



# THE ABI UPDATE

ISSUE 10 FRIDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2026

## MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER - MR CLINTON

Dear Pupils, Parents, Carers and Friends of Archbishop Illesley,

As you read this, half term will have started and we can all enjoy a well-deserved 10-day break. My advice to Year 11, who will start their last set of mocks on the first day back after half term and to Year 13, who are already revising as they enter the last 8 weeks of formal schooling, is to get into a routine this holiday. Definitely, have a rest and enjoy time with your family and friends, but also set aside two hours a day at a time to suit you, to engage in 30 minute bursts of revision. This revision should be away from the distractions of phones, music, YouTube and even siblings! Content would be interleaved (which means after a break, switching topics every 30 minutes) and knowledge should be transferred from the page, into your long term memory and reformed into revision/flash cards, mindmaps, diagrams, formulas, essay plans or paragraphs. If you need any further tips, speak to your tutors or subject teachers for more subject specific information.

This week's gospel was particularly fitting for the Archbishop Illesley community. It is the week every year where Jesus says to his disciples to 'let your light shine' which of course is our school's motto and mission - for both staff and children. In the same passage, Jesus tells his disciples, 'you are the salt of the earth'. As Mr Foley told Year 11 in Monday's assembly, salt can add flavour to food but also preserve it. In the same way, we as God's people, can make things better for our family and friends. This is our mission: to share our talents, be proud of who are and spread the good news of the gospel of love and care and salvation. This same messages have been shared by Canon Jonathan Veasey in our staff training today; staff should feel renewed as they begin their half term as our seeds of hope begin to germinate.

**“...let your light shine.”**

### KEY DATES:

- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> Feb - Friday 20<sup>th</sup> Feb - HALF TERM school is closed for pupils and students
- Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb - Back to school for pupils, students and staff
- Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb - Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March - Year 11 Mock Exams commence
- Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb - DT Mini Factory tour
- Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February - DT UCB Food Technology trip
- Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February - Year 12 London trip
- Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March - Biology Field Trip
- Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March - Biology Field Trip
- Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March - Year 8 Science STEM Event
- Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March - Year 13 Politics Revision Workshop trip
- Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March - Year 8 Vaccination catch up
- Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March - Year 13 Gold DoFE Practice
- Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March - Year 11 Photographs

## CATHOLIC LIFE

### SCRIPTURE REFLECTION: MATTHEW 5:13-16

'You are salt for the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled under people's feet. 'You are light for the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.

#### How is this relevant today?

In this Gospel, Jesus uses two simple but powerful images to describe what it means to be His followers: salt and light. These images were meaningful in His time, but they speak just as clearly to our children, our families, and our school community today.

When Jesus says, "You are salt for the earth," He reminds us that Christians are meant to bring something life-giving to the world. Salt gives flavour and preserves what is good. For our pupils and students, being "salt" means bringing kindness, honesty, respect and compassion into their everyday lives. It can be seen in small but significant actions: including someone who feels left out, speaking with courtesy, showing patience, or standing up for what is right. In a world that can sometimes be unkind or divided, our young people are called to be a positive, hopeful presence.

Jesus also warns that salt can lose its taste. This invites us to reflect on how we nurture our faith. Through prayer, learning, the sacraments and acts of service, we help our pupils and students stay rooted in the Gospel so that their lives truly reflect Christ's love.

Jesus then calls His disciples "light for the world." Light brings warmth, clarity, and direction. A lamp is meant to be seen, not hidden. In the same way, our pupils and students are called to let their goodness be visible through their actions—not for praise, but so that others may experience God's love through them. This is beautifully captured in our school motto: "Let your light shine." This is not just a phrase on our walls; it is an invitation for every child in our community. We encourage them to let their light shine through generosity, courage, forgiveness, service and joy. When they do this, they help others see goodness in the world and give glory to God.

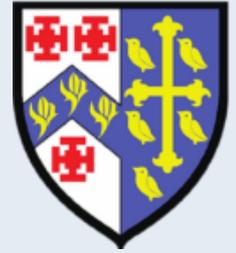
Today, many young people face pressures from social media, peer expectations, and a culture that does not always value faith or virtue. This Gospel reminds them that their light is needed more than ever. They are not meant to blend in or hide what is good, but to shine brightly through their words and deeds. As parents, carers and educators, we are partners in this mission. By modelling faith, kindness, and integrity at home and at school, we help our children grow as people who truly are salt and light in the world. May we continue to encourage all our pupils and students to "Let your light shine," so that through their good works, others may encounter Christ and give praise to our Father in heaven.



