

'Be who God wants you to be and so set the world on fire.'

St. Catherine's Newsletter: Autumn 2 Term 2023



A Message From Mrs Quiligotti

Dear parents and carers,

As we find ourselves immersed in the spirit of anticipation and reflection, I extend warm greetings to each of you during this sacred season of Advent. It is a time when we, as a community, come together in prayerful contemplation, preparing our hearts and minds for the joyous celebration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Advent serves as a beautiful reminder of the importance of hope, peace, joy and love in our lives. As we navigate through the hustle and bustle of daily life, it is important to pause to reflect on the profound significance of this season and the timeless values it imparts to us.

Our school theme during this Advent season has been 'Jesus, the light of our world'. We have focused on how Jesus guides us in life and shows us the right path to take. We have also focused on our core value of love, looking at the love God has shown to us through sending his only Son down to our world and the example Jesus sets of showing love to everyone he meets.

As you'll see throughout this newsletter, we've had another wonderfully busy half-term. Ofsted visited our school in November, which was a positive experience. It was lovely to hear so many positive things about our school and to have senior leader judgements verified by Ofsted too. I would like to express my gratitude for the incredibly kind and positive comments and feedback that parents sent to our Ofsted inspectors during our visit. Whilst we aren't privy to individual comments, we were told that feedback was overwhelmingly positive and complimentary so thank you so much for your kind words!

It was lovely to invite parents into school at the beginning of December for our first whole school Christmas crafts session. We hope that those who were able to attend had a great time and it was a really joyous afternoon in school. We look forward to inviting parents in again next term for our Easter crafts session.

As we light the Advent candles and await the arrival of the light of our world, may our hearts be filled with hope, our minds with peace, our spirits with joy, and our actions with love. May this season be a time of spiritual growth, unity, and grace for each and every one of you.

Wishing you and your families a blessed Advent season and a joyous Christmas ahead.

Mrs Quiligotti

Whole School



This Half-Term...

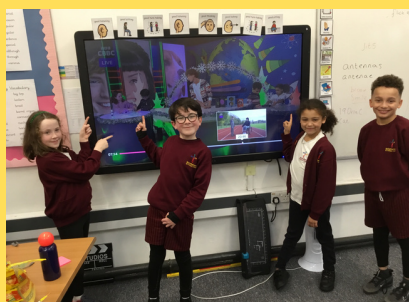
This half-term has been full of specialness and wonder. We have marked Remembrance Day in school with a beautiful service and minute's silence led by our Caritas Ambassadors, along with an opportunity for families to come into our school hall at the end of the day to light a candle and say a prayer for any loved ones who have passed away.

We've also celebrated Anti-Bullying Week and this year's theme 'make a noise about bullying'. Our Year 5 children have taken part in Bikeability and our Year 6 children attended their three day residential at Robin Wood and had a brilliant time! We even had a surprise visit by two of Santa's reindeer, which was very exciting!



Blue Peter

Our Year 4 children and our Caritas Ambassadors were incredibly proud to be part of two of the live Blue Peter shows in December. Our children travelled to Blue Peter studios in Media City, Salford and had a brilliant time working with the presenters, learning more about live TV filming and actually appearing on TV too! They are also now the proud owners of a Blue Peter badge – how special!



Love

Faith

Respect

Perseverance

Compassion

Inspiration

Advent



Our focus during Advent has been on 'Jesus the light of the world', looking at how Jesus guides us in life and shows us the right path to take. We have linked this theme to our core value of 'love', looking at how Jesus shows love to everyone around him and how we can follow in his example, as well as looking at the love God showed for us by sending his only son for us. Our children in Nursery, Reception and Year 2 have performed their Christmas nativities, looking at the story of the birth of 'the light of the world' and what an incredibly special occasion this is for us. Our end of term carol service also focused on the Christmas story and helped us to reflect on the true meaning of this season.

We have also learnt more about the Advent wreath, its significance during this Advent season and which candle we light each week. The children have loved taking part in the lighting of our Advent wreath and singing our special Advent hymn, 'Stay Awake, Be Ready'.



Christmas Crafts

This month, we had our first ever whole-school Christmas crafts session where parents of children in all year groups were invited into classes to work with their child to create some beautiful Christmas-themed crafts. It was wonderful seeing so many parents and family members in school and we were blown away by how creative our school community is! We look forward to inviting parents in again next term for our Easter crafts session.

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Nursery



This Half-Term...

