



# West Park

*'A caring school where we put pupils and their achievement first'*

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Dear West Park Families

The reindeer are primed and ready and Santa and his elves are loading up the sleigh. Christmas is coming quickly. This has been very evident at West Park over the last couple of weeks. From hunting for gingerbread men to belting out a Christmas classic, our pupils and staff have been fully immersed in the Christmas spirit.

It is brilliant to be able to share these experiences with our wonderful children and as much as they are fully immersed in the festive fun, they return to positive learning habits as soon as they arrive in lessons. This was emphasised on Friday when an epic House Christmas Karaoke competition (more on that later!) finished at 1:02 p.m. and by 1:09 p.m., 290 Year 11 pupils were sitting silently at exam desks in the sports hall ready to start their maths exam. I had to very quickly swap out of full Shakin' Stevens mode, (Christmas suit included) to start the exam without talking about mistletoe, presents and festive kisses!

Joking apart, our Year 11 cohort have been really impressive during the mock exam period. Focussed, mature and considerate are all words that spring to mind and I couldn't be prouder of them as they develop into significant role models for our younger pupils. I look forward to celebrating the end of the mock exam period with them and to welcoming them back to West Park in January for their final full term with us.

Our new Year 7s are just completing their first full term as part of the West Park family and what a bunch we have with us this year. Seldom has a year group settled in so well and they already look very comfortable in their secondary surroundings. These pupils will be absolutely shattered after dealing with all the changes and challenges that secondary school life brings. I hope they can enjoy a restful break, inspired by the festive madness that embraces our school.

This time of year always makes me think about family and community. In an ever-changing world, we can often control the things in our little sphere. I always feel very humbled to play a role in the West Park family (a Year 7 pupil pointed out yesterday, that I must be the Dad of the family, but not a proper Dad because I wear strange socks and play football - take from that what you will!) and hope that this is reflected across our school. Christmas is a time of giving and this year we have gone all out to help and support others. This is not always with tangible gifts, but often with time and experiences that are remembered forever.

Some of our recent activities include:

- ❖ Working alongside Fare Share and our Eco-shop to provide Christmas hampers and advent calendars to the local community.
- ❖ Liaising with Spondon Relief, who continue to support our Eco-shop and have donated £500 in vouchers to support West Park families.
- ❖ Benefitting from our relationship with Zanfish who have provided £40 in vouchers to support families in need.
- ❖ Continuing our partnership with Kits for Kids to get brand new football shirts to give to children who may never have had one (these are often shirts of less successful, more obscure teams. Aberdeen doesn't even qualify for this bracket!).
- ❖ Supporting the Terry Yorath foundation in Leeds; providing toiletries, gift sets and homemade knitted gloves to elderly residents.
- ❖ Providing 240 brand new toys to Cash for Kids: Mission Christmas Charity.

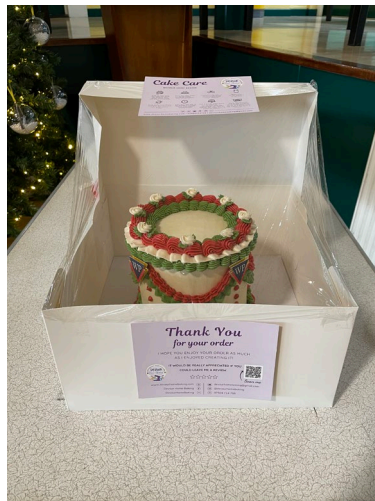


- ❖ A collection in support of the Derby City Mission Food Bank.

None of this is done tokenistically. We need to look after our own and it is so important that our pupils experience and understand this. However, in the world of social media, AI and Uber Eats it really is the quality time that we spend together that is key. This is exemplified by:

- ❖ Another amazing Prize Presentation Evening at Pride Park with 450 members of our community celebrating the breadth and depth of talent at our school.
- ❖ A sold-out Christmas performance with stunning acts, ranging from drama productions and Beatles' covers, to rock acts and sea shanty choruses. We definitely don't lack creativity.

- ❖ A brilliant Christmas bake off with over 40 entries from staff and pupils in all year groups. Sadly, my attempt is still welded to the bottom of the baking tray, but I took great pleasure in being a chief taster and judge! This event was kindly sponsored by Devour Home Baking, who provided a stunning cake (seen on the right) for our winner, India Selwyn-Smith.

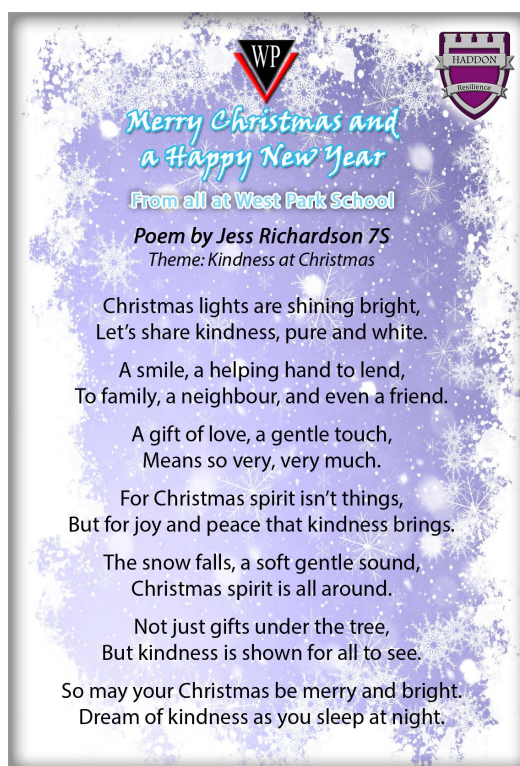


A few of the other entries:





- ❖ An amazing Christmas card and Christmas poem competition, allowing our creative juices to flow.



- ❖ A flash performance from our new staff band, Sonic Cathedral, an eclectic 6-piece from across the school. Our pupils were both elated and confused to see their staff delivering stunning versions of Mr Brightside and Fairytale of New York, to name but a few.

I could carry on; it is so important that we share these memorable experiences alongside facilitating the excellent teaching and learning experiences that take place every day at West Park.

We have never had a more able or more committed group of staff and I am so proud to have them all as part of the team. Proud, almost 100% of the time!

Our Christmas House sing-off this year, balanced on the edge of brilliance and absurdity with staff far too eager to get into costume. Mariah Scarey exploding upside down from a cardboard box, an effervescent Santa and Elsa and Anna, complete with full facial hair, were just some of the festive treats that your children will never be able to erase from their memory but what an amazing thing: to be able to sing, laugh, cry and celebrate with hundreds and hundreds of our amazing children. No mobile phones, no AI, just kids being kids..... and adults being even bigger kids!

We can never give our children every gift they request, provide the newest version of an iPhone or facilitate trips abroad to destinations far and wide but what we can give them is our time. Time to say hello, time to praise, to find out their favourite band or favourite activity outside of school. This doesn't just apply to the West Park environment, but it applies to home too.

This Christmas take the time to pause and rest up. Relax together and enjoy those special, shared moments, which stay with us forever.

Thank you all for your support and kindness over the last year. Have a wonderful Christmas and a fantastic New Year.



Scott McGregor  
Head