12th December 2025

Dear Parents / Carers,

As we approach the final few days of the term, it has been another busy week for Team St Michael's. As I mentioned in my last letter, pupils and staff gave up some of their day on Saturday to fundraise for Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, by bag packing in Tesco, Horwich. They raised over £500 toward the much-needed props for the show and will be adding to the total this weekend, as the choir head into Chorley town centre and Morrissons to share some festive, carolling cheer. Do pop by and support them, should you be out and about on Saturday.

Carols have abounded in many forms this week, as we have begun our annual participation in 'Carols in the Quad'. It's been brilliant to have whole year groups gather outside and sing their hearts out to some traditional favourites, accompanied by our pupil and staff brass band. We still have Year 7 and Year 10 to look forward to on Monday and Tuesday; a highlight of the week for sure!

Worship this week was led by Miss Davies, who reminded us about the history and meaning of Christingle. We learnt that Christingle started in Germany in 1747, in the Moravian Church, when candles were lit to symbolise the light of Christ shining in the darkness. Miss Davies talked about what each part of a Christingle represents: The red ribbon- the blood of Christ, the orange- the world, the four cocktail sticks- the seasons, and the sweets- all of God's creation. Miss Davies referenced several Bible verses, including, John 8:12 (I am the light of the world) and one of my favourites, Matthew 5:14, 'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden'. We were encouraged to think how we can serve our community and help others grow, before watching a stunning dance performance that allowed time for personal reflection. I joined Year 11 for Worship this time, and I was so impressed with their respectful attitude throughout; just brilliant.

On Tuesday, Our Year 11 German pupils were given a masterclass on revision by Sally Conroy from Cardinal Newman College. They also heard from several past pupils who are now studying A Level German there, who gave them an insight into college life post St Michael's. We say thank you to them all for giving up their time and providing our Year 11s with this opportunity.

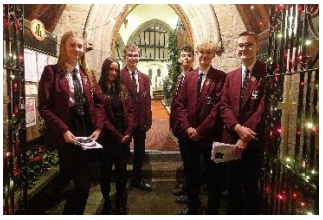




Wednesday was an incredibly busy day, but I like to think that 'we are busy because we are blessed'. At lunchtime, we had our second Advent Eucharist, this time led by Rev Cornelius Asghar from Chorley, St Peter's. A good number of pupils and staff attended again, and we thank Rev Cornelius for joining us; it was so appreciated.

Then, at the end of the school day, we had our first full governors' meeting of the academic year. Looking around the room, it was hard not to feel incredibly grateful for each person in attendance. Just like our pupils, they all bring their own unique strengths and talents, that together make a very strong team. Governance is so important in ensuring that the Christian vision of this school is lived out, enabling all who learn and work to **grow in body, mind and spirit** and to flourish. This is more than just a strapline for us, it genuinely underpins all that we do, and our governors are key to the success in that; we are incredibly thankful for their service throughout the year.

On Wednesday evening we held our Community Carol Service at St Peter's. The church set the scene beautifully, with twinkling lights welcoming us as we approached the entrance; many thanks to Fr Cornelius and St Peter's for hosting the service. Both Armstrong and Hughes choirs sang and I think, for many of us, listening to those voices really brought home the message of Christmas and of joy, peace and hope. I must mention Harry who stunned us all with his solo of the first verse of Once in Royal David's City, and Toby who wowed us by playing the church organ, accompanying our final carol. We were also blessed to be joined by Rev Ben Clayton from Heapey St Barnabas who led our reflection. It really was a wonderful celebration, and it was fantastic to see so many families in attendance too.



On Thursday we had our school Christmas lunch. Feeding our school community of over 1,100 children plus staff every day is no easy task, but we have a wonderful catering team in Mellors who really do serve us well; it seems a fitting time to say thank you to them. For the festive lunch our catering manager Sherilee reported cooking over 400 sausages, 110kg of potatoes, 3kg of stuffing and 16 litres of gravy! And I thought Christmas dinner for 7 was a challenge!

On the subject of food, I was enticed into classrooms again towards the end of the day on Thursday as a wonderful aroma drifted down the corridor and into my office. Following my nose, I discovered that Year 9 had been baking chocolate chip shortbread, whilst next door, cakes were being decorated brilliantly; some more wonderful opportunities for pupils to flourish; I hope families enjoyed the wonderful treats that came home.

Thursday is also our Year 9 enrichment afternoon of course, when a wide variety of experiences take place, including serving our local community. Mr Cree sent the following message,

Great work from the Enrichment Litter Team working on Park Road and the area below St Laurence's Church this week!

If that weren't enough, on Thursday evening, Miss Forrest and a team of staff took 90 pupils on a trip to the Lowry to see The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Following our worship on CS Lewis last week, this really was a timely visit, and I have no doubt that everyone had a brilliant time.