This half term in Nursery, our topic has been Autumn and Celebrations! We have enjoyed our focus texts, 'Wow! Said the Owl' and 'Dear Santa'. As part of our literacy, the children in Nursery have all been writing the word 'wow' on their own whiteboards and drawing and labelling pictures of all of the things the owl saw in the story.

In Maths, we have been focusing on numbers 1, 2 and patterns! The children have become expert pattern makers, with colours and shapes and even by using our bodies too!

We have been preparing for our very first Nativity and learnt lots of new songs and actions. We hope all of our grown-ups enjoyed it!

We have done lots of other exciting things, including celebrating red day, writing and posting letters to Father Christmas, having stay and play and Christmas crafts with our grown-ups and we loved our Christmas party to celebrate the end of the term too! It's been a busy one!

Our children say...

"We have been learning about red stuff! We tried red peppers, jam sandwiches and strawberry laces!"

"I know how to make a pattern.
"Yellow, blue, yellow, blue, yellow, blue."

"We have learnt lots of new songs."

"We can all write 'wow' - w-o-w."



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Reception



This Half-Term...

Our topic this half term has been 'Autumn and Celebrations'. In literacy, we have loved exploring the focus text 'The Leaf Thief'. Through this text, we investigated how seasons change and helped the squirrel to understand what had happened to his missing leaves.

During our mathematics work, we have focused on subitising, counting carefully, composition of numbers and 2D shapes. We are able to subitise numbers to 5 with quick recall and explain their composition of smaller numbers.

We are so proud of our Nativity performance. The children worked incredibly hard to learn lines, songs, stage directions and dance moves. Thank you for all of your support at home and we hope that you enjoyed our final performance.

This half term we had our first 'Big Questions' session with Father John. Father John showed us special objects which are used during Mass, including a bible and chalice from the church. We asked him lots of interesting questions including; "Why do you like being a priest?", "What do you do in the church?", "Why is Jesus so special?" and "Why does God choose to help people?"

Our children say...

"The squirrel was so silly. He thought someone had stolen his leaves, but really in Autumn the wind blows them down."

"I know all about shapes. Squares and rectangles have 4 sides."

"I love the Nativity. The best song is 'Flicker Flicker' with the shepherds."



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Year 1



This Half-Term...

This half-term, we have been learning about the liturgical season of Advent. We have been focusing on what it means to wait during this time and how we can best prepare. To do this, we created an "Appreciation Station" to write down all of the people who help us in our lives daily and how they help us prepare for Jesus' arrival.

We have had lots of fun preparing for our Christmas Carol Concert. It has been lovely learning all of the carols and even learning some songs in Spanish!

In English, we have been focusing on the book "Nibbles!" (a book-eating monster). We have learnt how to write a diary entry in the first person and have begun adding adjectives to our work independently.

In Topic, we have learnt about history and in particular the toys from the past. Over the last few weeks, we have compared old and new toys and have answered our big question, "Did our grandparents have PlayStations?"

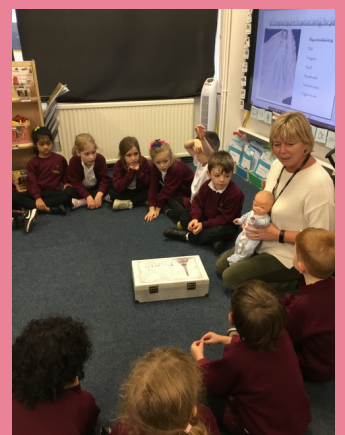
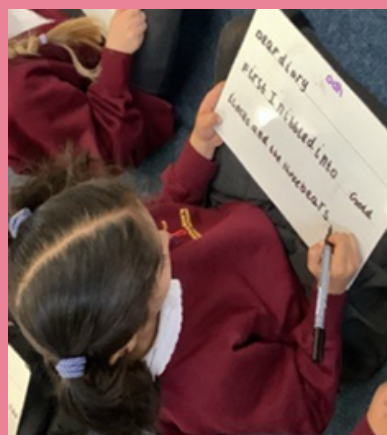
Our children say...

"I love when we do PE because I can now do a teddy-bear roll all by myself!"

"I can sing Jingle Bells in Spanish!"

"I have found Maths fun because we get to look at 2-D and 3-D shapes."

"Learning about the seasons in Science has helped me know what to wear to school to keep warm."



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Year 2



This Half-Term...

As part of our English lessons, we have been reading, 'the owl who was afraid of the dark.' We used this text as our inspiration for studying these fascinating birds. We used our knowledge of owls to create an owl fact-file and we enjoyed learning about the different features of this factual style of writing.

