

INSPIRE • ACHIEVE • SERVE

John F Kennedy Catholic School

9th May 2025



VE Day 2025

At Monday morning's weekly staff meeting I spoke about the big week ahead, with four distinctive events that would impact the life of JFK: the start of the public exams season, the traditional Year 13 leavers' day celebration, the beginning of the Conclave which would select the next Pope and the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

I went into Central London last Sunday for the VE Day celebration on the Mall and later made my way to Buckingham Palace for the fly past. There were lots of people there although it wasn't massively busy. People were in celebratory mood and there were a few overtly patriotic people dressed in red white and blue, but most were there for the spectacle and as a simple mark of respect. Victory in Europe Day, on 8th June 1945, marked the surrender of Germany and an end to the war that had been waged for almost 6 years. It was an end to the pain and suffering of both the troops in battle and the civilian population back at home. The newsreel of the day showed throngs of people in central London, filling the streets in jubilant celebration. The look on the faces is magical - displaying such a sense of relief and joy. The Imperial War Museum has put together some fascinating resources for schools. One interesting item I saw was a letter from Donald Chapman, who was serving in the Army Medical Corps, addressed to his wife and sister, showing that the excitement experienced by the people back home was mirrored by those still in the areas of conflict. He signs off;

'And now Goodnight, I'm too excited to sleep but so is everyone else, – I shall continue to take all care.

Isn't it, – oh isn't it beyond words, – Struth, I can hardly stand it.

All the love in the world,

Don'

This extract is from the Imperial War Museums collection of 'letters to loved ones', which can be found following this link:

<https://ve-vjday80.gov.uk/letterstolovedones/>

None of us can say we have experience of living through war time in the UK. For me, the measure of relief and joy expressed by those who did during 1939 - 1945 is a clear indication of the severe hardship they endured, both physically and mentally. It is therefore extremely important that we remember all those who died in pursuit of freedom and a world free from tyranny. Our main school assembly this week provided a time of reflection and prayer on the theme of VE Day. Mrs McKenzie shared a personal account of her grandfather, who served during the war, surviving the horrors of the D-Day landings. Later that day we observed the national two-minute silence, in commemoration of those who died.



HABEMUS PAPAM



I could not have predicted that, by the end of the week, we would have a new Pope! But the Holy Spirit worked quickly, and we were all excited by the news of the signs of white smoke pouring out of the chimney of the Sistine Chapel yesterday evening. A WhatsApp group chat that connects Catholic Education Leaders I have got to know over the past 10 years has been in overdrive since then, sharing information about Cardinal Robert Prevost, who becomes the 267th successor to St Peter, taking the name Leo XIV. Everyone I have spoken to is delighted at the selection of our new Catholic Church leader. We will be praying for him as a school community, that he may be inspired to follow Pope Francis' example of humility and servant leadership - qualities that have inspired the JFK community.

Prayer for our newly elected Pope

Lord of life, love and hope, we thank you for the election of our new Pope.

Watch over, protect and bless Pope Leo XIV

We pray that, led by the Holy Spirit, his faithful witness will be a beacon of hope in our fragile and often divided world.

May the joy of the Gospel inspire him with compassionate understanding so that, together, we can be peacemakers and life-givers.

May Pope Leo XIV be a good and courageous shepherd, concerned for "the least, the last and the lost" of "every tribe and tongue and people and nation". Guide him to be a leader after your own heart, which is more loving than we can possibly imagine.

We ask you, Lord, to surround our new Pope with people of pastoral wisdom as he adjusts to his new role. Fill him with confidence in the power of prayer. Help us to help him.

Amen.

The written exams started this week with GCSE and BTEC papers in Business Studies, Travel and Tourism and Drama. The exams season, which will also include A levels, will continue until 20th June. We wish our students the best of luck over the weeks ahead!

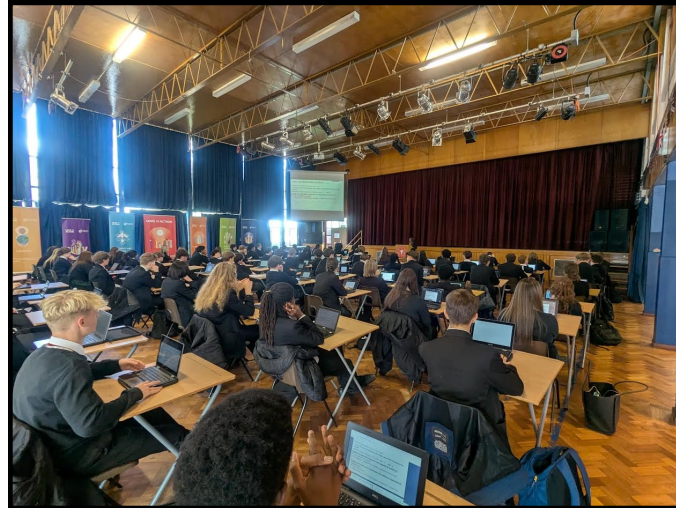
Yesterday we held our Year 13 Leavers' Day celebrations. Fr David celebrated a beautiful Mass for Year 13 and staff. This was followed by my final address to the year group and celebrations on the Bridge, which included farewells from staff, special awards and speeches delivered by Mr Joyce and Mr Wainman and refreshments. As usual the day was very enjoyable but tinged with sadness at the thought of saying goodbye to our wonderful students who are leaving JFK. More details will appear in the newsletter next week.

