

Newsletter

December 2017 - 2

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Dear Parents/Carers

We have come to the end of a long term and the whole school community is looking forward to a well-earned rest. The prospect of Christmas cheers us and lifts our spirits away from the cold, dark and depressing weather of the season.

Over the past few weeks, parents, grandparents, friends and I have been treated to a number of magnificent Christmas performances across both schools. As always, I was amazed by the confidence of the children and their wonderful skills in terms of acting, singing and narrating - they were absolutely amazing and a credit to you! I must also say a big thank you to all the staff involved in organising these events, well done!

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our Potton Federation parents, pupils and friends a safe and Happy Christmas. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of staff, parents and pupils to our schools in 2017. The reality is that the learning experiences and projects that have taken place this year could not have happened without a great deal of commitment and support from the staff, parents and pupils.

The staff are to be applauded for the way in which they have embraced the rewards and challenges of the curriculum and implemented it with positivity and enthusiasm. I am privileged to be a part of a school with highly capable and committed teachers and support staff. One of the critical factors of any successful school is the staff. There has never been a time when being a teacher has been more demanding or challenging. To our teachers and support staff, thank you for your energy, passion and enthusiasm. Our teachers are privileged each day to participate in their pupil's academic journey. They recognise and applaud just how hard their pupils rise to the challenges we give them. They celebrate their pupil's achievements whether they be great or small and they share, with pride, the progress their pupils make with their learning. Not a week goes by that we are not celebrating together the successes of our pupils, whether these successes be in the classroom, playing an instrument, on the sports field or in competitions. These successes would not be possible without staff, parents and pupils working together collaboratively.

When I reflect on my time as Headteacher, of what I consider to be two outstanding schools, I have so many fond memories. The road has had bumps and many challenges along the way. However, the rewards have far outweighed the challenges. All of the experiences of this year have contributed in some way to ensuring we offer our pupils the very best education. I believe we offer a very unique place for pupils to learn surrounded by a close and supportive community. Thank you to all of the families who continue to promote the federation schools in a positive manner.

Merry Christmas to you all and have a safe and very happy Christmas.

Kindest regards

Cathy Smart
Executive Headteacher

Christmas Message from The Potton Federation Governing Body.

During this half term the schools have held very successful open mornings and evenings to prospective new parents and the feedback from these was very positive from those that attended. The Governors have attended a Full Governing Body meeting and a number of committee meetings throughout this period. In addition, governors visit schools on a formal basis for learning walks to support the governing body in carrying out its key responsibility of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

I am also pleased to report that the school continues to find new and innovative ways of linking with the local town to give the school a real community feel. This is reflected with the choirs from both schools attending events in the centre of town, the lower school at the Christmas lights and the middle school at the Four Seasons Market, and both choirs have also been to Jakes Court. The school was also represented at the annual Civic Church Service.

The last few weeks of this term are always an extremely busy period, however it is also a fantastic opportunity for the children to celebrate their hard work. We have enjoyed attending as many performances and carol services as possible and also Christmas lunch with reception children is always a highlight, reaffirming that Potton Lower and Potton Middle School are great places to attend. In addition, both schools have ventured to the Pantomime in Milton Keynes this year, as you can imagine this is a strategic nightmare for the school to arrange, but the success and enjoyment is well worth it.

We do still have vacancies within the Governing Body and if you feel that you have skills that you can bring to the Governing Body and also feel that you can make a positive contribution to the school, then please email our Clerk, Andrea: ahutchison@pottonfederation.co.uk.

We are lucky to have a very active PTA at the lower school who organise amazing events throughout the year. I know that they need new committee members who can support their events, e.g. Christmas shop, Summer Fete etc. The fundraising that they do for the lower school is amazing and provides a number of additional items for the children, such as the coaches for the pantomime trip and the seating at the Nature Reserve. If you are interested and would like to know more about the PTA, please contact pottonlowerpta@live.co.uk.

On behalf of the Governing Body, may I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Warm wishes
Anna Adnitt Chair of Governors



Letter from the Deputy Headteacher

“There is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humour.” (Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol)

There is no better way to capture the end of term at both schools than using the well-known words of Charles Dickens which will be familiar to Year 8 from their recent studies of 'A Christmas Carol' which they have enjoyed, even if feeling thoroughly challenged at times by the text!