“...You are light for the world...”

## BEHAVIOUR AND STANDARDS - MRS BURNHAM

## PASTORAL



As we come to the end of the half term, I would like to thank families for their continued support in helping us maintain high standards across the school. Your partnership plays an important role in creating a calm, safe, and purposeful learning environment for all pupils.

### Uniform

Please use the half term break to check that your child has the correct school uniform ready for the start of next half term. Ensuring pupils are dressed in line with the school uniform policy supports consistency, high expectations, and a positive school culture. Any issues with uniform should be addressed before pupils return to school.

### Standards and Equipment

We also ask families to ensure pupils are fully prepared for learning by checking that they have the required PE kit and appropriate stationery. Being properly equipped helps pupils to settle quickly into lessons and engage positively with learning from the first day back.

### Behaviour To and From School & Online Safety

Pupils represent Archbishop Ilsey when travelling to and from school, and we expect them to behave respectfully within our local community, including in nearby shops and public spaces. Over the holiday period, please continue to reinforce expectations around staying safe, making positive choices, and showing respect to others.

In addition, we ask parents and carers to support online safety by actively managing their child's social media presence. Monitoring online activity, privacy settings, and screen time helps keep pupils safe and supports their wellbeing.

Thank you for your continued support. We wish all families a safe and restful half term and look forward to welcoming pupils back ready for a positive start to the next half term.

## YEAR 8 - MRS WAFI

## HEAD OF YEAR UPDATES

It has been truly wonderful to see forms actively participating in assemblies over recent weeks. Standing up to speak in front of a year group and one's peers takes a great deal of courage, confidence and preparation, and our pupils should be extremely proud of themselves. I highly commend all those who took part for their willingness to challenge themselves, support one another and represent their forms so positively. Opportunities like these help pupils develop important life skills, and I very much look forward to seeing what other forms have prepared to share in future assemblies.



Alongside this, it has been especially encouraging to see so many pupils demonstrating a consistently positive attitude towards their learning. There is a growing sense that every day matters and every minute counts, and this is reflected in pupils' focus in lessons, their resilience when faced with challenges, and the way they support one another both in and out of the classroom. Acts of kindness, encouragement and teamwork are evident across the school community, and these values play a vital role in creating a safe, respectful and purposeful learning environment for all.

As a school, we continue to encourage our pupils to be brave, to persevere and to support one another, guided by the reminder from Scripture: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

We are very proud of our pupils and grateful for the ongoing support of parents and carers as we work together to help every child grow academically, socially and personally.



As we reach the end of this half-term, I wanted to take a moment to express how thoroughly I am enjoying my role as Head of Year 7. I have been immensely proud of the year group over the past few weeks; their productivity, positive attitudes, and willingness to dive into school life have been a joy to witness. It is truly a privilege to lead such a vibrant group of young people.

### Assembly Highlights: Courage & Faith

A huge well-done to the pupils in 7CS and 7OC for their recent assemblies on St. Catherine of Siena and St. Oscar Romero. Public speaking to a large group of peers is a daunting task, but the bravery, confidence, and teamwork shown by these pupils was superb. They spoke with real heart about these saints and the values they represent.



### Celebrating Our Success

I also want to give a massive shout-out to 7BL, who have set a fantastic example over the last fortnight. Not only did they secure the highest attendance in the year group with an impressive 98%, but they also managed to bag the most house points as well! It is a brilliant double achievement, and it's been a joy to send out so many praise postcards this half-term to students who are leading by example. As a Head of Year it is a real privilege to recognise the hard work of so many pupils who are consistently going above and beyond.

### Sporting Success & Team Spirit

On the sporting front, our Year 7s have been absolutely flying. I was thrilled to see our Athletics team compete in the indoor tournament on Wednesday, 11th February; they performed exceptionally well and represented the year group with real pride. Beyond the track, I've been catching up with Mr. Hemmings, our Head of PE, who has been telling me just how successful the after-school rugby club has become. He's noted that some of our pupils are starting to truly excel on the pitch—who knows, perhaps one day we'll be watching one of our own representing their country in the Six Nations!