Mr Neves – Headteacher



RAISING ACHIEVEMENT

Raising Achievement Sessions – Supporting Success This Exam Season



As our Year 11 students started their GCSE exams, departments across the school have launched *Raising Achievement* sessions — a vital part of our final preparations before study leave. These subject-specific sessions are designed to help students refine their exam techniques, understand how they are assessed, and learn how to maximise marks when answering different types of questions.

Every department is taking part, offering focused, practical support tailored to the needs of their subject. Whether it's unpacking mark schemes, practising timed responses, or revisiting key content, these sessions are a golden opportunity for students to boost their confidence and sharpen their skills. A full timetable has been shared with all students on their Google classroom.

In addition to these sessions, *Top Tips* briefings are taking place every morning before exams, offering last-minute guidance, reminders, and encouragement to help students walk into their exams feeling prepared and positive.

These valuable opportunities will continue daily for the next two weeks, leading up to May half term, when study leave officially begins. From that point onward, students are only expected to attend school for their scheduled exams. However, the school library will remain open throughout the exam season for those who prefer to revise on site, and staff will always be on hand for any last-minute questions or support.

We want to take this moment to say a huge *well done* to all our students for the dedication and effort they've shown during this busy term. We are incredibly proud of the hard work, resilience, and commitment they've demonstrated. Remember: effort is everything. If you work hard and apply yourself, you will achieve the success you deserve.

Good luck, Year 11 — you've got this!

Mr Palumbo – Deputy Headteacher



SIXTH FORM



RSK

This week, JFK Sixth Form was delighted to welcome Rosie, an engineer from RSK, as part of our enrichment programme. Rosie delivered an engaging and insightful talk on careers in engineering, sharing her personal journey and offering valuable advice on both university and apprenticeship pathways. She also highlighted the importance of encouraging more women into STEM fields, sparking thoughtful discussion among our students. It was a fantastic opportunity to learn about real-world engineering and the many exciting routes into the industry. Thank you, Rosie!



Our Year 12 students have recently completed a Basic First Aid Training course, gaining crucial skills in basic injuries, wound care, and emergency response. Our very own Mr Sweet was in hand to provide integral knowledge and understanding of the key skills needed. The presentation was delivered through practical scenarios and students built confidence in handling medical situations both at school and in the community. This training is a valuable step in preparing our students to act responsibly and effectively when it matters most.

A huge thank you to Mr Sweet.

Mr Joyce and Mr Wainman – Sixth Form Team



SIXTH FORM

Student Exchange



A few weeks ago, we were delighted to welcome Isabella Knecht, a visiting student from Switzerland, to JFK Sixth Form. Isabella, who is cousins with one of our Year 12 students, Libby Whittaker, spent four days with us to experience life at a British Sixth Form and we were thrilled to have her.

Reflecting on her visit, Isabella shared:

"A couple of weeks ago, I had the chance to spend four days at JFK Sixth Form. From the very first morning, I was welcomed warmly – not just by the teachers, but by the students as well. As someone who has grown up with the Swiss school system, I was fascinated by the difference between the two. The lessons were very different from what I am used to. In Switzerland, classes are often more formal and structured, but at JFK there was much more discussion and student input. I sat in on the subjects my cousin, Libby Whittaker, is taking. I enjoyed my time at the school very much – thank you for having me!"

It was a pleasure having Isabella with us. Her thoughtful reflections gave our students and staff an opportunity to appreciate the distinctiveness of our approach to learning. We're very much looking forward to welcoming her back for a return visit in the near future.

Mr Wainman – Assistant Director of Sixth Form



LIVES NOT KNIVES TALK

Year 10 PSHE



On Wednesday during PSHE, Year 10 had a talk from PC Fiona Peters from Hertfordshire Police. The presentation included information on the law regarding the carrying and use of knives, the consequences of knife crime and she also discussed lots of examples of cases she had worked on to illustrate how devastating not just for the individuals who may be injured or even killed through knife crime, but also for the families and friends. Year 10 listened to what Fiona had to say very carefully and I think will take a lot away from this as there was a lot of food for thought about the consequences of our choices.

