



# St Michael's School

Society of St Pius X

Burghclere - Christmas 2025



## Souls to save

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Another term has flown by. We are happy to share with you, our friends and benefactors, news and pictures of the year so far. We wish, also, to express our deepest gratitude for the generous and faithful support that makes St Michael's possible.

Fr Bernard Bevan joins us this year. He replaces Fr Thomas O'Hart as the Boarding Housemaster. Fr Thomas is now prior in Dublin. Fr Bevan has lost no time in taking the reins. You can read snippets of the delightful letters he sends home with the boys several times a term. Fr Bevan attended boarding school in France from a very young age, so he is familiar with the challenges young boys face away from home. He also knows how to keep the boys busy and chipper. It is always a pleasure to be greeted with laughing eyes and wide grins, as the boys hurry to breakfast after morning mass.

I recently discovered that one of our alumni has become the youngest chartered tax advisor in the UK. He now works as a senior consultant at Deloitte. Two others lately secured MScs in Engineering, with Distinction. These are just a few of the many former pupils who have built on what they received at St Michael's. Most importantly, they have remained faithful to their baptismal vows and practice their faith with conviction and love.

The generosity and the loving labour of staff, helpers and benefactors have not been in vain. St Michael's continues to form men and women who will carry our Lord's banner when we are old. The Church has always favoured the formation of future generations. We labour, but God blesses the work. He is ever grateful to those who grant Him privileged access to the souls He favours.

We pray for you all before the crib.

**Fr John Brucciani, Headmaster**



**A**lthough technically free from constraint by the National Curriculum, St Michael's endeavours to ensure that our students satisfy, or preferably, exceed national standards. The recently completed draft curriculum review (*Building a World-Class Curriculum for All: Final Report, November 2025*) is relatively comfortable reading, as most of its key proposals dovetail with our programme, and some concepts have even been anticipated.

In brief, the review wishes to: extend curricular breadth whilst retaining depth, although this is recognised as an ambitious requirement; strengthen oracy across the curriculum; prepare students for the complex world of media, finance and technology; introduce key assessment points; and finally, without creating vast subject shake-ups, the report advises the review of some subject matter and of the sequencing of topics taught.

**Regarding curriculum breadth**, despite the constraints imposed by our narrow budget, St. Michael's already satisfies the proposed attainment measures, even at GCSE. Students take both English subjects, and all students have two humanities and two language options at GCSE. The most important subject, Religious Knowledge (underpinned by another important subject, philosophy) cannot be assessed by GCSE exams, but, nonetheless, it counts as a broadening of the humanities curriculum (even from a purely natural perspective). When KS3 subjects (choir, classics), extracurricular activities (drama, band) and cross-curricular timeslots (PSHE, assemblies) are also considered, subject breadth in the creative area is more obvious, even if the complete suite of creative subjects at GCSE is impossible for a school like ours.

**Subject depth is even stronger for St Michael's**, with regular teaching of content outside of the statutory curriculum. The history programme at KS3, for instance, not only covers a vast time range, but also equips students with an incarnational perspective which gives students the key to the meaning of history.

**The value of oracy at secondary level** is already implicitly recognised by SMS in the choice of a spoken language endorsement at GCSE level

since 2023; speaking and listening are already highly valued at St Michael's: outside of the English curriculum and its structured objectives and tasks for oracy, debating, skits and other collaborative speaking activities have featured in PSHE time. An in-house subject, General Studies, which formed part of the timetable from 2022 to 2024, anticipated other focal points in curriculum reform, namely financial, technological and media literacy. We look forward with interest to a more detailed oracy framework in the 2028 curriculum.

Finally, **regarding subject tweaks**, there are some sensible changes proposed, such as a statutory reading test in Y8; the teaching of more complex English grammar in KS3; the strengthening of drama in English time; and an all-through modern foreign language choice from KS2 to KS4, all of which are already in place at St Michael's.

**I**t is always important to remember that St. Michael's is never driven by Ofsted or governmental reviews. There is an absence of the true meaning of education in these official bodies that we seek to correct here at St Michael's. Nonetheless, we would be foolish not to understand the landscape in which we operate; a landscape that has to be navigated in order for our school to survive and thrive. We can, therefore, look forward with confidence that the latest round of curriculum tweaking is not a threat to St. Michael's, whilst always praying for the resources that would make it possible to continue, develop and expand our subject range and equipment. May St Michael continue to guide us in discerning next steps and priorities for our students' learning.