### Half-Term Stars & Virtues

It has been a privilege to see so many names put forward by form tutors for embodying our Christian virtues or being voted as the "Star" of their group. I would like to specifically congratulate: Eesa A, Hanna K, Saliha Mehmood, Layla H; Saniye H, Edward M, Kamayrik S, Lara W, Darcee-Rae C, Miracle N, Aviea S and Ibrahim S.

### Dates for your Diary: Looking Ahead

The next half-term promises to be just as busy. Please keep these dates in mind:

- World Book Day (Thursday, 5th March): We look forward to seeing the school transformed by our favourite characters.
- Year 7 Parents' Evening (Thursday, 12th March): Please ensure you have made appointments with all subject teachers via our booking system. We look forward to seeing you there.

**A Final Reflection** As we head into the break, I want to leave you with a verse that reminds us of the power of our voices: "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." (1 Thessalonians 5:11) Let's ensure our words always serve to lift people up, both in school and in the wider community. God bless you all over the half-term break. Stay safe, rest well, and let your light continue to shine.



Year 9, it has been a very busy half term, and we are incredibly proud of you. You have worked hard, shown maturity, and represented yourselves and the school so well in everything you have done.

This half term has been full of important moments and achievements. We celebrated a superb success by winning the Envision Programme at Birmingham City Football Club, which was an incredible achievement and a real testament to your teamwork, confidence, and determination. You should be extremely proud of this.

We also held Parents' Evening, which gave pupils, parents, and teachers valuable time together to reflect on progress so far, identify strengths, and discuss what needs to be done as you prepare for next year and the start of your GCSE journey. These conversations are an important step in helping you take responsibility for your learning and future goals.

As a community, we were blessed to celebrate Mass with Fr Toby, giving us the opportunity to come together in faith, reflect, and give thanks. These moments remind us of the importance of pausing, reflecting, and supporting one another as a Catholic school family.

You have also taken part in options assemblies, where you were given thoughtful guidance, advice, and reassurance to help you make informed choices about your next steps. These decisions are significant, and it was wonderful to see how seriously you engaged with the process.

A special and heartfelt thank you to Mrs Zannar and Mr Lakin, who produced and delivered the options assemblies. The time, energy, and care that went into these were absolutely incredible, and all pupils benefitted from their dedication and support.

As we now begin to prepare for Lent, this is a time for reflection, growth, and renewal. Pope Leo reminds us: "Lent is a time of renewal, a call to turn back to God and to one another." As we move into this season, let us think about how we can continue to grow – in effort, kindness, responsibility, and faith – and how we can support one another as we prepare for the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Well done, Year 9. Keep going, keep striving, and keep making us proud. Have a wonderful and restful half-term break. May this time give you the chance to pause, recharge, and return refreshed and ready for the weeks ahead.

On Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February a group of Year 10, 12 and 13 pupils and students represented the school as Sports Leaders at the Utilita Arena. The event saw 22 Birmingham primary schools take part in an indoor athletics competition. All the leaders involved did a fantastic job and impressed the staff from Sport Birmingham. There was lots of positive feedback from the primary school teachers and pupils also! Well done to all involved.

## ENRICHMENT





As we reach the end of this half term, I would like to take a moment to reflect on what has been a busy and positive period for Year 10. We have now reached the halfway point of the academic year, which is a significant milestone. Pupils are well into their GCSE courses and this is a crucial time to build strong habits that will support their success moving forward.

This week's assembly focused on the theme of kindness. We discussed the importance of showing respect, empathy and consideration towards others, both in school and beyond. Kindness plays a vital role in creating a positive learning environment where everyone feels safe and supported. It has been wonderful to see so many pupils demonstrating these values in their daily interactions.

We have continued to celebrate pupil achievements through our awards and Shining Light recognitions. These awards highlight pupils who consistently demonstrate excellent effort, progress, resilience and positive attitudes to learning. We are incredibly proud of the many Year 10 pupils who have been recognised this half term for their commitment and maturity.

