



Mr Hall writes ...

December 2025

As the curtain falls on another calendar year, it's typical for many of us to reflect on the year that has passed. St Joseph's is a community of approximately 600 children and their families, as well as about 80 staff. Suffice to say that 2025 will have been different for all of us - disappointments, successes, grief, joy and so many other experiences along the way. We are, of course, all thrown together by one common factor which is our membership of this wonderful school community.

Last month I attended the Arundel and Brighton Diocesan School Leaders' Conference. The keynote speaker was Cardinal Timothy Radcliffe - he is a Dominican monk and was created a Cardinal last year. Pope Francis declared that 2025 was to be a special Jubilee Year in the Catholic Church, with the theme 'Pilgrims of Hope'. Cardinal Radcliffe (who spurns the Cardinal's uniform in favour of his simple white monk's habit) spoke on this theme at the conference and described music as the 'breathing of hope', declaring that "song expresses our hope for what is beyond our dreams." These are words that I found myself revisiting over the last two weeks as we enjoyed the children of our school 'breathing hope' during their wonderful Christmas nativities.

This term has seen some new leadership among our SJA. The flagship event for the term was our Christmas Fayre which was moved to a Saturday for the first time in many years. I have to confess that I was slightly nervous about whether we would be graced by as many visitors as we have had on Friday afternoons, but Doubting Thomas was delighted to see so many families coming through the gates and enjoying a superb school event. Thank you to the SJA volunteers who worked incredibly hard to organise this event - it is true that many hands make light work, so please do consider whether you can spare some time to help with setting up for similar events in the future.

One drum that I continue to bang is that of attendance. At our Parent Partnership talks at the beginning of the Autumn Term, I spoke about the direct link between poor attendance and limited progress at school. You can check your child's attendance at any point by logging onto your [Arbor Parent Portal](#) account - anything below 95% is a cause for concern and children whose attendance is 90% or lower are classed as 'persistent absentees'. If you do log on to Arbor, while you're there, please check that your contact details are up to date (it's possible to edit these yourself) and that there is an emergency contact listed for your child. This is really important if we are unable to get hold of you.

At the end of this term Natalie Carroll's tenure as Foundation Governor comes to an end. I, along with the Governors, staff and children of St Joseph's, would like to offer our sincere thanks for her dedicated service to the school. Natalie first served as a Parent Governor before continuing her work as a Foundation Governor, completing two full terms and making a significant contribution throughout. She has given her time generously as a volunteer and has consistently shown great passion, care and commitment to St Joseph's and its community. We thank Natalie for all that she has done and continues to do for St Joseph's.

Learning and laughing together in the light of God's love.

We would also like to thank the handful of families who are now regularly supporting the [St Joseph's School Development Fund](#), as well as those who have kindly made one-off donations - all contributions are sincerely appreciated. These early gifts are already helping us to begin rebuilding the fund following its relaunch. We recognise that family circumstances differ, and contributions remain entirely voluntary, but even a couple of pounds given regularly can make a meaningful difference when shared across our community. We will review the funds received over the first six months and regroup in the New Year to reflect and plan next steps, keeping the school community informed along the way. If you would like to set up a regular donation, you can do so by following this [link](#).

I hope you enjoy reading about some of the things that have taken place over the last seven weeks at St Joseph's. The staff are very proud of the children's efforts this term and we look forward to welcoming them back in 2026. For many this is one of the busiest school holidays of the year - my top tip is to try to normal bedtimes as much as possible so that the children don't come back too exhausted in January! We wish you all a very blessed and peaceful Christmas.

Catholic Life at St. Joseph's **Remembrance Service – A reflection by Vieira (Headboy)**

On the 11th we marked Remembrance Day by holding a liturgy at St Joseph's, Redhill. We held an assembly for Years 4 and 5 and our parents to remember the people who sacrificed themselves for peace. In the assembly, we explained how the soldiers fought for peace and freedom, and we also presented the different types of poppies and what they represent. Remembrance Day is a crucial part of the year because it reminds us of the mission to fight for peace, not to glorify war. Another reason we held this assembly was to take time to reflect on what happened in WW1 and WW2. It felt calm and prayerful during the assembly, where we gathered together as one.

Reading in such an important service was a great experience. We came together as a community and thought about the people who were in the war. Sharing that feeling with the audience and other children was amazing, and it gave us time to think about what the soldiers did for us. So, we invite you, not to glorify war, but to work for peace.



Feast of St Cecilia (Year 5)



Year 5 celebrated St Cecilia's Day with a wonderful mix of creativity and learning. The children explored the musical instruments most closely linked with St Cecilia, such as harps and organs, and reflected on how music has been cherished throughout history. Inspired by these discoveries, they produced colourful artwork depicting instruments and scenes that celebrated music, filling the classroom with imagination and joy. Alongside their creative work, the pupils also learnt fascinating facts about St Cecilia, including why she is remembered as the patron saint

of music and how her feast day is celebrated around the world. By the end of the day, Year 5 had not only deepened their knowledge of St Cecilia but also expressed their appreciation for music in a truly memorable way.