This term has been busy with many families visiting both schools during our various open events and we have received much positive feedback about the wonderful school ethos that is felt across the Federation. A little girl visiting Year 4 and 5 last week commented that, compared to her school we seem so 'happy, fun and busy' - the best descriptions of our schools are always from the children visiting!

From a curriculum point of view, I am pleased to report the high level of consistency in teaching and learning across both schools. The Cornerstones topic based curriculum is firmly embedded and the children have

been engaged with their exciting projects across the term. Some highlights of the term (or maybe not if you are a member of staff!) have been the Year 2 horrid sandwich creations and resultant Big Writes which were of an exceptional quality and the Year 4 perfumes that were created as part of the 'Potions' topic. I'm not so sure I will be wearing the cinnamon perfume over Christmas but it was great to see the children focused on planning their perfumes and bring the plans to fruition!

The Year 5 and 6 projects were incredible and we were pleased to showcase them to the Governing Body who were proud to see such excellent outcomes from topic homework projects. Thank you to all of the support from parents in helping with these projects.

We have enjoyed these last few days of term wearing our Christmas jumpers and enjoying the delicious Christmas lunch cooked by Chef Maggie and her team in the school kitchen.

I wish you all a fun and relaxing break and we look forward to seeing the children in the New Year.

Kind regards

Laura Willcocks
Deputy Headteacher

Christmas Performance's at the Federation

Foundation Performance

Miss Coppenhall

I am overjoyed to say that our Christmas performance of 'Tinsel' was enjoyed by all. The children absolutely loved being able to make their own costumes, with Christmas puddings, crackers and baubles bringing us a lot of Christmas cheer in the lead up to our performance.

We have certainly used a lot of glitter in the Foundation Unit over the last few weeks in preparation, but not only did the glitter sparkle and shine on stage, so too did every single child. The children performed so confidently, and I couldn't be more proud of them all. They brought a tear to the eye of many parents and grandparents, and they sang their little hearts out.

Potton Pre-school also came to see us perform and it was wonderful to hear how much each child has grown in confidence. Our special guest, Reverend Gill, shared with us all the true meaning of Christmas and the children loved singing some traditional carols and taking home their Christingle.

The children also enjoyed being able to watch themselves perform through the recordings we completed beforehand. Their eyes lit up with joy as they saw themselves and friends on the big screen.

What a fantastic end to a wonderfully busy term. Well done Foundation, you are all superstars! I hope you all have the most amazing Christmas. Miss Coppenhall.



Key Stage 1 Carol Concert at St Marys Church

Mr Hodgson

The last few weeks of this term are always extremely busy periods for the children of Key Stage 1, however it is also a fantastic opportunity for the children to celebrate their hard work.

The pupils were invited back for another year to St Mary's Church and shared a very memorable and festive occasion in the true spirit of Christmas. The children came together to sing a range of festive carols and retold the story of 'The Nativity'.

The children sung their hearts out and even managed to generate much needed funds for St Mary's Church.

For many children, this was their first carol concert and we are so proud of the children showing courage and confidence when performing in front of others. The teachers of Key Stage 1 are extremely proud of the children's performance and attitude to learning a range a carols.

Reverend Gill and the school would like to take this opportunity to thank all the parents and carers who supported the event.

We would also like to wish you all a very merry Christmas.

Lower Key Stage 2 Performance

Mr Adams

Key Stage 2 have spent most of December preparing for our Christmas production 'Santa's On Strike'.

All of their hard work culminated in performances to parents and the school on Monday 11th and Tuesday 12th December.

The story followed Santa, who was very upset with ungrateful children, and he refused to deliver presents to children at Christmas. However, as with all great stories, Santa's elves showed Santa how kind, giving and caring children were. In the end, normal order resumed and Christmas was saved.

The children were fantastic, learning their lines and songs. They should be very proud of what they have achieved. We also had some last minute cast changes for some performances and all the children rallied together to ensure the show continued.

Well done Lower Key Stage 2, an amazing performance!

Potton Middle School Christmas Events

Mr James

On Monday 4th December, thirty pupils from Potton Middle School choir visited the community room of Jakes Court in Potton and sung carols with some of the residents. Starting with 'Once in Royal David's City', the first verse solo was sung by Tasarla Perry. Amber Lawrence also sang a lovely solo of Silent Night and then followed these with the popular Christmas songs, such as Jingle bells, Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer and Jingle bell rock. However, the biggest cheer was reserved for our performance of 'Grandma got run over by a reindeer'.