It has been an unbelievably busy week in PE; Mrs Dempster forwarded the following report,

Over the last 2 weeks, 40 Year 7 girls have been involved with the Chorley fun netball tournaments. It has been fabulous to see so many girls with varying previous levels of experience wanting to represent St Michael's. It has been a pleasure coaching these girls and I look forward to how they play in the District tournament on 13th January.

A massive well done to all four badminton teams who competed this week against other schools in Chorley. They played brilliantly and should be incredibly proud of themselves. The KS4 boys' and girls' teams both came first and will go on to represent Chorley in the county finals in January, while the KS3 boys' and girls' teams both finished in second place. What an achievement for St Michael's. A huge congratulations to everyone who took part!



On Friday 5th December, the Chorley & District Gymnastics competition was held at St Michael's. The pupils have been training for the competition since September, showing excellent commitment and skills. We had 19 pupils participate in the competition and as a school we came away with 5 bronze medals, 8 silver medals and 6 gold medals which is outstanding. Congratulations to all pupils involved, it was a fantastic evening to celebrate such talented individuals.

Our U16s Basketball team have progressed to the last 16 of the Lancashire Cup after successfully qualifying from a difficult group. Their final group game took place last Friday, where they secured a hard-fought win over Hutton Grammar School by just six points. It was a tough encounter, but the team showed outstanding resilience to get over the line. We now await the draw for the last 16 which will be played after Christmas.



On Tuesday, our Year 8 cricket team were crowned Chorley Indoor Cricket Champions. After a shaky start in the preliminary round against Parklands, where they found themselves 0/2 after just three balls, a superb recovery, led by Aaron helped the team post 76/3 from their six overs, before restricting Parklands to 43 in reply. A comprehensive semi-final win against Southlands set up a tense final against Bishop Rawstorne. Both teams bowled superbly in a low scoring contest, but our players held their nerve to secure the title by 10 runs. Well done to all the team on their thoroughly deserved success.

On Wednesday the Y10 boys footballers travelled to Carnforth in the Lancashire Cup 2nd round. A slow start on what was a very small and boggy pitch, we found ourselves 2-0 down at half time. The half time team talk saw a rally cry go out to go and fix the first half performance and that is exactly what the boys did. In a second half that seemed to entirely be played in Carnforth's half the lads eventually managed to start the comeback with about 20 minutes to go. An equalising goal soon followed and with 12 minutes to go we found ourselves level. With the prospect of a penalty shootout looming over us the lads continued to push for the all-important 3rd goal and with 3 minutes left to play it was found. Rescue mission complete and into the 3rd round we go!

Today we've had the entertainment of staff karaoke at lunchtime, another fundraiser for Chitty Chitty Bang Bang; I hope pupils enjoyed being serenaded by some of their teachers, all in aid of a good cause. Thanks to Mrs Nicholson for making it happen!

Of course, there were Gold Stamps awarded again too. This week, I saw some Year 7 pupils for their contribution to worship last week, as well as a young man in Year 9, for his involvement this week. As I say to pupils, we don't award a huge number of stamps, so it is an achievement worth celebrating, for sure!

With just one week to go, it's possibly wise to think about stocking up on replacement equipment for your child, so that they have everything they need for their return in January. To help with this, our equipment shop will be open at breaktime on Wednesday in the cantine. Alternatively, equipment can be ordered on Synergy. Hopefully, this will then be one less thing to think about over the holidays. Can I also mention uniform again? In particular, can I remind you that girls should not be rolling skirts up. From September, we will be asking families of our current Year 7, as well as our new intake, to ensure that skirts are at least knee length, so your support with this is much appreciated.

This month's Online Safety Newsletter highlights key tips for keeping children safe online over the festive period. It covers setting up parental controls on new devices and games, checking age ratings, and managing privacy settings. It warns about risks from AI chatbots and apps, online grooming, and emerging threats such as "Nudify" apps and scams. We encourage our parents and carers to talk regularly with their children about online safety, use blocking and reporting tools, and seek help from trusted sources like CEOP and NSPCC if concerned. Helpful links and resources are included for further guidance.

Of course, next week is set to be a busy one too, with our community Christmas party on Tuesday, various fun activities for pupils on Thursday and our end of term services on Friday. And with that my first year as headteacher will draw to a close, and what an absolute privilege it has been; I'm so looking forward to year two!

Sunshine is promised tomorrow, enjoy!

With kind regards,



Mrs Rachel Rongong
Headteacher

Important Dates

Saturday 13th December	Hughes and Armstrong Choirs carol singing 10.30am-12.30 Chorley town centre and 1.30-3pm Morrisons
Tuesday 16th December	Community Christmas Party - 12-1.15pm in school – please book
Friday 19th December	End of Michaelmas Term – school closes 1pm – buses will collect at this time
Monday 5th January 2026	Start of Lent Term

Therefore, choose

Knowsley
City Learning Centres

Online Safety Newsletter December 2025

AI Chatbots and companions

A simple search of "AI Chat" within the App store highlights the number of AI apps already available, many are rated as 18+ so it is important to speak to our children about them and the risks associated with them. Examples of AI chatbots that your child may have heard of are Character.AI (18+) and My AI from Snapchat (13+).