Community Prayer Group

We continue to enjoy welcoming some of our parents into the school to spend a short time of reflection on scripture and to pray together. This takes place once a month on a Wednesday morning at 8.50am. Everyone is welcome to come along when they can. The next opportunity to join us will be on Wednesday 28th January 2026.

Faith Leaders

Our amazing group of Year 5 Faith Leaders has grown! We now have a group of 16 who undertake various roles around the school with pupils in other classes and year groups to lead times of prayer in classrooms and sharing the Gospel during assemblies and hymn practice. We look forward to seeing what they have planned for the new term.



Reconciliation



We were grateful to be able to welcome Fr Tony and Fr Joseph into our school during Advent. This enabled the Catholic pupils in Years 5 and 6, who had previously made their First Reconciliation, to have the opportunity to receive the sacrament again. There was also the chance for other pupils to 'have a chat with a priest' if they wanted to, as we prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus at Christmas.

Foodbank Visit



Mr Hall and Mrs Barnes accompanied our Head Boy and Head Girl and Deputies to visit the Redhill Foodbank at St Matthew's Church and to deliver some of your generous donations of food for

those less fortunate in our area. They learnt how the donations are received, sorted and distributed. It is a huge task and the charity relies on many volunteers to run the foodbank well. Here are some of the comments from their visit

"I liked the amount of food they had stored to give to people who need it" Vieira

"I found it amazing how many people volunteer for the foodbank and also how many people they help" Matthew

"I liked to see how many people helped their fellow neighbours. Whilst we were there two people brought in big donations" Swara

"It was interesting to find out how the foodbank works and we were able to check our donations for 'use by dates' and then put them in the different boxes that were labelled for tins, cereals, pasta etc" Lucy



Nativities!

Stars, angels, Inn keepers and donkeys – every child has been consumed by their various roles in the school nativities, and every teacher has used up every spare minute rehearsing the songs that bring the story of Jesus' birth to life for the pupils. For any of you who were able to watch these wonderful performances, you'll agree that the hard work put in by everyone involved paid off. With this in mind, a particular shout out has to go to Mrs Tackie, who has co-ordinated the music,

scripts, roles and rehearsals of four year groups! This enormous feat is not something that can be understated – and our heartfelt thanks go to her for all that she has put in this half term to help our entire school community live out this element of our Catholic Life.

We spoke to some of our pupils about their experiences:

Gabby (1R) - I was an innkeeper – I enjoyed saying "we have no room for you to stay here Mary and Joseph."

Devkrish (1R) - I was a shepherd and my favourite song was The Shepherd's Hey!

Kori (1R) - I was an innkeeper and I liked having lots of my family there.

Evie (2OF) - I was Mary and I had to do thumbs up with Joseph. I liked walking around the crowd.

(2OF) - I was Angel Gabriel and I had to tell Mary not to be afraid. I liked the song It's A Long, Long Way.

Scarlett (3CW) - I was an innkeeper but I forgot to clean the floor – but it was ok.

Chidubem (3CW) - I enjoyed the singing. Three Wise Men From The Orient was my favourite.

Gabriel (4S) - I enjoyed being a reader and also the song called God's Great Plan about Joseph was a carpenter.

Emma (4S) - It was great fun and I thought the year 3 costumes were really cool



Year 6 – Christmas Jumper Day



Learning and laughing together in the light of God's love.

Forest School



Year 1 began their school year with Forest School. They had very varied weather but they loved their outside learning experiences and the firm favourites were learning to use a fire lighter, using hammers, taking their teddies on zip wires travels, eating at the fireside and playing tug of war. They all worked well at showing resilience and were up for taking risks too. Your door hangers look fab! Well done Year 1.



Year 5 have embraced each and every challenge that has come their way. We have learned more about the Greeks and Anglo Saxons in our outside learning environment with lots of quizzes, scavenger hunts and 5L even were able to make an epic Anglo Saxon burial ship. We acted out an Anglo Saxon cremation and a burial and sent them off to the after life. I hope moments like this they will remember. Each child has also taken part in using secateurs, whittling, making bread and cooking it on the BBQ. There has been some great team spirit, patience and determination in these activities. Well done 5L and 5W.

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Year 2 have had a very busy half term in Forest School. They have learned a lot about many key Monarchs and many children chose to make hobby horses, catapults and rubber band paper aeroplanes. They loved sawing and whittling to create the Advent candles and some chose to turn them into little people. We had a super last session baking stuffed apples on the BBQ. The golden syrup and honey treat also went down very well too. Well done Year One, yet again you have been lots of fun to work with and have shown endurance, care for nature and a love to keep active and learn in our outside environment.

