

THE HILL WEST HERALD


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Message from the Head Teacher

By Dr Beth Clarke

Happy New Year! I hope you all had a restful and joyful holiday season, filled with moments to cherish with family and friends. As we embark on a new term, I want to take a moment to reflect on the fantastic achievements of the last half term and share our vision and priorities for the months ahead.

This term, our focus remains firmly on striving for excellence across all areas of school life. At the heart of our leadership approach is a commitment to making decisions that have a meaningful impact on your children's education and wellbeing, not just now, but in the future. We believe that excellence is contagious, and we're dedicated to fostering a culture where every member of our school community is inspired to reach their full potential.

Our pupils continue to amaze us with their positive attitudes, exemplary behaviours, and eagerness to learn. Their resilience, curiosity, and determination are a constant source of pride, and their progress across all areas of the curriculum reflects their hard work and commitment. It is truly a privilege to witness their growth and celebrate their achievements, both big and small.

High-quality teaching and learning remain central to our work. We are committed to ensuring that every child, including those with special educational needs and those who may be underserved, benefit from reflective and evidence-informed teaching. By investing in the professional growth of our staff at all career stages, we aim to provide a rich and impactful learning experience for every pupil.

Equally important is the inclusive culture we nurture here at Hill West. Kindness, compassion, and connection underpin all that we do. We take immense pride in our school, celebrating both individual and collective achievements and ensuring every child feels supported to thrive. Together, we create an environment where everyone belongs and feels valued.

On a more practical note, I would like to update you on the scheduled building work. Unfortunately, this remains on hold, but please rest assured that we are working closely with the Department for Education to progress the works within the many constraints, both financial and contractual. We are committed to ensuring that these improvements are completed as soon as possible to enhance the learning environment for all our pupils.

Finally, clear and open communication remains a priority. We are committed to strengthening our partnership with you, our parents and carers. Your advocacy and feedback play a vital role in celebrating our successes and identifying areas for growth. Thanks go to those of you who completed our short survey before the Christmas break <https://forms.office.com/e/SEewiCkbCj>. By working together, we can continue to make our school an exceptional place for your children to learn and grow.

Thank you for being such an amazing community to serve. Your unwavering support and engagement make all the difference, and we are truly grateful. Let's continue to work together to make 2025 a year of achievement, connection, and pride for everyone in our school family.



ATLP News; Stockland Green School Singalong...

Shared by Dr Beth Clarke

Just before the festive break, Stockland Green School students from Christmases past and present joined a festive singalong to celebrate a much-loved pop hit that the school played a special part in recording.

Just over half a century ago, students from the school travelled to London to lend their angelic voices when Birmingham glam rock legends Wizzard recorded their yuletide classic 'I Wish It Could Be Christmas Every Day'.

Brummie songwriter and band leader Roy Wood had wanted to use local children to provide the backing vocals on the hit, which was released in December 1973 and raced up to number four in the charts and has been an annual festive favourite ever since. Roy arranged for the young choir from the Slade Road School to be bussed down to the capital for an unforgettable day of recording.

Fifty-one years on, some of those former students returned to Stockland Green to sing the song again with current pupils and original Wizzard multi-instrumentalist Bill Hunt, whose brother-in-law was a teacher at the school in the seventies. A classroom at the school was turned into a winter wonderland for the performance, as alumni and current students performed in a rendition of the song.

Mary, an original chorister said: "It's very strange being back at Stockland Green – there have been so many changes. We used to rehearse in the school hall for choir practice and we all auditioned for the Wizzard song. Only so many of us got picked. Hilary remembers the children enjoying their day out in London and interacting with the colourful glam rocker.

Stockland Green Headteacher Rebecca Goode said: "The story of how children from our school sang on Wizzard's big Christmas hit has been part of our history for decades, so it was brilliant to welcome some of them back and hear their memories of how it happened.

"To have Bill here – playing and singing with our students past and present – was the icing on the Christmas cake."

Bill said: "It's been an incredible experience to be reunited with the people who played such a big part in helping the song enjoy the success that it did. Spending time with Stockland Green School students past and present and sharing the joy of this memorable song with them all has been an absolute joy."

Despite being a recognised multi-million-selling Christmas classic, 'I Wish It Could Be Christmas Every Day' has never actually hit the number one spot – and was even beaten to the top of the chart on its release by 'Merry Christmas Everybody' – another festive West Midlands anthem by fellow Glam rockers Slade.