In Topic, we have been learning all about The Great Fire of London. We all took part in a special topic day where we dressed up in clothes from the 17th century. We took part in a drama workshop, created our own biscuits, wrote using a quill and ink (it's trickier than it looks), and we even learnt a new dance!

This half-term, we have been busy rehearsing our Christmas production – Baa Baa Bethlehem. It tells the Christmas story but through the eyes of the shepherds and sheep. We really enjoyed showing casing our many talents and it really helped us to remember the true meaning of Christmas.

In Science, we have been learning all about materials and their properties. We have conducted a number of investigations to explore the properties of materials and we used this to create our very own owls using a variety of materials and we had a hoot of a time!

Our children say...

"I loved dressing up for our topic day and the drama workshop really helped me feel like I was back in 1666."

"Our Christmas play was so much fun and I definitely think we are ready for the West-End!"

"I loved making a tea-light holder using clay and I can't wait to give this as a Christmas gift to my mummy!"



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Year 3



This Half-Term...

This half-term in Science, we have been learning about the process of fossilisation and how fossils are formed. First, we made our own salt dough. Then we pushed a small plastic toy dinosaur into the dough, removed it and left it to harden for a while. As a result, we created our own replica dinosaur mould fossil.

In Computing, we used the Scratch programme to create our own animation. We chose a character and background then we learnt how to control their movement and how to time it. We also added speech and music.

In Art, we have been looking at the art work of the artist Vincent Van Gogh. We have been exploring different textures and have used different grades of pencil to show tones and help us achieve a range of textured effects.

In our Music lessons, Mrs Dewsnap has been teaching us many songs and also how to play the ukulele. In preparation for the Christmas Carol Service, we have been practising 'A stable under a star' and 'Mary had a baby.'

Our children say...

"It was fun making the salt dough. It was very sticky and messy!"

"I've enjoyed using Scratch to make my sprite move around and speak."

"I really enjoy Art lessons. I liked using all the different grades of pencil to shade and draw texture."



Year 4



This Half-Term...

This half term, we had a very special visit to Blue Peter. We loved meeting the presenters and celebrities including Henry the Beagle Basset Hound. It was great seeing the inside of a studio and how an episode was made. We even got a Blue Peter badge!

In Science, our topic has been states of matter. We have loved this topic as we have conducted lots of experiments exploring the process of evaporation and different states of matter.

In Topic, we have been learning about the Vikings. We have used our prior knowledge of the Anglo Saxons to understand the chronology of our History topics effectively. We loved learning about how the Vikings lived, Viking longhouses and answering our key question: were the Vikings brains, brawn or both?

In PE, we have loved invasion games and exploring this through basketball. We have been defending and attacking with a ball wonderfully and have become pros at bouncing the ball between both hands.

Our children say...

"I liked learning how to draw reflections in Art using Christmas trees."

"I loved going to Blue Peter and meeting the presenters and being on a live show."

"I like learning about the Vikings as we got to learn about lots of cool weapons."



Love

Faith

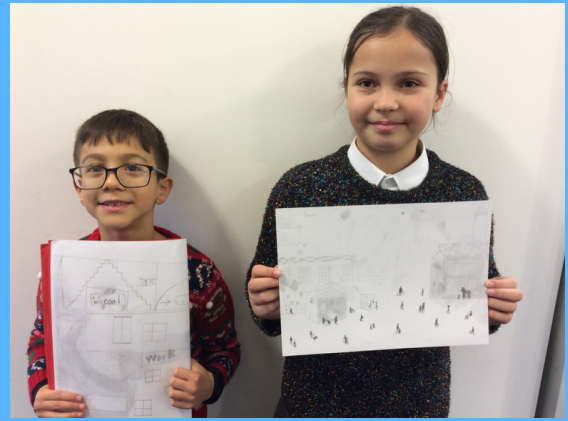
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Year 5



This Half-Term...

This half-term we have worked exceptionally hard on fractions in Maths. Fractions can be quite challenging at Year 5 level, so we have used a lot of diagrams (e.g bar models) to help us to visualise things like equivalent fractions.

In History, we have learned how Queen Victoria became Queen at age 18. We are investigating her long reign and still have more to study after Christmas! Our lessons have included the plight of Victorian children but we are also looking at important laws that were passed to improve conditions for children.

To tie-in with our studies of Victorian times, we have created our own version of a Lowry painting in our sketch books.