We are delighted to share the results of the UKMT Intermediate Maths Challenge – a very challenging national competition that tests mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills. An impressive 19 Year 10 pupils achieved either a Bronze or Silver award, which is a fantastic accomplishment in such a competitive event. We congratulate all pupils who took part for embracing this opportunity and representing the school so well. The certificate winners are as follows:

Humza K - Silver - Best in School; Ismael B - Silver; Julia G - Silver; Zuzanna K - Silver; Phoebe O - Silver;

Khadijah A - Bronze; Daniel A - Bronze; Salma Ben M - Bronze; Sean C - Bronze; Ellis C - Bronze; Alicja G - Bronze; Michael K - Bronze; Owen Malin H - Bronze; Dorando M - Bronze; Kacey N - Bronze; Evie O - Bronze; Lauren S - Bronze; Filip T - Bronze; Inaaya U - Bronze

As we move into the second half of Year 10, attendance and punctuality remain absolutely essential. Every lesson counts at this stage of their GCSE courses.

**Strong attendance supports:**

- Better understanding of key concepts
- Improved confidence in assessments
- Stronger relationships with teachers and peers
- Greater overall academic success

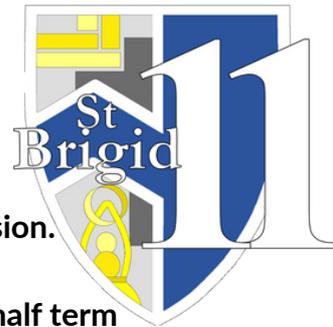
We ask for your continued support in ensuring pupils attend school every day and arrive on time, fully equipped and ready to learn.

Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support. We are proud of the progress Year 10 pupils are making and look forward to seeing their continued growth next half term.

We wish you all a restful and enjoyable break.

## Making the Most of Half Term

As half term approaches, we would like to remind our Year 11 pupils how important it is to use this break wisely. While it is essential that pupils take time to rest, relax and recharge, it is equally important that they use some of this time for focused revision.



Pupils have two weeks of mock exams beginning on Monday 23rd February, so this half term provides a valuable opportunity to review key topics, practise exam questions, and ensure they feel confident and prepared.

## TOP TIPS FOR REVISING AND PREPARING FOR MOCK EXAMS

### For Pupils:

1. Make a simple revision plan - Write down which subjects you need to revise each day. Try to do short sessions (20–30 minutes), then take a break.
2. Start with the subjects you find hardest - Tackle tricky topics first while your energy levels are high. Leave easier subjects for later.
3. Use active revision methods - Instead of just reading notes, try:
  - Making flashcards
  - Creating mind maps
  - Writing summaries in your own words
  - Practising past exam questions
  - Testing yourself or a friend
4. Revise little and often - It is better to do a bit of revision each day than leave everything to the last minute.
5. Take breaks and look after yourself - Get fresh air, eat well, drink water, and try to get enough sleep. Your brain works better when your body is rested.
6. Be exam-ready - Check you have the correct equipment. Your exam timetable can be found on the school website - curriculum > Exams > Exam Timetables

### For Parents and Carers:

1. Help create a quiet study space - Provide a calm, well-lit area with minimal distractions.
2. Encourage a routine - support your child in sticking to their revision timetable. Gentle reminders can be helpful.
3. Be positive and supportive - Praise effort, rather than focusing only on results. Remind them that doing their best is what matters.
4. Help them find balance - Make sure they take breaks and have time to relax as well as revise.



We are also pleased to share that Sixth Form pre-admission interviews will continue after the break. Staff have been incredibly impressed with how well prepared our students have been so far, and many pupils will have already received their Offer Letter from us – a fantastic achievement.

We encourage all Year 11 students to strike a healthy balance over half term: enjoy some well-earned time off, but also keep sight of the goals ahead. A little preparation now will make a big difference in the weeks to come.

