ST JOHN'S WEEKLY NEWS

A Learning Community guided by Gospel Values

23 November 2026
Week B

On Friday we were delighted to welcome former student, Natalie Durkin, into St John's to deliver a special workshop to our Mary Poppins cast and GCSE Drama students. Natalie is currently starring in the UK tour of Billy Elliot the Musical which will end its run in London, marking her West End debut. Natalie spoke to students about her career path since leaving St John's in 2007, speaking honestly about the realities of pursuing a career in theatre. She encouraged students to believe in themselves, be confident in their abilities and never allow setbacks to define them. She explained that auditions often involve hearing the word "no", but that resilience, determination and hard work are what help performers move forward. Students enthusiastically took part in the workshop, learning a tricky dance routine from the show and even sharing some jokes which is a key part of the Billy Elliot audition process. Students were eager to ask questions about life on tour, auditions and the realities of working in the industry. Natalie's honesty, positivity and infectious energy left a lasting impression, inspiring many young people to pursue their ambitions with confidence and determination.





On Friday, twenty girls from Year 8 and Year 9 took part in an exciting Design and Build Workshop at Bishop Auckland College, where they worked in teams to design a new school from the ground up. The challenge required students to consider a range of real-world factors including sustainability, budget management, eco-friendly features and effective teamwork to bring their ideas to life. Students also had the opportunity to hear from women currently working in the construction industry, learning about their career journeys and the wide variety of roles available within the sector.



Focus on... Catholic Life

Last week was an important week for St John's as we underwent our Catholic Schools inspectorate. The purpose of the inspection was to look at the quality of the Catholic life and mission of the school, religious education and collective worship. During the two day inspection, our students were incredible ambassadors for St John's. The students that spoke to inspectors showed real responsibility, respect and confidence and we were very proud of how they conducted themselves.



The inspection gave our new Liturgy Leaders the chance to share their work so far. Bringing together students across all years groups, this group will play an important role in supporting and enriching the prayer and liturgical life of our school. They will help to plan and lead key celebrations, contribute ideas, encourage the participation of others and help us to live out our faith as a Catholic school community. We look forward to seeing our Liturgy Leaders grow in confidence, develop their leadership skills and make a positive contribution to the faith life of our school.

Thank you to all of our parents and carers who took the time to complete the parent survey as part of the inspection, and a special thank you to those parents who spoke directly to the inspectors to share their experiences of St John's.

Finally, a huge thank you to our wonderful staff who worked tirelessly to showcase all of the amazing things about St John's during the inspection. We look forward to sharing the final report in the coming weeks.







Our students had a fantastic time at a county area girls rugby competition on Wednesday last week. Girls from Years 7-10 enjoyed playing contact rugby matches against different schools and showed amazing spirit and teamwork. Alongside the excellent results and match winning performances teams produced, we also were thrilled to see so many girls giving rugby a go, in many cases for the first time. Well done, all!

On Thursday we welcomed Humanutopia into school to work with our Year 9 and Year 10 girls. Their sessions focused on empowerment, confidence, relationships, wellbeing and resilience. Our girls had a fantastic day and showed incredible strength and self-belief when dealing with some of the topics and exercises, as well as forging new friendships. This continues our wider Pastoral Programme sessions aimed at addressing cultural issues and supporting our young people in being the very best they can be.

COMING UP THIS WEEK

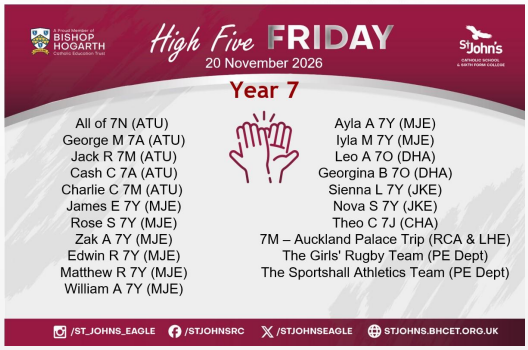
Tuesday 24 November- Well done to all of our students who applied to join our Student Leadership Team. We were really impressed by the applications and students will receive an email by the end of the day on Monday if they have been invited to the next stage. This will take place on Tuesday during Pastoral and will be in the form of a mock meeting where students will be observed on how well they engage with their peers and present their views. Good luck, all!

Wednesday 25 / Thursday 26 November- The next of our Year 7 Auckland Project visits to Christmas at the Palace take place this week with 7A on Wednesday and 7R on Thursday. attending Christmas at the Palace.