*Mrs Cullen, English and Geography teacher and EAL coordinator. Mrs Cullen completed her own GCSEs and A Levels here at St Michael's many years ago. Her five children now attend the school. Semper Fidelis!*

# Why Latin and Classics Still Matter Today

by *Emiliana Damiani, Classics Teacher*



At St Michael's, students learn Latin throughout their time in secondary school, taking GCSE Latin at the end of Year 11. They also study Classics in Years 7 and 8. People sometimes ask: "Why study a language that is no longer spoken today?"

Latin is far more than an ancient language tucked away in old books. It is a living key that unlocks the structure and meaning of English itself. Nearly 60% of English words come from Latin roots, and once students understand these building blocks, their vocabulary expands rapidly. Suddenly, words like transport, aquatic, vision, and audible make perfect sense. Latin teaches us to discover patterns, to decode unfamiliar words, and to understand where language comes from.

Since French developed from Latin, students often discover that learning one naturally supports the other. The similarities become obvious: pater and père, portare and porter, bonus and bon. Recognising these connections makes French feel more familiar and boosts confidence in language learning generally. Latin gives students a strong foundation that makes every future language a little bit easier.

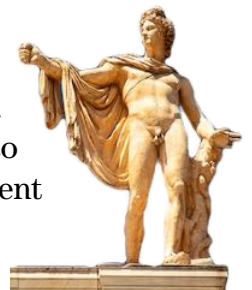
There are also transferable skills that come with the language. These are especially valuable as students progress through other subjects, helping with scientific terminology, precise writing, and analytical thinking. Latin sharpens the mind—and improves English—without students even realising it.

Introducing Classics early offers students a chance to explore the ancient world while they are naturally curious, imaginative, and eager to

understand the storeys that shaped Western culture. Whether we are discussing Roman daily life, Greek myths, or ancient art and architecture, Year 7 and 8 pupils find the classical world vivid, exciting, and surprisingly relevant.

One of the exciting aspects of studying Classics at St Michael's is that the ancient world is not as far away as it seems. In fact, Roman Britain is all around us. With remarkable villa sites such as Chedworth or Littlecote, only a short journey from Burghclere, even Bath is not that far away. Students can stand exactly where Romans once lived, worked, and built beautiful mosaics nearly two thousand years ago. These visits bring history to life in a way no textbook can. Pupils see baths, dining rooms, hypocaust heating systems, and even the remains of Roman gardens. Classics cease to be something theoretical and become something local, real, and tangible.

Classical literature has captivated readers for millennia, and our students are no exception. Tales from Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* continue to inspire awe and excitement: heroic journeys, mythical creatures, daring battles, loyalty, loss, and triumph. These stories are timeless because they resonate with the human experience — speaking of courage, curiosity, fear, friendship, and perseverance. Students love exploring these epic tales, discovering that ancient storytellers understood people just as well as modern authors do. The ancient world still has much to teach us, and we invite every student to step into it. ✧



STEM Club -  
Spring Term 2026  
Weds. 3:30 - 4:30pm



Codebreaking  
&  
Catapults!





## Primary Phase - Mrs Webb

Another busy and blessed term has flown by. The children have skipped into school, happy and enthusiastic, trying to be good. The teachers have taught, listened to, and guided them.

One of our teachers is leaving us after many, many years at St. Michael's, and much time, thought, and effort have been given to finding a new candidate.

What makes a good Catholic teacher? A good Catholic teacher works to integrate the teachings and counsels of the Faith into all subjects, not just religion. A good Catholic teacher seeks to educate the "whole child" academically, morally, and spiritually, serving as a role model and participating in the school's mission. The teacher's role extends beyond teaching the curriculum to fostering a virtuous environment, encouraging spiritual growth, and living out Catholic values daily, making it a vocation.

At St. Michael's, we are grateful and fortunate to have teachers who go above and beyond what a normal teacher would do. Our teachers readily give up their free time to support a struggling child with their learning. Every part of our day is designed to teach the children to know, love and serve Our Lord. They work together, supporting each other to achieve a positive outcome for every child. Please pray for our teachers, who need many graces to live out their vocation.

This year's nativity play was called 'Prophets and Kings'. The children learnt about how Our Lord's birth was long-awaited and how the prophets and kings had foretold the wonders in Bethlehem.

Wishing all our benefactors a happy and blessed Christmas. You are remembered in the children's prayers.

*Christmas story time with the Headmaster! The children have never been better behaved!*



Our special thanks and best wishes to Miss Rachel Dunn, who is leaving us this term.



A qualified nurse, Miss Dunn has worked at St. Michael's for almost 30 years! In addition to tending the sick, she first cooked, cleaned and supervised, and then, later, taught pupils in years 3 and 4.

Miss Dunn has worked tirelessly and quietly. She has been reliable and consistent. She has assisted, helped and guided the children and bandaged countless grazed knees and elbows over the years. May God reward all her hard work. We will sorely miss her. Thank you, Rachel, for being such a wonderful colleague.