Mrs Holton – Subject Leader of PSHE



LIBRARY



Footy fans have been recommending football stars to author Dan Freedman who helps decide who should win the coveted title Footballer of the Year. I was really impressed with some of the persuasive writing that accompanied the choices and so was Dan, who said *"It's fantastic to see this engagement. I would've loved to have had a go at this when I was at school too. I will take it into account in my own voting and also share it with the management team of the Football Writers Association so that they are aware of the emerging writing talent that is out there. Well done to the budding football writers who contributed"*!

Books on Trial continues as students get closer to voting for the book to win the Carnegie Award. This week the students were discussing 'The Things We Leave Behind' by Clare Furniss, a dystopian tale about a refugee crisis in London and two sisters desperate to find where they really belong. It certainly wasn't everybody's favourite and it's been interesting to hear the students explaining their reactions to the book.

This half term I launched 'Tell Your Story', a writing challenge for KS3 who have been invited to write about anything at all! Entries are already coming in, but there is still plenty of time for students to take part. Myself and other staff members will be judging the entries and the winning one will be published!

More book recommendations for parents coming soon as half term approaches...

Mrs Powell – Librarian



PE



County League Athletics Meet 2

Not quite the weather we had last week but this didn't stop the JFK athletes from giving it their all. We had so many wonderful performances from our experienced athletes to our students trying an event in competition for the first time. My favourite part was watching our older students taking the time to coach the younger students. They are great role models for JFK.

We have a busy athletics week next week with our 3rd County League meet on Tuesday at Jarman Park and then the Track and Field Cup all day at Watford on Friday.



Next Weeks Fixtures

Tuesday 13th May	County League Athletics Meet 3 @ Jarman Park
Thursday 15th May	Year 9/10 Rounders @ JFK
Friday 16th May	Track and Field Athletics @ Woodside



UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday 14th May - Year 7 Croft Farm Residential Parent Information Evening, 6.00pm

Tuesday 20th May - New Year 7 Parents Evening

Monday 9th June - Year 10 Work Experience Week

Monday 9th June - Year 7 Residential Trip

Wednesday 25th June - Year 11 into 12 Transition Day

Thursday 26th June - Sports Day

WE ARE HIRING!

[Click here for the latest vacancy information](#)



FUTURE DATES

2025

Monday 26th May - Friday 30th May - HALF TERM

Friday 27th June - INSET Day , school closed to students

Friday 18th July - Summer Term Ends , 1.30pm

Monday 1st September - INSET Day, school closed to students

Tuesday 2nd September – Year 7 and 12 only

Wednesday 3rd September - All Students Return



GOVERNOR RECRUITMENT

All Saints Catholic Academy Trust

The All Saints Catholic Academy Trust (ASCAT) is currently seeking to recruit Governors for a number of our Schools local Governing Boards, across the Trust, to ensure high standards of achievement for all children and young people in the school by setting the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction; holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

The Trust has vacancies for Foundation Governors; Co-opted Governors and Community Governors. This is an exciting opportunity to play a role in a vibrant and collaborative Trust that is in the process of expansion and development.

The role of Governor is incredibly rewarding and the benefits include:

- **Professional development**
- **Supporting the local and wider Catholic community**
- **Gaining insight into the Education Sector**
- **Management & Leadership experience**
- **Being able to have a significant impact on the Schools in the Trust**
- **Build your professional and personal network**

If you are interested in supporting our schools and Trust please contact Christina Reffold, Director of Governance and Compliance at governance@ascat.co.uk or complete the below form.

<https://forms.gle/9XHc98pgQCjgNfG7A>



TRIPS 2025 – 2026



Monthly Instalments are due on the *1st of each month for the following:*

GCSE Geography F/T, July 2025

Berlin, October 2025

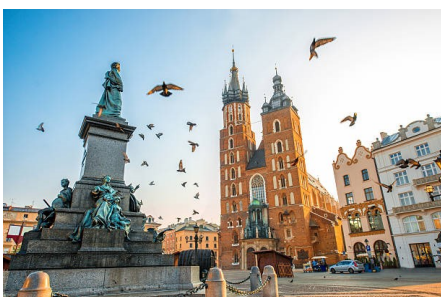
Ski Trip, February 2026

Valencia 2026

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Year 11 Prom – Instalments to be paid

Year 7 - Boxmoor Trust Trip

A Level History - St Albans Trip





ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS 2025

At John F Kennedy Catholic school, we believe that student performance, behaviour and attendance are fundamentally linked. Our ethos is to maximise the full potential of each student and in order to achieve this, high attendance rates are essential.

Our expectation is that individual student attendance should not be below 95%.

Section 7 of The Education Act states that 'parents are responsible for making sure that their children, of compulsory school age, receive a suitable full time education'.

Section 444 of The Education Act clearly states that 'if a child is absent without authorisation, then the parent is guilty of an offence'. This is a strict liability offence - i.e. all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1000.

