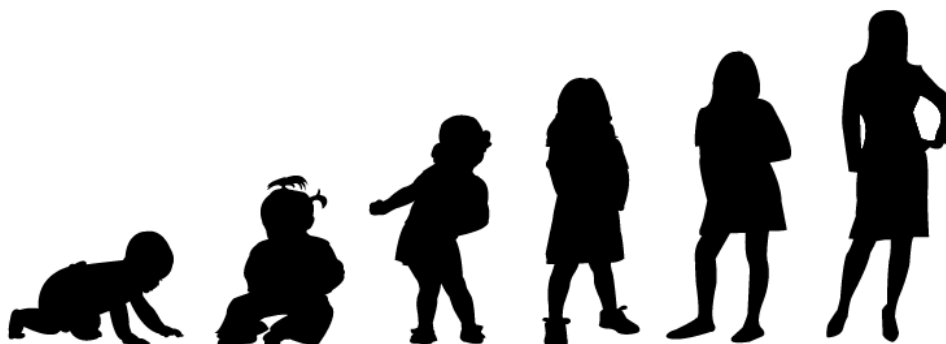
We continue to teach our students the full range of issues about growing up, responsible decision making and the dangers that they may face. This term alone we have had drama education groups in to teach about the dangers of Child Sexual Exploitation. Students learn everything from finance matters to healthy relationships and sexual health. We do a lot of work with our students about County Lines gangs and knife crime. We look at issues of joint responsibility and we have organisations who bring speakers with real life experiences of being exploited or jailed or who have had family members jailed as a result of poor choices.

You may recall that in one of my previous newsletters I warned parents of the dangers of a new national trend called Snuss – a form of tobacco pouch placed between the lips and the gum. This continues to be an issue, but there are new dangers emerging nationally...

---

[\*You can find out more about our PSHE Curriculum here...\*](#)

---



## 1 in 6 vapes confiscated in schools contains the “zombie drug” Spice



We have long held the policy that any student found with vapes or vaping paraphernalia will be suspended. This along with the door monitoring systems for toilets and CCTV on all corridors means that Balshaw’s has not had the same issues with vapes as other schools. However, we know that students vape on the way to and the way from school.

[According to the BBC](#), and analysis from 38 schools revealed that the synthetic street drug, classified as class B alongside ketamine and GHB, was in nearly 100 devices. The researchers said they believed the substance was being put into vapes marketed as containing cannabis oil.

---

**The drug [Spice], which can cause heart attacks, seizures and psychotic episodes, was found in 16.6% of vapes tested, while roughly one in 100 contained THC, the psychoactive component of cannabis. One vape tested contained trace elements of heroin.**

---

Watch out for mood changes in your child because they may not realise that they are being affected by the vapes that they are using. In school we have seen a growing number of students who aggressively question and challenge directions and it does make us question what they are taking in their recreational time. This is not unusual and it can’t be dismissed as “something that happened to other people.”

The [NHS has published figures in October](#) of this year that reveal that:

- A quarter of all 11 – 15 year olds have tried vaping.
- 1 in 10 11 – 15 year olds vape regularly.
- 1 in 6 vapes found in schools contain the ‘zombie drug’ spice

Positive, proactive parenting is needed and you can’t do better than checking your child’s phone by looking at the Snapchat and Instagram messages that they are receiving. Some of the Snapchats that come through to students are like menus of drugs that they can choose from. It is very rarely that a student pays for their own phone, so by default it is your phone which they borrow! You, as a parent, have every right to take your child’s phone and look at it. It is responsible parenting to do so.

If you have any concerns about your child, school is able to refer you into support services that will be able to provide help if they would like to be able to stop vaping.

## Parent Forum

This term saw the first Parents' Forum take place. The Parents' Forum is the chance to come and reflect upon systems at the school and to put forward your views to shape the school as we move forward. A big thank you to those who attended. The issues discussed at the first Parents' Forum were:

- Parents' Evenings
- School reports
- Trips and Extra-Curricular activities

We will be taking forward ideas and suggestions that came from this meeting. Our next Parents' Forum will be **Wednesday 5th February**. The topics which will be discussed on that evening will be:

- Behaviour policy
- Pastoral care and transition
- Inclusion and SEND provision

You will receive an invitation to this in the new year.

## The Lancashire Great Debate and other Public Speaking Successes



*1 - The team with Mr Haycocks, Dr Breen and former Balshaw's governor, Cllr Matthew Tomlinson.*

We were delighted to win the Great Lancashire Debate for the second time in the two years that it has been running. Facing competition from across the whole of Lancashire, Omar, Rory, Will and Zac won the judges with their vision of what will Lancashire look like in 50 years and the boys suggested we invest in anaerobic digestion plants instead of incineration plants and eliminate plastic pollution and landfill sites. The team hope that the Council will act on their suggestions and really enjoyed the opportunity to share their ideas in such grand surroundings.

Balshaw's public speaking teams also took part in the English Speaking Union's national public speaking competition. Clarisse used the Jackson Pollock painting Full Fathom Five (1947) as her inspiration for the speech about a cultural and political sea change after the

Second World War and Isabel spoke about the hijacking of social media as a global superweapon by political tyrants under the title: "Is social media the new global superpower, or just a place for cat videos and memes?"