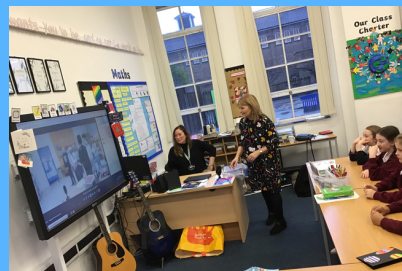
In Religion, we have been studying the importance of commitment and how this can be expressed in our lives, including in the sacrament of marriage.

Our children say...

"I absolutely adore learning about the Victorians in History. In addition, our English text (Street Child) makes you feel as though you are in Victorian times."

"I liked the Google Meets with did with our two partner schools in Spain because it allowed me to see my Spanish pen-pal."

"I have been taught loads of new dance moves by our specialist dance teacher!"



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Year 6



This Half-Term...

In Spanish this half-term, we did a Google Meet with our exchange schools (Mallón and Palacios) where we all performed a Christmas song. We sang 'Merry Christmas Everyone' by Shakin' Stevens and our Spanish friends loved it!

In Science, we have been learning all about electricity. We have built our own circuits and learned about how voltage affects the brightness of a bulb. We really lit up the classroom!

Year 6 loved the Christmas Craft afternoon where we made wreaths; it was so fun being creative and we really went to town with the glitter!

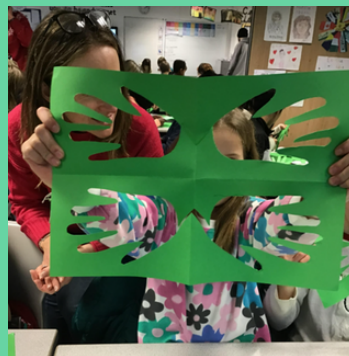
In PE, we have been developing our hockey skills with Mr Hollins. We loved working in small groups where we practised dribbling the ball with our stick and then passing to another player. It was great fun!

Our children say...

"I've really enjoyed PE because we got to play football and rugby!"

"I liked making the wreaths during the Christmas Craft afternoon - it's now hanging in our sitting room!"

"Topic has been so interesting because we've learned about Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust!"



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Music with Mrs Dewsnap



Music Lessons

In our Music lessons, it is an important part of our curriculum to learn about, celebrate and embrace other cultures.

This term, for example, we arranged for African drumming specialists to visit our school to ignite children's enthusiasm for their learning and encourage whole class participation. All of our children from Nursery to Year 6 experienced an amazing African drumming and percussion workshop, providing them with a powerful introduction to rhythm and songs from Africa.

The children created sounds and music from the African continent and everyone had a 'hands on' immersive experience playing djembe drums with the feelings of unity in being part of a drumming circle! Our talented teacher was most inspiring, having played djembe for audiences such as Her Majesty the Queen and Nelson Mandela! We were all so proud of our children who showed great interest and enthusiasm throughout the session.



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Music with Mrs Dewsnap



Choir

Recently, our wonderful choir was honoured and privileged to sing carols in Didsbury Village for the Christmas Lights switch on. It was so heart-warming to hear that our young choristers received so many compliments from the traders, the public, and the Didsbury Festival Team. Well done children and thanks to all our parents for your continued support.

On Sunday evening, the choir took part once again in The Community Nativity at Withington Baths, which was a resounding success. The choir accompanied the actors with a few carols including a big favourite, 'Love Shone Down'.

Our choristers are now preparing for the big Young Voices event next term where they will perform with other schools at the AO Arena in Manchester to thousands of audience members!



Sports



It has been another busy half-term of sports, both within and outside of the curriculum. Some year groups have been taught by specialist gymnastics and dance coaches this half-term, helping them to progress their skills. Our children have been thoroughly enjoying these lessons and have spoken so positively about them. Our Year 5 and 6 football teams have been busy competing against other schools as part of the Manchester Excel League. Our netball team continues to train weekly, preparing for competing against other schools in netball tournaments planned for the spring term. Our KS2 cheerleading team has recently performed at the Electric Athletics Christmas showcase, where they showed off their fantastic routine to over 300 people! Our cross country stars have continued to achieve well during their Saturday runs too and we're very proud of everyone taking part. A special shout out goes to those children who qualified to compete in the Cross Country Citywide Finals in November – well done, children! We continue to have a range of after school sporting opportunities for our children including football, netball, cheerleading, gymnastics, dance and yoga and it's great to see so many children accessing these.