Holidays during Term time

Authorisation of absence for Holidays during term time is at the discretion of the Headteacher and is granted only in exceptional circumstances.

Fines are enforceable for a child being absent from school without permission. This is currently £80 per child for each parent, rising to £160 if paid after 21 days.

Lateness

As stated in the school Attendance Policy:

- Students should attend school "full time" and they should remain in school attending all timetabled lessons. This means that students should arrive in time for registration. In practice school buses may be late and in this case students should sign in at Reception so they can receive their mark.
- Avoidable lateness beyond 10.00 am constitutes unauthorised absence and can legally be the basis of an offence by the parent/carer
- Those students who arrive very late (after 10.00 am) without a good excuse will not be credited with an attendance. Their absence will therefore be unauthorised and a different mark (U) will be used to distinguish them from those who are "unpunctual". Steps will be taken by the school with the support of parents/carers to correct those students who are persistently unpunctual



GENERAL NOTICES

Road Safety

Parents/Carers are reminded about the importance of road safety and we highlight a number of points you may wish to discuss with your child:

- The importance of crossing the road at a safe place. Using either a zebra or pelican crossing where possible
- Avoid crossing behind parked cars
- Never run out into the road
- Be aware of your surroundings – take out earphones and stop talking with friends or on the phone when crossing the road
- Have reflective items on jackets or bag.
- If cycling, follow the same instruction and make sure you have lights on your bike and wear a helmet at all times.



Disabled Parking Zones

Please can we ask that the disabled parking bays located along Hollybush Lane be kept clear . They are marked on the path and are needed to be accessed by local residents.



JFK enjoys good relationships with our neighbours and local community. Please be mindful of driveways and access in Hollybush Lane and neighbouring roads if dropping off/picking up your child from school. **Please also try and avoid leaving your car engines running outside of school.**



GENERAL NOTICES

Appointments During School

Please try to avoid making medical appointments during the school day. If this is not possible, please alert the Year Team via email with a copy of the appointment letter/email/screenshot at least 24 hours in advance.

If your child does need to leave for a pre-arranged medical appointment please ensure that they are aware of the time and date of the appointment and are instructed to be ready in reception to be collected. There have been a number of occasions recently whereby the office staff have had to search for a student in order for them to be picked up.

Illness During the School Day

We have seen an increase in students calling parents prior to seeking medical attention at school. Any student feeling unwell during the school day should report to Student Services where they will be seen by a medically trained member of staff. Please do impress upon your children the importance of the school contacting home if it is required during the school day. It can cause parents unnecessary worry which we would like to avoid.

ABSENCE

If your son/daughter is going to be absent due to illness please telephone the school absence line by 9.00am on each day of absence.

Year 7 01442 229105 (year7@jfk.herts.sch.uk)
Year 8 01442 229124 (year8@jfk.herts.sch.uk)
Year 9 01442 229131 (year9@jfk.herts.sch.uk)
Year 10 01442 229132 (year10@jfk.herts.sch.uk)
Year 11 01442 229136 (year11@jfk.herts.sch.uk)
Sixth Form 01442 229137 (6thform@jfk.herts.sch.uk)

Students should bring a letter explaining their absence on their return to school.



Public Health
England

Guidance from Public Health England

Diarrhoea and vomiting: exclusion period: whilst symptomatic
and 48hours after the last symptoms



[Is my child too ill for school?](#)

NHS advice about when to keep your child off school



Parent & Carer Support Summer Term 2025



FREE to parents and carers living in Hertfordshire

All courses are 6 weeks with a break for half term 26th-30th May

TALKING TEENS

6, weekly sessions for parents and carers of children aged **12-19**, covering:

- The Teen Brain: physical and emotional changes taking place and why behaviour changes.
- The link between behaviour and communicating difficult feelings.
- How to maintain your relationship with good communication.
- Understand risk taking behaviour around drugs, alcohol and gang culture.
- How to negotiate and reduce conflict.



Wednesdays

7.45 - 9.15pm

7th May to 18th Jun

Online Course: ID 759

Tuesdays

7.45 - 9.15pm

3rd Jun to 8th Jul

Online Course: ID 760

TALKING ADDITIONAL NEEDS

A 6-week group for parents and carers of children with any additional need aged **2-19**
Your child does not need a diagnosis.

- Understand your child's behaviour.
- Develop strategies that really work.
- Reduce conflict and increase co-operation.
- Improve emotional regulation.
- Explore sensory needs.
- Increase your child's resilience.
- Manage different needs in your family.



Tuesdays

9.30 - 11.30am

3rd Jun to 8th Jul

Face to Face: ID 755

**Gade Community Room
Oakleaf Primary School,
Hemel Hempstead**

Tuesdays

8.00 - 9.30pm

6th May to 17th Jun

Online Course ID 756