What are the risks?

- Over reliance on AI companions, for example they may replace 'real life' friendships or over reliance on using them for homework or problem solving.
- Exposure to inappropriate content.
- Privacy/data risks.
- Misinformation as not all information shared is correct and can be biased.

How can I protect my child?

- Check age ratings of any apps or websites that your child accesses.
- Discuss the risks of AI chatbots with them and have open conversations about why they may be using them.
- Set up appropriate parental controls on their devices/ broadband.
- Chat to your child regularly and ensure your child knows that they should talk to you or another trusted adult if anything concerns them.

Further information

https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/blogs/ai-chatbots-and-companions-risks-to-children-and-young-people

New Technology



As some children may be receiving new technology or related games at Christmas, here is a quick reminder of the importance of setting up appropriate parental controls.

Games/Consoles

- Check age ratings: look at the PEGI rating of any new games. *Remember, PEGI rates the gameplay so whilst it is important to review age ratings, you must also check to see if it has any communication elements.*
- If a game does allow your child to communicate with others, then adjust or disable the settings as appropriate to your child.
- On the device itself, set up applicable controls such as restricting spending limits. Follow the links below to find out how to set up Parental Controls for popular devices here:

Xbox: https://www.xbox.com/en-GB/family-hub
PS5: https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/ps5-parental-controls-spending-limits/
Nintendo Switch: https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Hardware/Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls/Nintendo-Switch-2-Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls-2873385.html

Tablets/Smart phones

Set up parental controls on the device to prevent purchases, restrict content viewed and adjust privacy settings. Furthermore, remember to check any apps your child requests to check that they are suitable for their age. Follow the links below to find out more:
iPhones/iPad: https://support.apple.com/en-gb/105121
Android Device: https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/1075738

Further information

https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/

The Safety-First Smartphone

The Other phone is a new smartphone, which includes "SafetyMode" software. The software automatically blocks nudity, profanity, and bullying language in real time. You can find out more here: https://otherphone.co.uk/.

Smart Phone Free Childhood also list some alternatives that you could consider here: https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/alternatives.

Please note, that the inclusion of these models does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation. While these devices may provide a 'safer' alternative to traditional smartphones, there are still potential risks associated with children using any type of phone.

Online Grooming

What is Online Grooming?

Online Grooming is when an adult builds a relationship online to manipulate or exploit a child.

How does Grooming take place

Groomers may use fake profiles to pretend they are someone they are not, for example younger than they really are or pretend to be a person of influence. They will use flattery to bond and build a friendship with your child. They may use online games or social media to initiate contact but then encourage your child to switch to a different app to chat privately, usually on an app that doesn't offer parental controls.

What should I do?

- Use appropriate parental controls.
- Set privacy settings.
- Chat to your child regularly about what they do online and who they speak to. Talk to them about how people may not be who they say they are and show them how to use any blocking or reporting tools on the apps/websites that they use.

What should I do if my child is being groomed?

- If you think your child is in danger, then contact the police immediately.
- Save any evidence that you may have.
- If you are worried about online abuse or the way somebody has been communicating with your child online, then you can contact CEOP (https://www.ceop.police.uk). Once a report has been placed, a Child Protection Advisor will get in touch to help you.

Further information

There is a lot of information available online. The following links provide a comprehensive overview of this subject, as well as the details of who you can contact for further advice and support:

- https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/types-of-abuse/grooming/
- https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/online-grooming/

Signal Private Messenger

Signal is rated as 13+ on the App store. It is a messaging app, where users can text, send voice messages and photos plus participate in group chats and calls. There are no parental controls currently available. As with all messaging apps, the risks can include bullying and viewing inappropriate content. Find out more here: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/chat-apps/

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date released 01.12.25. The inclusion of any links does not imply any affiliation with or endorsement of the linked websites, documents, or videos, nor are we claiming any ownership or copyright in the content of the linked materials.

Nudify Apps

Have you heard of Nudify apps? Users upload a picture or video to a Nudify app and AI creates the nude image. This is obviously horrifying. Bark provides further information as well as what to do if this should happen to your child.

Find out more here: https://www.bark.us/blog/nudify-ai-apps/

How to deal with online scams

Parent Zone have published an article on how to deal with online scams as well as how to prevent them from happening. You can read the article here:

https://parentzone.org.uk/article/how-deal-online-scams-parent-guide

Calm Zone

Childline have an area on their website full of activities, tools and videos to help you let go of stress. It includes yoga videos, breathing exercises, calming videos and games. It also includes information on how to get further support should you need it. Find out more here:

https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/calm-zone/

Would you like to read this newsletter in a different language? You can use the translate tool on our web version: https://www.knowsleyclcs.org.uk/december-2025-secondary