Reception – First Christmas at School

By Mrs. Lisa Pardo



Christmas is truly a magical time, especially when it's your first Christmas at school. The children have been bubbling with excitement and anticipation, eagerly counting down the days until Christmas. Each morning, we've been greeted with beaming smiles and cheerful countdowns at the school gate. December has been filled with joy, thanks to our wonderful classes.



To kick off the festive season, the children immersed themselves in creating their very own winter penguins and dashing Rudolphs, using a variety of imaginative techniques. These included step-by-step drawing, mark making, cutting, template work, and construction. We're certain these charming penguins will look fantastic in your homes this Christmas, bringing smiles to both staff and students alike. The process of selecting designs for our Christmas cards and calendars is one in which we take great care, knowing that these keepsakes will be treasured by families for years to come. The cards and calendars were also a wonderful opportunity for the children to showcase the skills they've been honing throughout the term.



The Robins and Wrens also explored the significance of the Christingle. They learned how the orange represents the world, the candle symbolises the light of Christ, and the red ribbon stands for God's love through the blood of Christ. Despite the damp weather, we enjoyed a delightful walk to All Saints Church, where the children sat quietly and listened attentively to the Christmas story. They also had the pleasure of watching some very talented guitarists and violinists—who knows, maybe some of your children will be performing there themselves when they reach Key Stage Two! After many fun rehearsals in class, the children sang with great enthusiasm. They performed "Love Shone Down" and "Sing Christingle" beautifully. Their proud parade through the church with their handmade Christingles was truly a special moment.



Reception also had the joy of attending the nursery nativity, where they were captivated by the depiction of the Nativity, their faces lighting up with joy. I wonder if they remember when they were that small!

Adding to the excitement, some very special visitors made their way to Hill West this season—Santa and his elves! The children listened intently as they shared their Christmas wishes. Some were a little nervous, but all greeted Santa with smiles and left feeling incredibly proud.



As a gift this Christmas, each child received a crazy pair of Christmas glasses from the Reception staff - a lasting reminder of their very first Christmas at Hill West.

We hope you all have a wonderful holiday, filled with special moments spent with your loved ones. May you have the chance to slow down, relax, and truly enjoy the festive season together.

Year 1 – South Staffordshire Water Workshop

By Miss Anjali Parekh

Year 1 pupils recently splashed into the fascinating world of water efficiency during an engaging workshop hosted by South Staffs Water. The interactive session combined fun activities with essential lessons on how to use water wisely, highlighting the importance of conserving this precious resource in our daily lives.

The workshop kicked off with an animated discussion on the many ways we use water every day. From brushing our teeth in the morning to washing our hands, drinking water, and even watering plants. The children were amazed by the sheer number of tasks that depend on water. This exploration set the stage for understanding why saving water is so crucial.

Adding to the excitement, the children were introduced to Captain Efficient - South Staffs Water's water-saving superhero - who shared his top tips on how to use water wisely. Captain Efficient explained how small changes can make a big impact and encouraged the children to become water heroes themselves. Alongside Captain Efficient, the children also met Leaky Lou, a mischievous character representing a leaky toilet. Through a fun demonstration, they learned that ignoring leaks like Leaky Lou wastes a significant amount of water, but calling a plumber can quickly solve the problem.

Through hands-on activities and vivid demonstrations, Year 1 were shown how water might be wasted in their homes and schools. Examples included leaving taps running while brushing teeth, only filling the dishwasher half full and not fixing leaky taps. The children were encouraged to reflect on these habits and think about how they can be more efficient water-users.

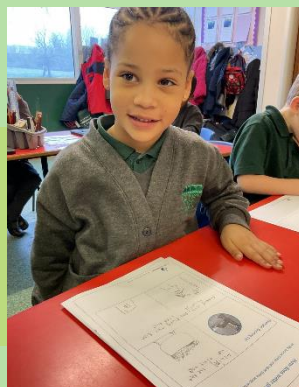
South Staffs Water educators also introduced simple yet effective ways to save water. The children learned to turn off taps while brushing their teeth, use a watering can instead of a hose for gardening, and collect rainwater in barrels for outdoor use. They were encouraged to report leaky taps to adults and spread the message of water conservation to their families. The children then drew pictures of ways they can save water in their booklets.

The children also had great fun learning "The Water Wasters Song", which taught them about common water-wasting mistakes in a memorable way. One verse went:

"Wendy flushed the wipes, in the bin, in the bin. Don't waste water!"