The residents joined in with many of the carols and all enjoyed a good time. Jakes Court showed their appreciation by providing us all with orange squash and biscuits and also, very kindly, gave us a donation for our school funds. This was our first Christmas event and it really helped us to get into the Christmas spirit!

The Probus Club

The Probus Club of Sandy is a local association of retired and semi-retired professional and business people. On Thursday 7th December, they met for their annual Christmas lunch and we were asked if we would provide the post-lunch entertainment. So, after our own school lunch, twenty-seven pupils of our choir piled into two minibuses and made the long, arduous trek to Sandy - approximately seven minutes after leaving we arrived and made ready for our performance! We needn't have rushed though, the members were still working their way through their desserts..... then cheese and biscuits....then coffee....but finally, we walked into the hall and were received with much enthusiasm and cheering.

The traditional first verse solo of 'Once in Royal David's City' was sung, much to everyone's surprise by the President of the Probus Club. I proceeded to surprise others in the audience with the suggestion that more members of the club might be called for a solo; however, Tasarla stepped in to save any embarrassment and gave a wonderful performance of the first verse of Silent Night. We then sung quite a large number of carols and Christmas songs and gave an enthusiastic encore of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'.

Once again, our pupils gave a very good performance and very much showed our school in a positive light. Well done to all of you – here are a few comments that we received after returning back to school.

I thoroughly enjoyed the carols by the pupils of Potton Middle School this afternoon at the Probus Club of Sandy Christmas lunch. – Pauline Westhorp

I feel that I must congratulate you for the performance of your pupils this afternoon. It was lovely to see that they were actually enjoying singing. You must make their lessons very enjoyable. Sometimes when you watch a school choir they look a little bored, as if they have to do it. Many people were saying how wonderful the children were, but I know that means that you have to put a lot of work in too. Well done and thank you. – Janet Roffe

Potton Market Square – Four Seasons Market

Pupils, staff and former staff (nice to see Mrs Anna Cook joining in!) gathered together on a very cold winter's morning to celebrate Christmas by singing carols and songs at this traditional event.

Thank you to all who gave up your personal time for supporting our community in this way – it is something that the people of Potton very much appreciate. I bravely managed to keep going in the cold, even though my fingers were starting to turn blue – however, my head was kept very warm indeed, underneath my large, furry Mongolian hat!



Our singing of 'Personent Hodie' was particularly fine. Another song that we enjoyed singing was 'Jingle Bells', and sure enough, the next day we saw lots of snow and reindeer in Potton (I'm told that the reindeer came particularly early in the night and were travelling very fast indeed. They were in training for the Christmas present run on Christmas Eve).

Upper Key Stage 2 Carol Concert

As always it was lovely to welcome parents and carers into school for our Key Stage 2 Carol Concert. The children really enjoy singing for their family and friends, and it was so nice for many of them to see a friendly face in the audience!

The children sang with great gusto, and it was wonderful to have our guests join in as well. We hope you enjoyed it as much as we did!

Whole School Carol Concert at St Mary's Church

This is such a wonderful tradition to have at Potton Middle School, and is a favourite in our school Christmas calendar!

The whole school enjoyed a walk through Potton to St Mary's Church, our cheeks were all rosy red by the time we arrived as the weather was very fresh! The children behaved superbly and were a credit to the school.

We are very lucky to have such lovely vocalists in our school choir, and Amber Lawrence started off the service beautifully by singing the solo of 'Once in Royal David's City'.

We had some lovely readings from Mrs Topple, Mrs Rider and Mrs Smart as well as readings from our pupils. Tasarla Perry gave a fantastic solo performance of the first verse of Silent Night.

We would like to take this opportunity and thank Reverend Gill for allowing us to use the Church and for all of her involvement with the school.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

Arena at Potton Lower School – Mrs Boston



It was wonderful to have the touring theatre company Arena back at Potton Lower School - this year's production was 'Tales from Beatrix Potter'.

Arena brought their imaginative style and skill to this delightful adaptation of Beatrix Potter's classic tales. The children followed Peter Rabbit and his friends as they adventure in Mr McGregor's garden and beyond. Arenas blend of humour and physical theatre really brought Beatrix Potter's enchanting tales to life and the children were thoroughly engaged!

