Christmas is the most wonderful and magical time of the year in school! Here at Franche, we always make a very special effort to celebrate the festive season with our children, and use the opportunity to remind them and their families of the true message of Christmas.

Our message is that it is not about the latest toys, or the glitziest light display, or the table heaving with expensive food – nice though all those things are to give and receive! It is about love, and family, and looking after each other, especially those who are less fortunate or who do not enjoy the things that we take for granted.

This hit home to me particularly following the tragic events in Paris. We held a short silence in school to remember the victims of terrorism and spoke to the children in simple terms about what had been on the news, focussing particularly on how the world had come together to support each other, share love and peace and keep each other safe. It reminds me of how lucky we are to have a community of staff, pupils and families at Franche that seeks to live these values. We show it in so many different ways – these are just some that spring to mind for me this term:

• The way our children love getting “Caught Being Good” rewards, just for doing the right thing, whether that’s showing kindness, helping a friend, or working hard.

• The way our amazing parents rallied round to help as part of our Parent/Teacher partnership, putting on a fantastic bonfire and fireworks display, many of them giving up their weekend to do their bit. The fog might have hampered us on the night and spoiled the view for many (there are some things even we cannot control!!), but everyone still turned out to support the efforts, together raising an incredible £8,000 for our pupils.

• The enormous support we show towards the more vulnerable people. The shoeboxes have piled in for Operation Christmas Child, and we raised hundreds of pounds for Pudsey the Bear and Children in Need this year. We also distributed hampers, via our local churches, to local families and older people in need following our harvest festivals. We will be sending out gifts and hampers for disadvantaged children and families later this month.

• For our war heroes the children collected £202.

• The children are making cards to send to the elderly, sick and lonely this Christmas.

I am so proud to be the Head of a school where we welcome children of all abilities, all backgrounds, all nations, without discrimination. I hope this instils in our children an understanding that we are all equal, all special, all deserving of love and all being given the best of opportunities to enjoy and achieve.

Thank you for being part of the Franche family – Governors, staff and I join to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

With very best wishes

Val Weddell-Hall
Head Teacher
Lucas Remmers, 11, and Caitlin Stanton, 10, were selected by teaching staff to act as ambassadors for the school and role models to younger pupils.

They were picked for being hard working, kind and friendly. Said Lucas: “I think my strong work ethic and because I always try my best were the things the teachers liked about me.”

Added Caitlin: “It’s a real honour and we are so proud to be the head girl and boy. It makes me feel very special. We both want to do anything we can to help younger pupils and to represent the school.” The pair have come up with the idea of having question time each week so pupils can ask them questions and put forward ideas which can then go to School Council and the head teacher.

Mrs Weddell-Hall said the idea of introducing a head boy and girl was for them be ambassadors for the school. “Lucas and Caitlin were chosen by the staff as they wonderfully embody the values we hope to see in all our children – they are kind, compassionate and hard working but are also outstanding mentors who inspire younger children in our school.”

The pair wear distinctive red ties and have Head Boy and Head Girl badges.

Some 30 children from across years 4 and 5 created artistic lanterns for the annual Christmas Lights Switch-On and parade in Kidderminster. The children, all identified as talented artists, took part in a workshop organised by Wyre Forest District Council to create their artworks. The lantern procession was part of the celebrations to mark the lights switch-on by the mayor of Kidderminster, Rose Bishop, last month.
A record number of shoe boxes crammed with Christmas cheer are now winging their way to vulnerable children in Kyrgyzstan - a rugged Central Asian country - thanks to the incredible efforts of pupils and parents.

Year 5 staff and pupils coordinated this year’s efforts for Operation Christmas Child, and did an amazing job persuading the rest of the school to take part and do their bit.

Dozens of shoeboxes filled with small presents and essentials like gloves, soap and toothbrushes are now en route to bring joy this Christmas to children who have very little.

Mr Loughton, Mrs Fassnidge and Mrs Mason coordinated the campaign with the pupils of Year 5, who designed persuasive posters to urge people to get involved and wrote a letter to parents asking them to donate gifts. The children also used their skills in ICT making promotional videos to showcase to the rest of the school, informing them about the charity and persuading them to donate to the cause.

The campaign was also tied in cleverly with their topic work around the stories of Narnia, bringing in aspects of maths, creative writing, geography, history and current affairs.

Said Mr Loughton: “I have been overwhelmed by the support we have received from our pupils and parents alike across the school. What has particularly impressed me is the way the children of Year 5 have taken this cause to their hearts, acted with great maturity & compassion and shown such commitment to making this year’s shoebox collection a success. It is truly humbling to know that our children will have such a huge impact on so many disadvantaged young people across the world and a huge thank you must be given to everyone who has supported us this year. Our 174 boxes crammed with goodies are now winging their way across Europe towards Asia and we hope they bring joy to children who are much less fortunate than us.”

To find out more please visit: www.samaritans-purse.org.uk
Our popular extended services provision, known as Franche 726, has come back under the school's management. The extended services are now working seamlessly with the school to ensure the continuation of high quality care, greater consistency and to ensure the children benefit from the fantastic on site facilities.

Our aim is to ensure continuity of care and learning as children prepare for school, and to ensure all services continue to be viable so we can operate as flexibly as possible and meet the requirements of all of our families.