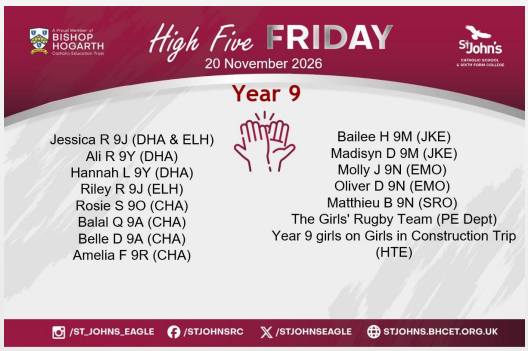
LAST WEEK'S ACHIEVEMENTS

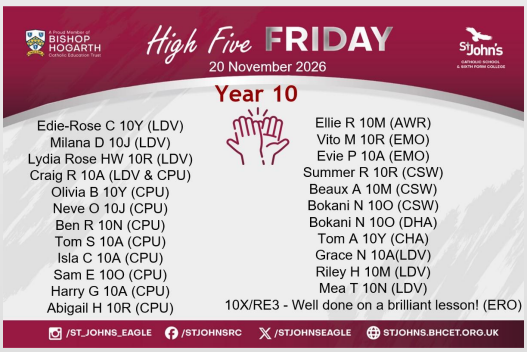
We love to celebrate and share our students' achievements, both in and out of school. If your child has a success they would like to share with us and are happy for it to be posted on our Facebook and Instagram pages, please email it, along with a photo, to Mrs Rose, Assistant Headteacher, at nrose@stjohns.bhcet.org.uk.

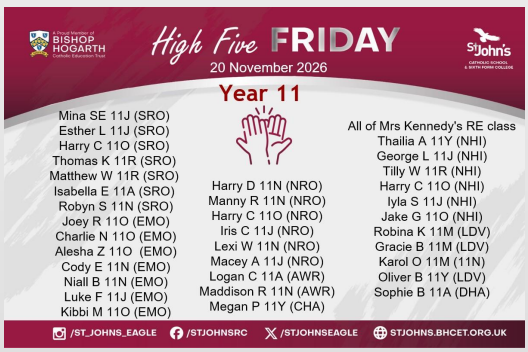


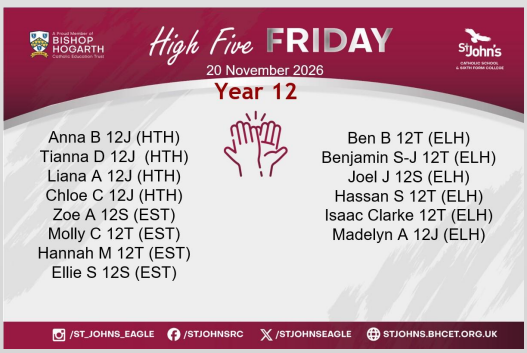


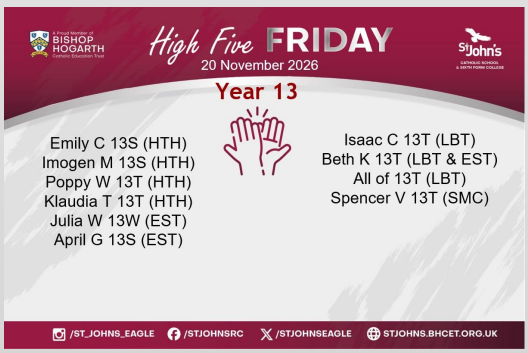












Arbor Top Scorers

Year 7
Kailah R, Martha L, Isabelle Y, Talia B, Flavja B, Jack R, Tase S, Beatrice B, Edwin R, Sophie S

Year 8
Grace W, Toby H, Katherine J, Martha B, Freya F, Lucy B, Joseph H, Francesca H, Aurora P, Esmae U

Year 9
Rosie S, Finley H, Kai D, Belle D, Tommy-Lee C, Luke D, Elliott M, Claudia M, Riley R, Alex T

Year 10
Sam E, Oli K, Matty R, Ben R, Caitlyn H, Harriet S, Isaac B, Clevania C, Isla C, Eli F

Year 11
Megan P, Emmanuel R, Iris C, Thailia A, Harry C, Alex P, Jacob D, Ewan R, Harry M, Airren S

Sixth Form
Monica M, Madelyn A, Ben B, Isaac C, Joel J, Hassan S, Benjamin S-J, Laycie W, Zuzanna W

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- **Tuesday 8 December-** Year 11 Progress Eve
- **Monday 14 December-** Christmas Celebration
- **Tuesday 15 December-** Advent Liturgies
- **Friday 18 December-** Break up for Christmas
- **Monday 4 January-** School reopens
- **Tuesday 5 January-** Year 12/13 Progress Eve
- **Tuesday 19 January-** Year 10 Progress Eve
- **Tuesday 26 January-** Careers Day
- **Monday 1 February-** Year 11/13 Mocks 2
- **Tuesday 2 February-** Year 9 Options Eve

I Heard a Whisper...

In a world where we often rush through our days, it's essential to pause and reflect on the power of compassion and kindness. Embracing the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, we are reminded to prioritise the dignity of every person and to show love to our neighbours. Acts of kindness not only uplift others but also enrich our own lives. A simple gesture, a kind word or a heartfelt thank you can create ripples of positivity that extend far beyond our immediate circles. Well done to Mrs Thompson (Head o Year 12/13), Jayne Summerbell (Admin-Headteacher PA) and Susie Denning (Parent Support Advisor) who received last week's sweet treats!

iheardawhisper@stjohns.bhcet.org.uk

Artist of the Week

Laycie W 12T