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Student Leadership



Laudato Si Council

This half-term, the Councillors have been conducting some very useful Pupil Voice about our PSHE and RHE curriculum. They have also continued being excellent role models around school by promoting respect and compassion at playtimes.

Learning Leaders

We have recently appointed 'Learning Leaders' from children in Year 5 and 6 who will support some of our younger children in their learning. This is a great way to support our older children in developing their leadership skills while helping our younger children with their learning, as well as developing relationships between different year groups in school. This is a prestigious role requiring a great deal of responsibility and commitment to supporting our younger children and we were so pleased to receive so many applications.

Climate Change Champions

Take a look on the next two pages to find out more about our new pupil leadership group!

Caritas Ambassadors

Our Caritas Ambassadors have been working hard in December to support our school collection for Woodstreet Mission. They have helped with collecting in all donations and in raising the profile of this great charity within school.

Our children also led our Remembrance reflection, helping us to remember those who have lost their lives and praying for their eternal rest. Our Caritas Ambassadors were also privileged to be part of the Blue Peter Christmas Extravaganza live episode this month! They had a fantastic time taking part in all of the filming and meeting the Blue Peter presenters and Henry, the Blue Peter dog.

GIFT Team

Our GIFT team has continued to support us in leading our whole school masses this half-term as well as helping us to promote the key messages of Advent in school during this special liturgical season. They have also been coming up with some great ideas for next term to continue to develop the faith life of our school.

Climate Change Champions

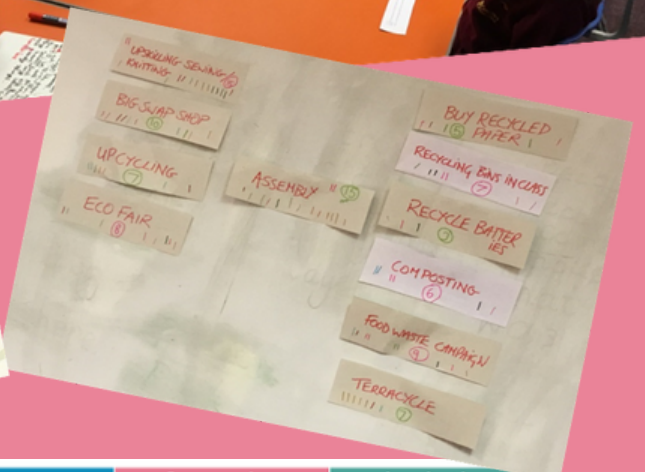
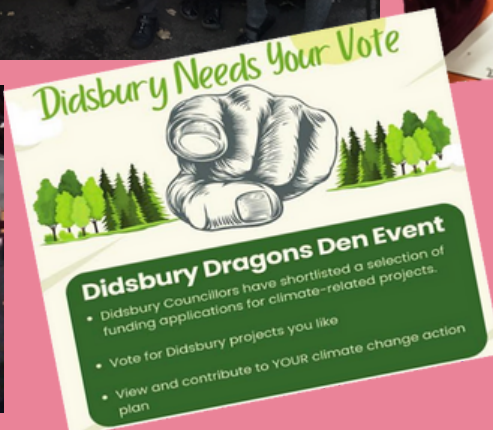


This year, St. Catherine's is stepping up to Pope Francis' plea for 'swift and unified action' to tackle the ecological and climate challenge that our world is facing.

Mr Westbrook is our new sustainability lead in school and is already working with lots of local professionals to help make our school a more sustainable place. Eight children from Year 4 and 5 have been chosen to raise the profile of sustainability within school as Climate Change Champions!

Here is some of the progress we have made so far (see the next page too!):

- The school has recently acquired funding to have solar panels installed on the KS2 building roof to support our energy diversification. We now have 46 solar panels on our school roof!
- We have entered an application for a grant to improve bike storage facilities and we are hoping to get a green roof bike shelter. Fingers crossed!



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Climate Change Champions



- We have worked with Cllr Linda Foley to access the Neighbour Investment Fund (NIF) from the council to have Dr Raichael Locke from Manchester Environmental Education Network (M.E.E.N.) work alongside Mr Westbrook (Sustainability Lead) in creating an Eco Committee.
- The children have begun looking at a number of ways that the school can improve its environmental footprint and have secured funding from Didsbury Dragon's Den Event. Some of our Climate Change Champions presented in front of lots of Didsbury residents and came in second place, securing the funding they asked for!
- City of Trees have been into school to conduct a survey of the school and will be providing us with a plan of how we can green up the school with planters and by possibly adding more trees as well for bio diversity.