*Years 5 and 6's sing carols to local residents with whom they keep in contact via the letter club, to the delight of all involved.*



### Maths

*Ruben, Luke and Peter are proud of their silver and gold achievements in this year's UK Maths Challenge.*

*Bravo!*



School is about so much more than sitting in a classroom learning phonics, numbers and how to form letters and words. Many other activities help open a child's mind and heart to the world they will inhabit one day.

Trips, plays, poetry, competitive activities and parties all form an essential part of the child's learning and formation. How they love these alternatives to pencil, paper and impossible sums to add and subtract!



On the 8th October Junior 2 travelled to the London Natural History Museum to learn more about earthquakes and volcanoes.

After we arrived, we had a quick look at some mammals and then had lunch.

Soon, we climbed on an escalator through a giant globe, which represented the layers of the Earth. At the top were many exhibits of volcanoes and their magma. There was even an exhibit of a man buried in ash and glass-like-threads, called 'Pele's lava'.

Next we attended Professor Andrew's talk about volcanoes and earthquakes. We learnt that flat volcanoes are called effusive and pointy volcanoes are explosive. We looked at the effects of volcanoes and how they were formed.

I really enjoyed the visit to the museum, especially the stuffed animals; I think people who like animals or earthquakes would really like it too.

Peter Hall Year 6



## Welcome to Fr Bevan, Housemaster

Fr Bernard Bevan replaces Fr Thomas O'Hart as the Boarding Housemaster. Ordained in 2022, Fr Bevan previously served at La Salette Academy in the US.

Fr Bevan comes from a family of ten children. He attended a Society of St Pius X school in France and completed two years of university before answering the call. His older brother is also a priest who teaches at one of our schools in France. One of his three sisters is a Dominican sister in France. She teaches philosophy.

Needless to say, Fr Bevan has assumed his role without fuss and with energy! The boys do not know what has hit them! He regularly edits a short newsletter which allows parents to better understand the workings of the boarding house and how it seeks to train and form the boys so that they become brave, intelligent and civilised young men, ready to take on roles of responsibility in society. Here are some snippets that, we hope, will make families envious of the wonderful opportunity boarders have here at St Michael's.



Every Tuesday at 8.35 pm, the Upper Dorm gathers for *Thoughtful Tuesday*: a small conversation with the Housemaster. The boys listen quietly to the general outline of the topic until it soon becomes a lively and fruitful exchange. They are free to ask questions and share their thoughts and ideas. Topics such as the beauty of confession, the necessity of purity, the problem with worldliness, or the vocation to the religious life not only inform the boys' minds but also introduce them to a new way of thinking.



In a world where superficial communication is prevalent, there's often a sense of emptiness. Words are used to convey complete shallowness. Young boys are soon contaminated by this spirit unless they are equipped to think for themselves. Thoughtful Tuesday aims to give our boys a taste and love for proper and profound conversation – a wealth of thought to chew on and digest. In essence, they are given something meaningful.

By developing the habit of going to the root of a topic, understanding the reasons behind things, and recognising the value of profound principles, our young men are placed in front of reality as God intends us to understand it.

For many teenagers, assisting at mass can be a burden or a rut. Not for our boarders, though.

Every day, I witness a handful of boys getting up early to attend *Holy Mass*. They arrive on time and diligently follow their missals. This is incredibly commendable and encouraging for the staff.

The boys are surrounded by like-minded friends who all understand the importance of personal sanctification. Going to mass is not unusual or strange for them because acts of devotion have become an integral part of their lives. Seeing others attend mass, they happily perform it themselves.

Finally, they are around priests and Catholic laymen whose primary goal is the spiritual welfare of those under their trust. This can only bring out the best in them.

We don't force your sons to go to mass; they freely choose to go of their own accord. They are fully aware of the many blessings that can be obtained at such a low cost. One of the greatest values of a good Catholic boarding house is this realisation.





The strict observance of the rule is insufficient, as it only pertains to the letter of the law. We encourage our boarders to understand *the true nature of obedience* and embrace the spirit that gives rise to a particular obligation or duty. Once they comprehend the reason behind something, it becomes easy. In other words, when they perceive the goodness and fittingness of doing something, they promptly and willingly carry it out, making it natural for them to take responsibility and initiative. Blind obedience may work for a time when the soul is young and immature. However, as the soul grows and reason develops, a Catholic formation calls upon educators to enlighten this obedience, thus allowing it to flourish.

What's the School all about? This simple answer is: the Faith!

Yes, the Faith makes up the true ethos of the School. It informs everything we do and every decision we make, especially for our boarders who live on site. To maintain this Faith, we rely on the fruits of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Mass is the principal source of divine grace.

