



# West Park

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

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17<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Dear West Park Families

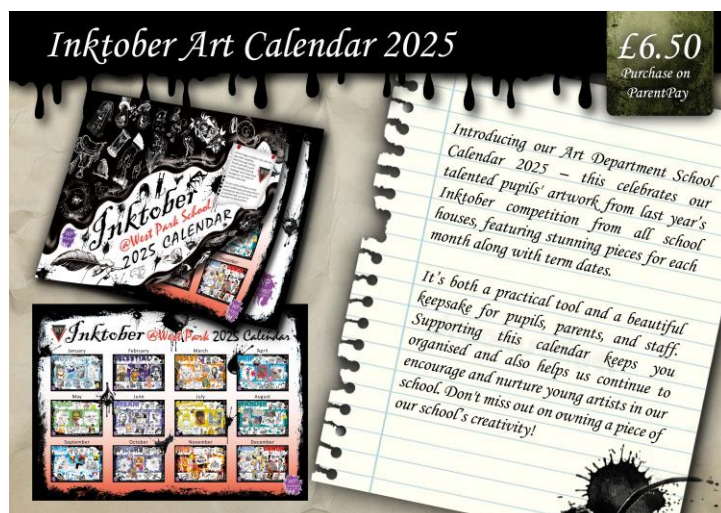
The Festive season is truly upon us and we are counting down the days until the end of an action packed first term and to the visit of the 'Big Man' himself. As is the case in a lot of local households, our home has been plagued by a particularly naughty band of Santa's elves. Not only have we rejoiced in the return of Buddy, but this year he has brought along his cousins, Arthur and Martha, to contribute to the 'fun'. By the 16<sup>th</sup> of December the elves' creativity is certainly starting to wane and they look like they have been wild camping for the last few weeks! Hopefully, they can sustain the next few days and perhaps they will acquire the knack of cleaning up after themselves!

## **Community**

At West Park, we allow ourselves to get carried away by the magic of Christmas and there have been numerous opportunities for celebration, recognition and consideration over the last few days. Christmas always emphasises the strength of community and it was wonderful to be able to support the Methodist Church and Community Hub with their pensioners' Christmas meal. Our GCSE food pupils prepared some lovely festive treats and our performing arts stars entertained with a range of music and drama. We look forward to further developing these relationships in the months and years to come.

On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December we hosted our annual Christmas Showcase. Only at West Park could this involve a range of Christmas classics alongside music from Metallica, The Killers and our very own Sea Shanty Club!

Our pupils delivered a range of stunning performances ably supported by our music and drama teams. A big thank you to the staff volunteers who rose to the challenge of serving 150 hot drinks and mince pies in a 15-minute interval! Alongside the performances, we held a pop-up art gallery, showcasing artwork from our incredibly talented GCSE Art pupils. This was displayed along with our Inktober annual art competition winners. Our 2025 Inktober calendars were on sale and there are a small number remaining; if you visit parent pay you can grab our last few.



Our Year 7 pupils have been making Christmas baubles: another fusion with Spondon Community Hub. The completed baubles look amazing with a festive silhouette taking centre stage, although I am not sure the art department are talking to me yet, as the 30 baubles that I promised them turned out to be 330 baubles! Hopefully the Christmas spirit will kick in and they will accept my apologies.

This really is the season of goodwill and, as always, I am amazed by the level of generosity that is evident across our community. We really do live and work in a special place. Some of our external partners have gone above and beyond to allow us to support those in need. This includes:

- £500 worth of Asda vouchers from Spondon Relief in Need Charity, to allow us to support families in our community.
- £50 worth of vouchers from Zanfish to provide a festive treat to members of the West Park family.
- A huge set of different fabrics from Derby Unitex to allow us to grow and develop projects and opportunities for pupils studying textiles.

This goodwill does not stop at the doors of West Park and members of the pastoral team have been collecting goods to support local charities and organisations. This includes:

- Toiletry hampers for residents at the Terry Yorath Care Home in Leeds.
- Collecting over 200 gifts for Mission Christmas, supporting children living in poverty.
- Collecting in excess of 240 food donations to support the local food bank at Asda, Spondon.

It has been amazing to see how much our community cares and the lengths that people go to in order to assist those in need. This was further exemplified by the whopping £1,873.41 that West Park raised for Children in Need.

## Events in School

Staff really do go the extra mile to make this time of year special for our pupils. Over the last 12 days of term, pupils have been fervently searching for Gingerbread men around the school site.

Pupils who find a hidden Gingerbread man go down to our library and get the opportunity to answer a challenge question with the chance of winning a special prize.