We are so proud of what our Climate Change Champions have achieved in such a short amount of time. The future is very bright for our children!



We won £2,400 for our school too!



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Parent and Teacher Association (PTA)



Dear parents and carers,

A massive thank you for your generosity and support during the last half-term, particularly during the run up to the festive season, donating, volunteering and of course coming along to enjoy and support the events. It has been wonderful to see so many of our school community involved.

If you would like to know more about the PTA or get involved in any of the upcoming events, we would love to hear from you. You can get in touch with Marian on 07383010123 or email us at stcatherinesdidsburypta@gmail.com.

Finance update:

Costume disco – £1,456.51 (with gift matching confirmed)

Christmas Fair – £2,558.09

Mulled Wine and Hampers – £1,548.20

Amount raised since September – £5,806.34



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Parent and Teacher Association (PTA)



UPCOMING EVENTS:

AGM

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 11th January at 3.15pm in school, with the option to join via Zoom. Everyone is welcome to come along; it is an opportunity to have your say and hear about what is planned for the rest of the academic year. If you are interested in a committee role, please get in touch with Marian on 07383 010123.

Bag2school Collection

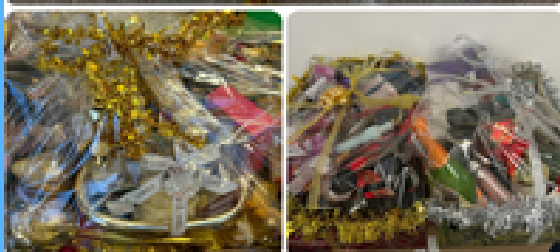
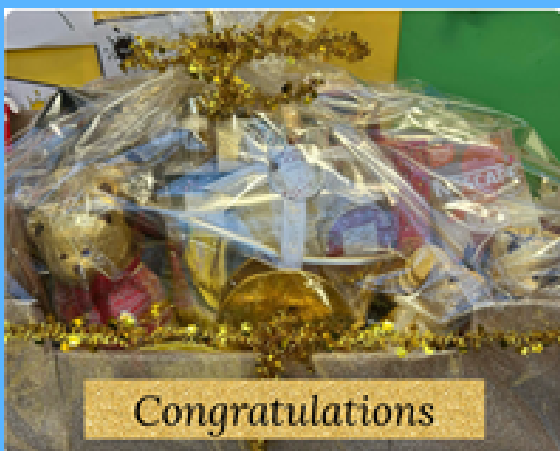
The next Bag2school collection will be on Friday 26th January 2024. Please leave your donations in the Church porch by 9am on the day.

Bedtime stories

On Wednesday 31st January 4.30–5.30pm, parents are invited to stay in the school hall when the children take part in the bedtime story event. There will be hot drinks available and an opportunity to pick up preloved uniform.

Valentine's Celebration

More information about our PTA Valentine's celebrations is coming soon.



Enter our
Super Draw

**WIN A £3,000
CHRISTMAS
CASH BONUS**



 St. Catherine's
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Parent and Teacher Association (PTA)



ONLINE FUNDRAISERS

Don't forget you can help support our fundraising efforts through joining Your School Lottery, using Easy Fundraising when shopping online and checking if your work place offers Gift matching.

Your School Lottery

Congratulations to our recent local draw winners. The more people that play, the bigger our weekly guaranteed prize will be!!!

In the festive Super Draw, one lucky person will win an amazing £3,000 Christmas Cash Bonus. Get your Super Draw tickets before Saturday 23rd December to be in with a chance to win!

<https://www.yourschoollottery.co.uk/lottery/school/st-catherines-r-c-primary-school>



Easy Fundraising

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/stcatherinesdidsbury/>

Easy Fundraising is a great way you can help raise funds for school whenever you shop online without costing you a penny! Use Easy fundraising to shop with over 7,000 brands including Amazon, John Lewis, Tesco, Currys, Asda, Apple and many more. When you shop, you will raise a free donation for St Catherine's every time. It's that easy; follow the link above to join today.

Gift Matching:

Please check with your employer to see whether you are eligible for Gift Matching as part of the company benefit. Your contributions towards fundraising activities for the PTA can often be matched either in full or in part by your employer.

Thank you for your continued support, have a wonderful Christmas and Happy New Year.

The PTA ❤️

PTA Committee

Chair – Marian Glorioso

Co Secretaries – Tina Fitzpatrick and Daniela Bartolo Romano

Co Treasurers – Katie Sammonds and Sarah Moister