The storytelling blended drama, music, dance and soft toys and Arena really encourage children to use their toys and imaginations to make their own plays and stories.

New Staff and appointments at the Federation

Mrs Colette Rider – Year 5 Class Teacher – Wagtails

Wow! As the Christmas carols are being heard around the school and the smell of mince pies fill our homes, I sit back with a happy smile and a contented heart.

It has been an amazing first term here at Potton Middle School, one of my most enjoyable of my 18 year teaching career. The school is such a fantastic community and I have felt welcomed with open arms and supported hands.

We began the year with our Tudor topic, 'Off with her head', full of interesting facts and grand figures of history. From using maths to work out the measurements of Henry VIII on the playground, to creating mood boards of Tudor clothing, the year group immersed themselves fully in the topic and should remember this period of history for many years.

Our second topic, 'Alchemy Island' took us on a magical, mystery tour through a portal to a fantasy land. An opportunity for me to dress up and teach through roleplay. The topic led to the creation of fantastic fantasy stories, science investigation and geography knowledge.

I wish everyone a peaceful and enjoyable Christmas and look forward to the coming year.

Miss Rachel Coppenhall – Year 3 Class Teacher – Merlins

I have had a very enjoyable first term here at Potton Lower School and I have settled well into my first term as a NQT.

I cannot quite believe it is nearly Christmas already as it only seems yesterday that I was decorating my classroom displays during the summer, ready for the first day in September.

I have been warmly welcomed by both staff and children, particularly my marvellous Merlins class. Each day, the children in Merlins amaze me with their imaginative ideas and wonderful work they produce. I have set high expectations for my class and they always challenge themselves to achieve and exceed these expectations. The progress they have made so far this year has been terrific and I am so proud of all of them. I look forward to watching them progress further over the course of this school year.

The support I have received by all members of staff has been fantastic and has made me feel a part of the team from the very first day of term. I know I can draw on support, both professionally and personally from many members of staff where needed, and this has helped me through the challenges of my first term of my NQT year.

I look forward to the next term here at Potton Lower School.

Mr Lewis Wimbleton – Year 1 Class Teacher – Puffins

The start of the year has flown by, and it's hard to believe that we are almost at Christmas already! It only seems like a few weeks ago I was moving into my classroom.

I have found the start of my NQT year to be the best challenge of my career - it is the first job I have had that I actually look forward to coming in to every morning. The thought of teaching children something new or inspiring is a huge motivator!

I'm sure further challenges will follow but I will continue to set myself and my class high expectations, as I am so proud of their progress thus far.

I am also lucky to work with very supportive colleagues who are always available for support and I think that's what makes Potton Lower School such a great school to work for. I am very excited for where the rest of the year will take me and Puffins!

Mr Philip Adams – Head of Lower Key Stage 2

It has been an honour to take on the role as Head of Lower Key Stage 2, and continue working alongside dedicated colleagues and enthusiastic children.

Potton Lower School is a fantastic place to work and I am keen to support all children and parents as they progress through the school and continue their journey into Upper Key Stage 2. Should you need to see me, please contact me through the school office or class dojo.