Online Safety

Dear parents and carers,

Starting from this issue, with every newsletter I will share top tips and information on keeping children safe online and when using electronic devices.

Our topic for this newsletter: What can parents do to keep children safe when gaming online?

Gaming online is extremely popular – I hear children at school having conversations all the time about games they played the day before (particularly about the game 'Roblox'). An extra element for this generation was absent from most of our childhoods – the function that many games provide to communicate with others via the game software. The risk is clear – we teach children to be aware of strangers outside, but now children playing various games are able to communicate with potential strangers from their own bedrooms. Games have also changed in other ways. A game like Roblox is actually thousands of games rolled into one – users are able to choose which game within Roblox they want to play, and some of these have been reported recently to be inappropriate for primary-aged children. Here is a guide to keeping children safe when gaming online.

Set up safety features and parental controls

- Use built-in controls on consoles and platforms (PlayStation, Xbox, Nintendo, Steam, Roblox, etc.) Roblox parental controls include content and communication restrictions, screen time limits, spending limits, and visibility settings. Parents can set a content maturity level, manage who their child can chat

with, and place a monthly spending limit or block purchases. Do this by going to your child's account settings and then selecting 'Parental Controls'.

- Limit access to age-appropriate games and block certain content of your choosing. This includes making sure Roblox access is restricted to child-friendly games. Find a guide to this from Roblox here: <https://en.help.roblox.com/hc/en-us/articles/30428310121620-Parental-Controls-Overview#:~:text=Go%20to%20Settings,available%20to%2017+%20verified%20users.>

- It is also possible to create a Roblox parent account and link this to your child's account. Details can be found here: <https://en.help.roblox.com/hc/en-us/articles/30428321333140-Parents-How-to-Link-Your-Child-s-Account>

Help children protect their identity

- Teach kids to never share real names, addresses, school names, photos, or passwords in games.
- Encourage them to use anonymous usernames and avoid using voice chat with strangers.

Talk openly about online behaviour

- Discuss how to handle poor language, cyberbullying, and pressure from other players.
- Explain the risks of clicking links, adding strangers, or moving conversations to other apps.
- Make it normal for them to tell you if something feels wrong, without fear of punishment.

Encourage safe gameplay habits

- Keep gaming devices in a shared family space – from conversations with parents, I know that many children play online in the living room or at the kitchen table, rather than in bedrooms, and this is a great idea.
- Encourage breaks to avoid compulsive use, especially in games with loot boxes or constant rewards.
- Remind kids not to download mods or cheats from unofficial sites—they often contain malware or viruses that can cause damage to your device or steal information from you.

Stay involved

- Learn about the games your child plays: watch game trailers, read reviews, maybe play with them.
- Know who they are interacting with — friends from school or strangers online?
- Review friends lists periodically together and remove unknown contacts.

Thank you for reading, and I hope you have found this information useful. Please do contact me through the school office for help, or to give me some advice or tips that you'd like me to include in the next newsletter which would benefit our school community.

Mr Simons

Y6 Teacher and Online Safety Officer

Bling your Bike

Bling you bike returned to St Joseph's for another year of amazing creations! Children were invited to make their bikes, bags or scooters bright and seen using a range of recycled materials. We had some fantastic entries, which made it very difficult to select the winner. 14 children were chosen as winners

(2 from year group). Some were awarded for the most effort and others for the most creative. Have a look at some of our amazing creations!



Achieving silver award



Throughout the last academic year, the staff and children at St Joseph's have worked hard to promote safe and active travel. All our hard works and efforts were noticed, and we were awarded Silver (very good) accreditation from Modeshift. Domhnall, from Modeshift visited and presented the certificate in our weekly assembly. I am incredibly proud of all the effort from staff, children and parents who have helped towards this accreditation. This is only the first step to making sure children are safe while travelling to school and enjoying their journey to and from school.

School Admissions September 2026

A reminder from Surrey County council, the closing date for Reception applications for September 2026 entry is **15 January 2026**.

Surrey CC recommend online applications via <https://www.eadmissions.org.uk/eAdmissions/app>. If there is a valid reason why parents cannot apply online, they can obtain a paper application by calling us on 0300 200 1004. Completed paper application forms must be emailed to schooladmissions@surreycc.gov.uk or posted to the team with a postmark no later than 14 January 2026. We strongly recommend that parents send postal applications by recorded delivery as we are unable to confirm receipt.

Parents can also call 0300 200 1004 for impartial help in completing an application. Full information is available on Surrey's website at www.surreycc.gov.uk/primaryadmissions.

Christmas Masses 2025

Christmas Masses

Wed 24th 6.00pm St Joseph's (Vigil Mass)
Wed 24th Midnight Holy Family (Midnight Mass)
Thurs 25th 9.00am St Joseph's (Dawn Mass)
Thurs 25th 11.00am St Teresa's (Day Mass)

Parish Reconciliation Service
St Joseph's Church, Friday 19th Dec from 6.30pm