Singing together, the children reinforced their understanding of proper water usage and had plenty of laughs along the way.

To wrap up the workshop, each child received a certificate for being 'a water saver', officially recognising their efforts and commitment. With their certificates in hand, the children were invited to join Captain Efficient on his mission to save water and make a positive impact on the planet!



Year 2 - Shine Bright in 'The Twinkly Nativity'

By Mr. Ryan Horne



This year's Year 2 Nativity production - 'The Twinkly Nativity' - was a truly magical event that celebrated the spirit of the season and showcased the incredible talents of our young performers. The hall was filled with excitement and anticipation as families and fellow pupils gathered to watch the children bring this heartwarming story to life.

The show featured a delightful cast of characters: including Mary, Joseph, and their faithful Donkey; the angel Gabriel and his host of angels; three wise men on camels; shepherds; sheep; innkeepers; and a group of travelers. At the heart of the production were seven sparkling 'stars' who acted as narrators, guiding the audience through the story with confidence, charm and charisma!

From the very first rehearsal, the children threw themselves into their roles with enthusiasm and dedication. They worked tirelessly to learn their lines, perfect their cues, and even create their own choreography for the show's upbeat and incredibly catchy songs. Each performance was filled with energy, joy, and a sense of teamwork, as the children supported one another to deliver a show they could all be proud of.

The songs were undoubtedly a highlight of the production, with lively melodies that had everyone humming along. From joyful celebrations to tender moments of reflection, the music beautifully complemented the story, adding an extra layer of emotion and excitement. It was clear that the children thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of the process, from singing and dancing to acting and collaborating with their peers. Mr Horne still finds himself humming the melodies long after the final curtain call!

The staff worked tirelessly on the creative set design that transformed our stage into a festive wonderland. The twinkling stars, radiant angels, and colourful characters brought the Nativity story to life in a way that entertained all who attended. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the incredible support of our Year 2 team, who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure every detail was just right. From guiding rehearsals to organising props and coordinating costumes, their dedication and hard work made the production a resounding success. And a special mention goes to the parents of our children for supplying the dazzling costumes that were seen on stage.

'The Twinkly Nativity' was more than just a performance; it was a celebration of the children's creativity, teamwork, and joy. Thank you to everyone who came along to support our Year 2 stars. Your warm applause and encouraging smiles made this a truly unforgettable experience for all involved.

We are so proud of our Year 2 children for their hard work and enthusiasm. They truly shone brightly, reminding us all of the magic and wonder of the season.

Year 3 – Christingle

By Ms. Clare Whelan



Hill West Primary School's Christingle service at All Saints Church was a heart-warming celebration of Christmas, bringing together the school community in a meaningful and joyful way. The children, each holding an orange adorned with a red ribbon and a candle, proudly walked around the church, sharing the beauty of the Christingle tradition with their parents. This moment of unity and reflection offered a powerful reminder of the Christmas story, while also creating an opportunity for the children to participate in a cherished ritual.

It was particularly special to see so many parents in attendance, joining in the celebration and showing their support for the children. The presence of so many families added to the sense of community and warmth, making the service even more memorable. It was clear that the event was not just a school tradition, but a celebration shared by the entire community, highlighting the importance of togetherness during the festive season.



Year 6 students, in their final service at Hill West, played a pivotal role in bringing the Christmas story to life. With great poise and emotion, they read the story with clarity and conviction. Their beautiful voices resonated throughout the church, capturing the attention and hearts of everyone in the congregation. Their performance was a fitting tribute to their time at Hill West, and their ability to express the story so effectively left a lasting impression on all those in attendance.



The atmosphere was further enhanced by the children's singing, who performed several festive songs, including "Sing Christingle," "The Christingle Begins with an Orange," and "Love Shone Down." The sound of their voices echoed through the church, filling the space with joy and bringing the message of Christmas to life. The children's enthusiasm was evident in their performances, and their ability to sing together harmoniously created a truly uplifting experience.



The musical talent on display at the service was equally impressive. In addition to the singing, a group of children played a range of instruments, including clarinets, guitars, and a tenor horn. Their skill and dedication were evident in the way they played, and each instrument added something unique to the service. The Christmas songs they performed helped set the tone for the service and were a testament to the hard work and talent of the students.

Beyond the service itself, the children have also been busy creating Christmas decorations for the school's Christmas trees. Key Stage 1 students decorated the tree in their hall, while Key Stage 2 students adorned the tree in theirs. This year, there was a special competition to create the most unique decoration, and it will be exciting to see which one stands out as the favourite. The decorations, full of creativity and effort, reflected the festive spirit and teamwork that are so central to the Hill West community.