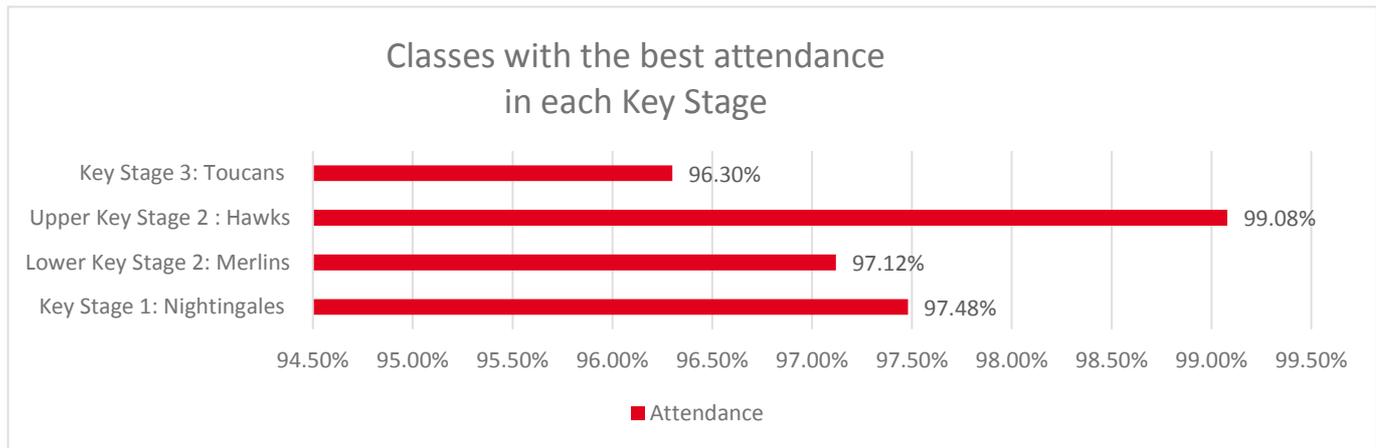
Attendance

Well done to all of the children on the attendance this half term. It has been fantastic to see such commitment from you all, even when some of you have felt a little under the weather.

A special congratulations to the following classes who have had the highest attendance across their Key Stage so far this half term.

The Local Authority set our attendance targets, the federations target is 97%. It wonderful to see three of our Key Stages achieve this percentage, and one only just behind.

Well done everyone!



We have updated our website with the most recent documents that the Local Authority have supplied us with relating to attendance and we hope you find it helpful and informative, it includes:

- A penalty notice leaflet
- Holidays in term-term
- A guide to non-attendance prosecutions and courts
- FAQ's

Potton Lower School Council

The School Councillors have settled so well into their new roles and are a true asset to Potton Lower School.

This term they have been very busy helping The Royal British Legion with the national poppy appeal and also organised a very successful fundraiser for Children In Need with PJ day, and an extremely busy bake sale raising a total of £500.00!

As the New Year approaches we will be looking at how we can make improvements to our school and listening to the suggestions that the children of the school put to us.

The school council would like to thank you for all the support you have shown us over this term and would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas.

Reminders for parents

Medicines in School:

A reminder that we CANNOT administer medication that is not prescribed to your child and/or is only prescribed for three times a day. This includes Calpol and Nurofen. Parents can come into school themselves if their child needs a dose of medicine although we do advise parents to keep their children at home if they are poorly.

Reporting Children's Absence:

Reporting children's absences - if you need to report your child's absence and do not need to speak to anyone in the Middle School office about this, there is a direct line: 01767 261527. Lower School parents can ring the main reception 01767 260239 number and select option 1.

Reading:

We would really like to encourage all parents with children in Reception and Key Stages 1 & 2 to read daily with their child. Children in Key Stage 3 should be reading independently each day too!

Water Bottles:

Please can all parents ensure that their child brings a named and filled water bottle into school with them each day, and that they only contain water. It is important for the children to drink regularly throughout the day. Children may of course bring juice to drink with their packed lunch, and juice and water are also available for children having a school dinner at lunchtime.

Dates for your diary: (January – February 2018)

Wednesday 10th January 2018

Potton Lower School

Year 2 Literacy and Numeracy Evening

This is an opportunity to find out about the expectations for the rest of the year, and a chance to look at past SATs papers, which your child will be taking in May 2018.

Wednesday 31st January 2018

Potton Lower School

School readiness evening

The evening will give you a chance to meet some of our staff members and to give you ideas on how you can best prepare your child for school. From 7pm in the main hall.

Wednesday 24th January 2018

SAT's Information Evening

PMS

Parents and carers are invited into school from 6pm – 7pm for an information on SATs to help prepare your children.

Friday 9th February 2018

Celebration of Work

Both schools

Parents and carers are invited into school to look at their child's work and books with them. You are welcome from 2:30pm onwards and you may take your child home early with you.

More information will be provided on each event during the school term

The Potton Federation Academic Calendars for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 are now available on our website. Please do not refer to the Central Bedfordshire Council's Term dates Calendar as these dates are incorrect for the Potton Federation:

<http://pottonfederation.co.uk/parents/term-dates/>

Science in Key Stage 3 at Potton Middle School by Mrs Bingham

I cannot believe my first term at Potton Middle School is nearly over! It has gone by so fast and I have thoroughly enjoyed it, thanks to the motivated students and the friendly and supportive staff.