The library team also played an integral role in our Bookbuzz initiative. Our English department have provided the following information:

Last year, our Year 7 pupils were lucky enough to be given a book each (to keep!) in time for Christmas through our Bookbuzz scheme. This year, we have decided to extend this to include Year 7 and 8 to promote the importance of reading. At West Park, we value reading, and we understand that it is important that all children have access to books. As American author Kate DiCamillo said: "Reading should not be presented to children as a chore, a duty. It should be offered as a gift." With this idea in mind, we feel the best gift we can give to our young people this Christmas is the gift of reading. Please encourage your child to begin reading their books over the festive period – we will be doing an extended project as homework around their book, and we will make sure pictures of the project are shown to you all before the academic year ends. Thank you, as always, for all of your support in encouraging and promoting the importance of reading for academic purposes and (just as importantly) for pleasure.

***"There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island."***

Walt Disney

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December (unlucky for some!) we hosted our annual House Christmas Karaoke. This event grows year on year and our Heads of House have been inspiring their teams to get involved with their performances. This year involved considerably more talent than might have been on display in previous years. Even the staff came to the party with tuneful lyrics and musical surprises a plenty. This year the victory went to Chatsworth with a live band supporting a huge choir of voices. They even managed to squeeze in a live saxophone solo during the instrumental!

On Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December we had the pleasure of welcoming back two of 'our own': Ben Osborn, midfield star at Derby County Football Club and Will Barlow, from RAMs TV. A number of our pupils engaged in fitness and football sessions with Ben and absolutely loved the experience. We organised a signing event at break and lunchtime with Ben and to say that we were inundated is an understatement. Ben saw over 500 of our pupils and was somewhat overwhelmed by the whole experience. Maybe a big blast of West Park positivity has in some way contributed to the improvement in Derby's form. Up the Rams and we wish them all the best for their festive fixtures!

It makes me so proud to be able to share these experiences with our children, allowing them to develop lifelong memories. They really are an amazing bunch and the vast throngs of children that were in the main hall behaved impeccably.

## **Normal School Life Continues**

Although we have a plethora of things going on, 'normal' West Park life continues with pupils engaged in creative and meaningful lessons right through to the end of term. If you are keen to see what your child is studying now and what they are likely to be doing moving forward, this can be accessed via the link below:

<https://www.westpark.derby.sch.uk/information/school/curriculum.php>

## **Year 11 Mock Exams**

Our Year 11 pupils are pushing through their second week of mock exams. This is a very busy time for them and these exams are crucial preparation for summer exam season alongside giving a clear indication of current performance. The Year 11 cohort have engaged with the exams very impressively and their exam behaviour has been commendable. With this in mind, we will be allowing Year 11 to leave early after the final exam on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December. Year 11 will be escorted down to the Park Road exit just prior to 11:00 a.m. where we will wish them a Merry Christmas and send them on their way. Please note that this is still a school day and all Year 11 pupils should be in attendance.

## **End of Term**

As we approach the end of term and in preparation for a positive start back in January, can I remind West Park families of the following:

- Form starts at 8.30 a.m. and pupils should be on site prior to this time.
- School opens at 8:00 a.m. and breakfast is served in the main hall from 8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.
- Please refer to uniform expectations on our website when sourcing new school clothing. Leggings are not part of the school uniform.
- Please let us know of any changes relating to contact details we hold for you and in particular any changes to your child's medical/allergy information we have recorded on our system.
- West Road and Park Road are very busy roads, particularly at the start and end of the day. Please avoid these areas in vehicles where/when possible and be considerate of local residents when parking.
- School closes for the Christmas break at 3:00 p.m. on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December and re-opens for the new term at 8:00 a.m. on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025.
- Our Eco-shop opens for the final time this term on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December. Our friends at Spondon Relief are supporting us with providing additional stock so please pop by to see us later in the week.

On Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December we will have our annual Christmas jumper/accessories non-uniform day. Voluntary donations of £1 should be given on ParentPay. All money raised will go to the Community Hub in Spondon. It is always great to see staff and pupils in a range of festive outfits and I get the pleasure of embarrassing all three of my daughters (and quite possibly my wife) by sporting my bright green and orange festive suit when I visit Asda early on Friday morning!

Please note that Year 11 should be in school uniform on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December as they are still in exam season.

As another year comes to a close, it is always a good time to reflect on the last 12 months. We are still on a cycle of change and there are a number of challenges in the world of education and beyond but, through all of this, family and community are the stable structures which allow us to excel and flourish. Think of this when you spend time with loved ones over the Christmas break and take time to enjoy the small things that bring joy and warmth to us all.

A Merry Christmas from all at West Park.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott McGregor', written in a cursive style.

Scott McGregor  
Head