The Christingle service, along with the other Christmas activities, was the perfect way to bring the school together to celebrate the season. The children's involvement, creativity, and performances were a testament to Hill West Primary's commitment to fostering a sense of unity, joy, and celebration. It was a pleasure to see the school community come together in such a special way, with so many parents present to share in the magic of the season.

Year 4 – Mayan Day

By Mr. David Parkin



On the morning of the 19th November, the children of Year 4 knew it was not going to be a normal day at Hill West, as they arrived in anticipation of what lay ahead of them. The iPads were left behind in the 21st century, as the journey back in time began. The destination was the ancient Mayan civilisation. All were ready for an enthralling day which would go far to supporting classroom learning on ancient civilisations.

The day began with the awe and wonder of a Mayan sacrifice. The expert guide for the day, dressed in Mayan costume, performed a sacrifice on a Mayan figure, explaining that this was being completed as a ritual to the Mayan Gods. The children were mesmerised as they joined in with the chants that took place alongside this Mayan tradition. They could not wait to return to the classrooms to see what the remainder of the day had in store.



The intrigue did not end there as the children were ready to find out more about the Mayans and how they lived their daily lives. Astonishment filled the room as it was established that the Mayan number system was based off a base 60 concept (unlike the base 10 system we are accustomed to today). The children rose to the challenge and figured out the ways of representing different Mayan numbers. It was agreed by all that the Mayan number system was in no way as efficient as ours today.



There was plenty of time for an art and craft element to the day. The knowledgeable guide explained that the Mayan people had their own writing system which was much different to how we write today. The children were able to explore Mayan symbols by painting them onto traditional bark paper which would have been used by the Mayans. Precision was necessary as the paper was delicate and concentration was needed to perfect the symbols. Following this, the children even made some clay pots in the style of Mayan pottery. Some impressive creations were made which enhanced the learning around Mayan pottery and objects.

Time still remained for perhaps the most exciting part of the day. All were amazed as the guide presented a variety of real Mayan artefacts, explaining what they were used for and the history behind them. The children were curious and ever-respectful as they not only listened carefully, but also handled the artefacts with great care. It certainly provided a memorable afternoon of historical learning, bringing the Mayan period to life in the classroom.



Overall, the day was a wonderful success and was fully supportive in providing a love for historical learning and hopefully inspiring some historians of the future.

Year 5 – Aberdovey Outdoor Adventure

By Mr. Joel Clarke

Our Year 5 residential trip to Aberdovey, a beautiful coastal village in Wales, was an unforgettable adventure full of exciting challenges and valuable lessons. The children faced a range of activities that pushed them to step outside their comfort zones, while learning key life skills such as teamwork, resilience, and self-confidence.

One of the most memorable activities was the jetty jump, where each child had to muster the courage to leap into the cold estuary below. It was a real test of bravery, but the children supported one another with cheers and encouragement, helping even the most hesitant students take the plunge. This sense of camaraderie continued throughout the trip, especially during team-building challenges like the 'Grot Pot' exercise. Here, students worked together to navigate an obstacle course without falling into a pit of 'dirty water,' relying on each other's ideas and strengths to succeed.

The children also took on a demanding gorge walk, navigating rugged terrain, steep inclines, and slippery rocks. The walk was physically challenging, but with each step, the children encouraged one another, building both their physical and emotional resilience. Following the gorge walk, the group tackled a mountain climb, which tested their determination and teamwork. Reaching the summit, with its breathtaking views, was a moment of immense awe and pride, as each child realised they had accomplished something they had once thought was impossible.

Throughout all the activities, the children learned that success isn't just about individual effort—it's about working together, supporting each other through challenges, and never giving up. By the end of the trip, the children not only gained new physical skills but also developed greater confidence in their ability to face any challenge.

A special thank you goes to the instructors and staff at the Outward-Bound Centre, who made this trip so memorable. Their expertise, enthusiasm, and unwavering support helped the children navigate each activity safely while fostering an atmosphere of encouragement and fun. The staff were instrumental in creating a positive, team-focused environment, allowing each child to thrive and grow.

As their teachers, Mr Clarke and Mr Henrick are incredibly proud of the resilience and teamwork the children demonstrated throughout the trip. The residential experience was far more than just a series of outdoor activities—it was an opportunity for the children to learn important life skills in a supportive, challenging environment. The lessons they learned and the memories they created will stay with them for years to come, making this trip one they will always remember. We cannot wait to see these new traits learned throughout the week to be fully displayed throughout the rest of the year.



