

Winter Update

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Happy New Year to everyone and I hope you had an amazing and blessed Christmas. As we start a new decade and we begin our journey into the 20's we look forward to all that God has planned for TheO6 in Ottery St Mary and surrounding area. I am really excited. If the last three years have been anything to go by (yes it has been that long) then 2020 and the next few years ahead will be brilliant. But let's tell you what has happened in the last few months.

The big thing had to be Christmas for me. It was probably the busiest run up to Christmas I have experienced, finishing up on Christmas Eve. But for all it's busyness it was amazing and something I would not change (well, maybe a few tweaks). One of the highlights for me over this period was the Christmas Experiences I was involved in; in Ottery St Mary, West Hill and Newton Popleford.

We held the first one on Friday 6th December at St Mary's Parish Church in Ottery St Mary. Here we welcomed over 130 Foundation stage and Key Stage One children from Feniton Primary School and Tipton St John Primary School. It was so good to see the church full of so many children – all very excited at what the morning was going to offer. The activities were run in a carousel style – with each group spending around 20 minutes at each activity. Activities included a nativity treasure hunt, a Bible Society Christmas video, a pop-up nativity, Christmas Crafts and refreshments and biscuit decorating. As the children left at the end, we all sang Away in a Manger. It was such a good morning, exhausting but so good. From conversations following it I know everyone really enjoyed it – helpers, teachers and children.

The second one TheO6 did was at West Hill Church on Thursday 12th December and for this one we had over 90 Foundation Stage and Key Stage One children from West Hill Primary School. This one was different to the previous one as we had each class visit us one at a time.



Each class visited for around 50 minutes. During this time, we explored the Christmas Story through a video called 'The Noisy Neighbour' video and then by splitting into four groups. Each group, taking in turns did three crafts and a Nativity treasure hunt. The crafts were a Christmas Star, a Christmas Angel and a Shepherd. The first two we also did at St Mary's. We finished their time with us with a wonderful rendition of Away in a Manger. They were certainly in fine voice. Again, everyone seemed to enjoy it and we will certainly be looking to do something similar again next Christmas in both venues. I also had the pleasure again this year of helping St. Luke's at Newton Popleford with their Christmas Experience. Again, with very similar numbers to West Hill we enjoyed a 50-minute session with each class exploring the Christmas Story. We watched a video and did four different crafts. Thank you to everyone who helped with all the Christmas Experiences. If it wasn't for the most incredible teams it just wouldn't have happened. Thank you to all the venues. They provided a most excellent setting to telling the children one of the most important stories they will ever hear.





Ottery St Mary Primary School – last term I have again been working with the school mentoring four young people. Also, I have started a lunchtime club with the school, for those that find breaktimes quite difficult.

Feniton Primary School – Bible Explorers continued during the Autumn term. We explored some of the Miracles of Jesus and we finished the term looking at the Christmas Story. Also, at Feniton last term we ran the Timid to Tiger Course. It is a course aimed at parents who have children that suffer from anxiety and the issues that anxiety brings. Parents from across all the schools in the learning community were invited to attend. We had an amazing response – in fact we had to turn some people away. However, we are looking to do another one quite soon after to accommodate those who missed out. Timid to Tiger has been running on a Tuesday morning and has been led by Anna Vine, Pastoral Manager at Ottery St Mary Primary and myself. I also had the privilege last term of opening and closing the Act of Worship on a number of occasions, on a Friday afternoon. It was great to hear the children’s thoughts on the stories of Jonah and Moses.

West Hill Primary School – Last term I also had the privilege again of taking a number of assemblies. I always look forward to seeing the children there. As previously mentioned, they also took part in a Christmas Experience.

Tipton St John Primary School – It was great having them take part in the Christmas Experience with Feniton Primary School.

Kings School – Last term I continued going in lunchtimes two or three times a week. Over the term I had many conversations with so many young people. With it nearly being three years that I have been doing this it has been great to see how the relationship between the pupils and myself has really flourished. I also attended a Parent Christmas Coffee event at the school. I use the word privilege a lot (I know) but it really is a privilege to work with King’s School and I look forward to working with them further.



The Hub Drop-In Café continued to grow last term. We are now getting in excess of 23 children most weeks now. This is really good and it is brilliant to see them coming in. This has presented a few difficult issues that we have needed to address. One of these is man management. To enable one of the purposes of the drop in to continue – the place where young people can chat to me about issues etc, it is important that most of my time is not spent fighting fires as such. So, we are having to increase our volunteers to two plus myself each session. If you are interested in volunteering or know someone who might be please contact me – I would love to speak to you. Also, with the increase of people comes the need for more cakes and cookies. It costs around £18 each week at present and as such there is no separate fund for it. So, we are also looking for people that would be happy to donate money towards our cake and cookie fund. Finally, with the increase of numbers and ‘need’ we are looking to how we structure the session. The reflective, drop in café style isn’t quite happening. So, to enable this we are making sure there are other things going on during the session to keep everyone occupied. Last term I met up with Vicky Johns, Town and East Devon Councillor. We had a great conversation (despite the fire alarm going off) and she informed me soon after that the Town Council are really happy to support the Youth Café and Theo6 Project at large. I look forward to seeing how this will roll out.



I think the one disappointment last term is the mentoring project. We have reached a bit of an impasse. I believe this is because of a number of reasons. One of the reasons is lack of referrals. We just haven’t had any. This is a shame as we have mentors ready to go. The second reason is Male mentors. The one potential mentee we have cannot be paired because we have just one male mentor to choose from. Thirdly is time. Both of the above issues could be addressed quicker if there was more time for me to work on it. With everything else I do – it is really difficult. However, this is being worked on and hopefully in the next month exciting news will follow.