## Sixth Form Parents' Evening – Thank You and Key Messages

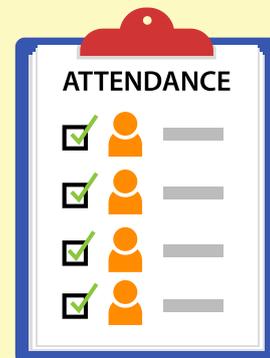
We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all Year 12 and Year 13 parents and carers who attended last night's Sixth Form Parents' Evening. It was a pleasure to see so many of you in school, speaking with teachers and engaging in conversations about your child's progress and future. Your time and support are greatly valued.

Parents' Evenings are incredibly important to us in the Sixth Form. They allow us to celebrate students' successes, share honest and constructive feedback and agree on the best ways to support each individual moving forward. Most importantly, these evenings reinforce the strong partnership between school and home that lies at the heart of our Sixth Form. This partnership is something that truly sets us apart from colleges, and it is something we are immensely proud of. We believe that when school and families work together, our students achieve their very best.

A key theme from the evening was the importance of attendance. Staff spoke clearly about the strong link between excellent attendance and excellent academic outcomes. Put simply, students who attend regularly are more likely to stay on top of their work, engage fully in lessons, and make strong progress towards their targets.

To support this, we shared our Sixth Form Attendance Protocols. These outline what happens when attendance is strong and what steps are taken if it begins to decline:

- Attendance over 97% is considered good attendance and students are eligible for rewards linked to attendance.
- Stage 1 (94–97%) involves the form tutor monitoring attendance and discussing strategies with the student to maintain good habits.
- Stage 2 (below 94%) triggers support from the KS5 Coordinator, a review of the Sixth Form contract, increased supervised study and contact with parents. Students receiving a bursary may also have payments reduced.
- Stage 3 (below 90%) is considered persistent absenteeism. At this point, home is contacted, additional support is put in place; attendance concerns may put a Year 12 student's progression to Year 13 at risk.



These stages are not about punishment, but about support, guidance, and ensuring that every student has the best possible chance to succeed.

Once again, thank you to all parents and carers for your continued commitment to working in partnership with us. Together, we can help our Sixth Form students thrive academically and personally as they move towards their next steps.

## Celebrating Our Year 12 and 13 Recognition Assemblies

This week we were delighted to hold our Year 12 and Year 13 Recognition Assemblies, where we came together to celebrate and recognise the excellent habits demonstrated by so many of our Sixth Form students. The focus of these assemblies was not only on academic achievement, but on the attitudes, behaviours, and systems that underpin success. Students were nominated by their subject teachers for the 'Systems' Award, which has been our VESPAR focus this half term. These nominations highlighted students who are consistently organised, responsible, and proactive in their approach to learning.

Our VESPAR focus, 'Systems create space for Hope to grow', reflects our belief that when students develop strong routines and structures, they are better equipped to feel confident, in control and prepared for their future. Throughout the half term, students have been encouraged to build and refine systems in several key areas, including:

- Being organised and having what they need to be successful in lessons
- Developing clear systems to organise their learning so they can understand and retain information effectively
- Managing their time well to meet deadlines and balance commitments
- Making the most of dedicated, supervised time for Reactive Learning (homework set by subject teachers) and Proactive Learning (independent revision using the study skills taught during tutor time)
- Engaging with their Super Curriculum to deepen their subject knowledge beyond the classroom
- Completing Monday Weekly Planning and Friday Reviews to reflect on progress and set clear goals for the week ahead

It was wonderful to see so many students recognised for their commitment to these habits. The nominations reflected hard work, resilience and a mature approach to learning that will serve them well both now and in the future. Please ask your child if they received a recognition.

We are incredibly proud of our Year 12 and Year 13 students and look forward to seeing their continued growth and success as they build on these excellent systems and habits.

## Next Half Term VESPAR Focus: Practice – The Missing Piece of the Puzzle

As we look ahead to next half term, our VESPAR focus in the Sixth Form will shift to Practice – a crucial, and often missing, part of the learning process.

We know that many of our students work incredibly hard. They attend lessons, complete their homework, and spend time studying. However, effort alone does not always lead to the progress we expect. This is why our focus on Practice is so important. The key question we want students to reflect on is not just "Am I working hard?" but "Am I working on the right things in the right way?"

We will be encouraging students to develop the humility to recognise that, no matter how able they are, there is always more to learn and ways to improve. This mindset is essential for true academic growth and mastery.