Year 6 – Remembrance Day Assembly

By Mrs. KerryLynn Lampitt

Monday 11th November was a special day that was commemorated by the Year Six children, who took centre stage as they led a moving and heartfelt assembly for Key Stage 2 to honour Remembrance Day. The event was not just a showcase of their hard work and preparation but a deeply poignant reminder of why we come together each year to pay tribute to the sacrifices made by so many during war and conflict - past and present.

The assembly, held in the school hall, was attended by pupils, staff, and an audience of parents and guardians. From the moment the children began, it was clear that this was more than just a performance. Through readings, poetry, music, and personal reflections, Year Six delivered a powerful message about the importance of remembering those who have served and continue to serve for our freedom.

A highlight of the assembly was the children's retelling of stories from World War I and II, bringing history to life with empathy and respect. Adorned in poppies made by Miss Graham's Mum, they transported the audience back in time to the trenches and the home front, illustrating the courage and resilience of those who lived through such tumultuous times. The hauntingly beautiful recitation of 'In Flanders Fields' left many in the audience visibly moved.

The children's poignant delivery of these stories and their heartfelt reflections on the meaning of peace resonated deeply with younger children in the audience. "It made me think about how lucky we are today," said a Year 4 pupil, reflecting on what they had learned.

The assembly also included musical tributes. Foxes rendition of 'Keep the Fires Burning' was a stirring performance, as well as 'We'll Meet Again' which filled the hall with humble emotion. Many parents and guardians were seen dabbing their eyes, clearly touched by the effort and sincerity of the children.

Deputy Headteacher Mrs. George commended the Year Six pupils for their dedication and thoughtfulness. "You didn't just show us what Remembrance Day is about—you helped us all feel it in our hearts," she said. "It's so important that we keep these traditions alive and pass them on to the next generation, and today, you did just that."

The assembly concluded with a moment of silence, observed by everyone present, as poppy petals gently fell from the sky above. It was a solemn and unifying moment, emphasising the importance of reflection and gratitude.

Year Six have truly set a high standard for meaningful assemblies, leaving a lasting impression on everyone who attended. Their ability to convey the significance of Remembrance Day has ensured that its message will remain in the hearts of the school community for years to come.



Bikeability

By Mrs. Alison Downes

For Year 6 pupils, participating in Bikeability is a fantastic opportunity that goes beyond just learning how to ride a bike. Bikeability is a nationwide program designed to teach children the essential skills they need to ride their bikes safely and confidently, whether they are riding to school, exploring their neighbourhood, or enjoying a family outing. This program provides students with the knowledge and skills to navigate traffic, understand road safety, and develop responsible cycling habits that will stay with them for life.



The importance of Bikeability cannot be overstated. In today's world, where active travel is encouraged to reduce traffic congestion and promote a healthier lifestyle, knowing how to ride a bike safely is an invaluable skill. Cycling is not only an excellent way to stay fit, but it's also an eco-friendly mode of transportation that helps reduce carbon emissions. By equipping children with the confidence and skills to cycle safely, Bikeability encourages independence and fosters a sense of responsibility from a young age.

Year 6 children are at a perfect age to learn these crucial skills. As they approach the transition to secondary school, they will be navigating more complex environments, including busier roads and different routes to school. Bikeability prepares them for these challenges by teaching them how to handle their bike in various situations. This includes understanding how to signal, how to position themselves on the road, and how to deal with different road signs and hazards. By practising in a controlled and supportive environment, the children build their confidence before facing real-world cycling situations.

To make the experience even more memorable, Year 6 took part in a Christmas-themed helmet decorating competition. The children were encouraged to get creative and add festive touches to their helmets, making them as fun and colourful as possible. It was a wonderful way to combine safety with holiday cheer, and it also added a fun, competitive spirit to the program. The decorated helmets were a reminder of the festive season, while also ensuring that everyone was equipped with safety gear to protect themselves while cycling.

Beyond safety, Bikeability offers an opportunity for children to develop a sense of freedom and independence and promotes a positive, active lifestyle. Cycling encourages children to spend time outdoors, reducing their screen time and providing a break from the pressures of schoolwork. Many thanks to Joolz and Matt from Aspire Organisations who taught the children safety, resilience and perseverance so beautifully.