We entered both the intermediate and the senior Rotary Youth Speaks competition. It was our intermediate team's first competition and Lucas, Olivia and Alice did very well against teams that were older.

In the senior event, Balshaw's swept the competition away winning every single prize:

- Best Chair: Isabel Pearson
- Best Speaker: Mischa Dagers
- Best Vote of Thanks: Ewan Sutherland
- Best overall team: Isabel, Mischa, Ewan (speech on Screen time parenting)

2nd Place Team: Milly Bidwell as Chair, Millie Blackwell (whose speech about the North/South divide in education heavily criticised Government underfunding of education in the North of England) and May McGowan as Vote of Thanks.

---

[You can check out so many more stories about our students' achievements and other news here on our website....](#)

---

## Attendance

Attendance has been a national concern and a focus for improvement by governments since the end of the Covid pandemic. As you will know, Balshaw's actively encourages excellent attendance and chases up reasons for any non-attendance.

I am pleased to say that attendance at Balshaw's is among the best in the county (10th out of 82 secondary schools) and the country (the top 10%).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those parents who support the very best attendance possible by sending them in each day unless they are very unwell.

## Events coming up



Already this half term we have welcomed families to our Memorial Candlelight Vigil and the PTA Christmas Family Fun Night which was well-supported by parents, raising over £320 to help raise money towards reinstating the school's climbing wall.

Our next big event before Christmas is our Christmas Carols at Balshaw's on **Wednesday 18th December from 6.00 – 7.00pm.**

We also look forward to our annual School Carol Service for all students at St Andrew's on Tuesday next week as we really start the countdown to Christmas.

## Uniform Issues for after Christmas

A number of students seem to have had growth spurts over the course of this term. If you have a daughter at Balshaw's, please check that their skirt is knee length as quite a few students look like they need a new skirt. The school does have a good collection of pre-loved uniform that can be viewed easily if you pop into Reception at school.

In case your child was thinking of colouring their hair over Christmas or having a piercing, please remember the school rules about natural hair colour and that piercings are not allowed in any way – they cannot be covered with a plaster or transparent stud.

Another trend that we have noticed is students coming in with trainers and notes stating that they are wearing trainers because of foot injury or sore feet. These same students then go out and play football at break and lunch! Unless students have a medical note providing a reason that they should *not* be in school shoes, they are expected to wear school shoes.

## Blackburn Diocese Advent Daily Readings and Reflections

Blackburn Diocese produce a booklet of daily readings to take us through Advent each year. You can pick one up from your local church or download a copy here: [download pdf copy of Advent devotional](#).

The diocese also have an app which you can download which contains a wealth of other resources including a daily podcast to accompany your reading of the booklet.



## The New Year

Next term we will welcome Paul Foster, MP to meet with our students and answer questions about his role as MP for South Ribble and his commitment to the education of young people at Balshaw's. We will prepare for Easter worship and hopefully welcome some warmer weather. There will be more fun from the PTA with a Race Night – a fun night for all the family to enjoy.

In the meantime, may I wish you all a very peaceful Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

Steven Haycocks

**HEADTEACHER**

**BALSHAW'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL**

**Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path. (Psalm 119, vs 105)**

non sibi sed aliis

## Christmas events in and around Leyland



**Given**  
*The best gift ever!*

You are invited to celebrate the best gift ever this Christmas with **Buckshaw Village Church**

**Sunday 1st December 2pm**  
Community Event with Santa Tour  
BV Community Centre, Unity Place

**Sunday 8th December 2pm**  
Messy Christmas  
BV Community Centre, Unity Place

**Saturday 14th December 6:30pm**  
Cosy Costa Christmas  
Buckshaw Costa, Lancaster Way

**Friday 20th December 2pm**  
Festive Family Fun  
The Hub, Unity Place

**Sunday 22nd December 4pm**  
Carols by Candlelight  
BV Community Centre, Unity Place

**Monday 23rd December 10am**  
Only Kids Allowed - festive games and crafts  
BV Community Centre, Unity Place

**Christmas Eve 3pm**  
Let's celebrate!  
BV Community Centre, Unity Place

**Christmas Day 10am**  
All age worship  
BV Community Centre, Unity Place

Follow Jesus | Love Others | Serve the World

0-



Join us at  
**St Ambrose Church, Leyland**  
as we celebrate

**The Joy OF CHRISTMAS**

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December**  
10.30am - Eucharist & Nativity

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December**  
7pm Remembering our Loved Ones

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December**  
6pm Nine Lessons & Carols  
Christmas Eve

**4pm Christingle**  
**11.30pm Midnight Mass**

**Merry Christmas!**



**Rejoice  
God  
IS WITH US!**

**CHRISTMAS AT ST. ANDREW'S**

<b>Christmas Festival</b> Saturday 7th December at 2-5pm in the Church Hall & Grounds	<b>Carols by Candlelight</b> Sunday 15th December at 6.50pm in Church	<b>Christmas Eve Crib Service</b> Tuesday 24th December at 4.00pm in Church
	<b>Midnight Communion</b> Tuesday 24th December at 11.15pm in Church	<b>Christmas Day Services</b> Wednesday 25th December 8.30 & 10.30am in Church

01772 622964  
f /StAndrewsLeyland  
x /StAndrewLeyland

Select this link to see more events: <https://www.stambrose.info/events>