Students in Key Stage 3 started the term looking at safe practice in the lab and earning their Bunsen Burner Licences. Both year groups have now studied one Chemistry, Biology and Physics topic.

During their Chemistry topic, Year 7 investigated different ways of separating mixtures. Using microscopes we then looked at cells; the building blocks of animals and plants. The children prepared slides of onion tissue and also a slide of their own cheek cells (easily removed with a cotton wool buds!). For home learning the students created models of different types of cells. The models were fantastic (see below) and the non-perishable ones are displayed in the science lab.



Year 8 looked at the differences between chemical reactions and physical changes. The students really enjoyed burning magnesium and observing its bright flame (viewed through protective glass filters). In the digestion and nutrition topic, students carried out food tests to identify the nutritional groups in different foods. We ended the first half term with a dissection of a pig pluck, examining the structure of the oesophagus, trachea, heart, liver and lungs.

Recently both year groups have been studying electricity. The students are great at participating in role plays and we have been using a rope model as recommended by the Institute of Physics to understand resistance, voltage and current in series and parallel circuits. The students have also been building lots of circuits and measuring voltage and current.

There were lots of exciting science projects on display at the school open evening and my helpers were brilliant. These students had spent many lunch breaks growing crystal gardens, practising flame tests and developing their chromatography skills for the evening. They were great ambassadors for the school.

Year 6 used the science lab to look at pig hearts and I have been amazed at the detailed models they have made. I have also had the pleasure of looking at the fantastic science work year 5 have completed this term.

Best wishes for a happy Christmas holiday.

Eco Council – Potton Lower School

We would like to thank Erica and Helen from the Greensand Trust who came to lead an assembly about the local wildlife along the Greensand Ridge that runs across the width of the county. They informed the children about the endangered dormouse and how to spot their nests on your winter walks through local woodland.

They instructed, that if children do see them, not to touch them but to take a photo and contact the Greensand trust to help with their environmental studies. Some of the children also had an opportunity to contribute to a large woven dormouse nest which will travel from school to school across the county before being displayed at the Greensand Festival next year.

TURN YOUR OLD CHRISTMAS CARDS BACK INTO TREES.

In January the Eco Council are collecting old Christmas cards for recycling. Boxes will be located in the front entrances of both schools. The Christmas cards will be taken to Marks & Spencer who will plant a tree with the Woodland Trust for every 1000 Christmas cards they recycle.

Hot Chocolate with the Head – Values

For going above and beyond in demonstrating the Value of the Month, let's hear it for our Thoughtfulness Champions:

- Lui Ahmetaj
- Jonas Moss
- Grace Peacock
- Alanna Hayes
- Taya Rolph
- Matthew Leach



In a slight change to how we normally select our 'Champions', we asked the children to nominate who they believe embodied November's Value.

Over the course of recent weeks, students kept a keen eye on who modelled 'thoughtfulness' and were challenged to select one of their peers when they were particularly impressed with their commitment to the value.

On behalf of the Upper Key Stage 2 team and I, we'd just like to say how proud we are of our champions, as well as those who made the nominations. It was ever so warming to see the children come up in assembly to discuss who they nominated and why.

Values at Potton Lower School

We have had a very exciting half-term exploring the values of Thoughtfulness and Caring.

During November we explored Thoughtfulness, Miss Fordham shared a very moving assembly about how we can be thoughtful to others. She showed a very touching cartoon animation clip which helped the children to understand how it can be portrayed. We would also like to thank Open the Book who came in and gave an assembly to the children which showed the story of Daniel and the Lion.

The children have been working hard throughout their school day to be thoughtful to one another and this has been recognised by their teachers. We celebrated a range of children who achieved the thoughtfulness certificate and enjoyed a chocolate with the head experience.

December has been our month to explore the value Caring. In our assemblies we have been thinking about caring for family and friends, our animals and our belongings. Miss Bagnall shared an assembly about how we care for animals, and that animals are not just for Christmas, but a large commitment to our daily lives.

We also explored how giving presents can be very caring at this time of year. We have discussed if we give a present, should we always receive one in return? This generated a good discussion, and led onto the great work that charities complete at this time of year. We have not yet completed our celebration for this value, but look forward to seeing who has shown caring within their classes.