*We give a dedicated place of honour to the celebration of Mass.* We want the boys to witness the ceremonies close up and to be actively involved in them. Not only are the boarders encouraged to attend Mass regularly, but they also take turns serving on weekdays and Sundays, preparing the vestments and setting the altar. Additionally, they learn the Latin responses and participate in a weekly class on serving. High standards are required. The boys must value the Mass as the principal source of their sanctification.



Our new common room is delightful. Well-furnished, it's a hub of activity. Boarders often play pool, table football, table tennis, and various board or card games during their free time, especially on weekends. The priests frequently join in, but they are usually outshone by the mastery and skills of the students.

Here, the term final. Bravo to Laurence, table tennis champion, and to Peter, runner-up!



Chef Brother Dominic Savio, pictured here with a smile, looks after the kitchen and sacristy. In the past few weeks, he has spoken about the vocation of religious life. During these conferences, he outlined what is meant by the religious life and the three vows and described the daily routine. Brother showed his vocation to be a truly beautiful choice of life. We pray daily for vocations, and hope that some of our boys will follow in Brother's footsteps, God willing!



There's no time!



For mischief





Sergeant Christian has led the St Michael's Cadet Corps for the past seven years. At the Christmas NCO meal, Fr Holden delivered a sterling speech of gratitude and presented him with a shielded plaque in gratitude. It is a real pleasure to see the flame pass on - Sergeant Christian became a junior cadet at age 11 in the newly formed cadet corps under Fr Holden. Now he leads the Corps he was part of. Fr Holden visits twice a term to check standards, brief and de-brief, and share a jolly pint as well! We love his visits!

Mr Newton continues to provide invaluable counsel, encouragement and support. Next on the list: another visit to the shooting club and, hopefully, a visit to the Bovington Tank Museum. As the boys say - "It's great to be a cadet!"



Mr Keating celebrates his 96th birthday and shares memories.



## Urgent Roof Project

**B**uilt in the mid-70s, the White House extension's 24 metre-long roof has succumbed to its weight. Poorly built, it has been under surveillance for several years. Despite additional bracing, the roof has continued to "rack". Recent inspections have revealed that the roof is now officially collapsing. **All the trusses lean 30+ degrees from the vertical towards the far gable end, some 24 meters away.** The heavily-deformed gable wall is on the verge of collapsing. Daylight streams into the attic space between the Main House wall and the once-abutting roof line. Great cracks are visible. The gable end has been braced.

**W**e hope that this will be the last major renovation work for years to come... famous last words. Since 2018, the property has been methodically maintained, repaired and updated. It is a high-use property that requires constant vigilance and intervention. The cost of saving souls!

**Cost £110 000** (works scheduled Feb 2026)

**HOLY MASS OFFERED FOR ALL OUR BENEFACTORS ON THE 1ST FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH.**

*M*eanwhile, another sort of renovation and restoration is taking place. The Parish Guild of St Margaret Clitherow has made several new vestments and copes. The school is so very blessed with liturgical beauty beyond compare, so important for children.



# SAINT MICHAEL'S SCHOOL

Harts Lane  
Burghclere, Newbury  
RG20 9JW  
U.K.



01635 278137  
[headmaster@sanctusmichael.com](mailto:headmaster@sanctusmichael.com)  
<https://stmichaels-school.uk>

Name : ..... Tel : .....

Address : ..... City: .....

Post Code : ..... Email : .....

**I would like to make a donation of**  £50  £150  £ \_\_\_\_\_  
 £100  £200



## I would like to set up a monthly Standing Order

Gift Amount  £10  £15  £20  £30  £40  £ \_\_\_\_\_

### Pass on to your Bank or Building Society this instruction:

*Please pay Royal Bank of Scotland, Newbury Branch, 20 Market Place, Newbury, RG14 5BD on the ..... day of each month until further notice.*

**Sort Code 16-26-18 Acc. Number: 10191323** for the credit of **St. Michael's School.**

*giftaid it*

**B**oost your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate. Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

*I want to Gift Aid the following donations to the Society of St Pius X (please tick the correct boxes)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>this donation</i>                          | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>all donations for the 2023-24 tax year</i>                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>all donations for the 2021-22 tax year</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>all donations for the 2024-25 tax year</i>                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>all donations for the 2022-23 tax year</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>all donations from 6th April 2025 until further notice</i> |

*I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.*

.....  
Signature

.....  
Date:

Please notify us if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

God bless you for your kindness! Return form to address above. Questions? Call us at 01635 278137.

**HOLY MASS OFFERED FOR ALL OUR BENEFACTORS ON THE 1ST FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH.**