All food within the extended services provision is provided by our Silver Food for Life kitchen. This ensures that children are accessing a wide range of Organic and locally sourced ingredients. All children attending the after school provision now receive 'High Tea'.

Daily operations are overseen by the school's deputy head teacher Miss Lazenby and nursery manager Mrs Jane Bulmer, in partnership with the extended services team. The provision is again a fully integrated part of the school's award winning early years team (recently announced as the best in the country!)

Senior staff and Extended Services Governors have worked with County Advisors to ensure fees have been simplified. There has been a small increase in fees (the first in six years) which, for most families, has seen a rise in fees equivalent to 25p an hour.

Breakfast Club
Wraparound Care
Before and After School Club
Tots at Franche
Little Franche Nursery
2 & 3 year old funded places
Holiday Club

**Typical fees include:**

Babies, Toddlers, Nursery: £39 a day including all meals (7.30am-5.30pm)

Toddlers and Nursery: £12 for a three hour morning or afternoon session, including snacks (full nursery funding available, information from the nursery team) Breakfast Club for 0-11 years: £5 including breakfast (7.30am-8.40am)

After School Club for 0-11 years: £5 including high tea (collection by 4.30pm) or £9 including high tea (collection by 5.30pm).

**Christmas childcare:**

We are open during the Christmas holidays on December 21, 22 and 23, from 7.30am to 5.30pm (7-7.30am and 5.30-6pm by special arrangement). Activities on offer include making Christmas cookies, mince pies and more, plus a variety of Christmas craft activities including gifts, calendars and decorations.

The annual Christmas party will be on Wednesday December 23.

The provision closes for Christmas and New Year and reopens on Monday January 4th (teacher training day).

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all our wonderful families. Thank you for your support during this transition period.

**Please book early to avoid disappointment**

Bookings are also being taken for February Half Term- trips off site to be announced.
The Early Years team which oversees care and learning for pupils in Nursery, Reception and Year 1 has been named the country’s best at a prestigious national awards.

Franche entered the Nursery World Awards for the first time ever this year, and we were thrilled to be named Early Years Team of the Year. We were also runners up in the categories for Pre-School of the Year and Nursery Manager of the Year (Jane Bulmer).

Staff attended a glittering awards ceremony in London at the end of September and were amazed to learn they had achieved recognition on the national stage.

Miss Lazenby, deputy head with responsibility for early years, said it was a fantastic moment for staff.

Judges praised the team’s united purpose and ambitions for every child, the excellent progress made by children, and the positive partnerships between staff, children and families.
WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN JOINING OUR GOVERNING BODY?

If so, contact Sandra Aldridge in the school office by:

- Talking in person
- By phone on 01562 751788
- or by email at Sandra.aldridge@francheprimary.worcs.sch.uk

Regardless of your background or experiences, we would love to hear from you if you would like to join our Governing Body. Full training and induction is given and a mentor governor will help you find your feet and find out all you need to know.

We are also particularly keen to speak to anyone who thinks they would be able to add insights or have experience in premises maintenance, performance data and assessment, finances and child safeguarding.

The governors work with the head teacher and the School Leadership Team to ensure the school is well managed, has a clear strategy for improvement and provides a high quality education for all its pupils.

Governors are selected to serve on a range of committees, based on their interests and skills. The committees oversee different aspects of school life, including pupil achievement and well-being, safeguarding, finance, staffing, pay and premises.

Governors work closely with staff to analyse performance, discuss strategy and provide a vital role as a “critical friend”, while also becoming familiar faces around school.
A new action plan to save energy has been launched by the school's eco committee.

As part of our continuous efforts towards achieving Green Flag status, pupils meet fortnightly to create action plans, think of ideas and plan exciting events on a green theme.

Some 20 pupils are current members of the committee, and together they have created an Eco Action Plan for 2015-16.

They voted to focus on three key areas: Energy, Water and Healthy Living.

The children then looked at our energy readings on heating, lighting and water use and have discussed ways to improve these.

At the weekly staff meeting, three committee members presented their initial findings to staff and warned that they would be conducting spot checks around school to check that lights have been switched off, computers closed down and interactive boards turned off when classrooms are not in use.

They will then place Green or Red cartoon images above the light switches to show whether the class is doing the right thing to conserve energy.

The committee has also decided to create challenges across different year bands to help children learn to save energy and water.

Please support the initiative by being eco aware at home, encouraging children to switch off lights, TVs and computers when not in use.
Horse riding, animal keeping, magic tricks – these are just some of the brilliant activities our pupils enjoy at school.

Joining that list from January is skiing. We've had a phenomenal response to our invitation to pupils to take part in lessons on the dry ski slope at Wolverley High School and these begin next term.

We also regularly take pupils to Wolverley's mini farm, where pupils look after small pets; and they get the chance to learn conversational languages, arts, crafts and cookery, among many more.

Academic achievement is a vitally important part of primary school life and we are very proud of the progress our children make against targets set by the government.

But the tests our children take don't measure every aspect of their lives. They don't assess how thoughtful they are, or how good they are at drawing, or how they finally overcame their fear of water in a swimming lesson.

That's why the education we provide at Franche focusses on preparing them for high school in every way – academically, socially and emotionally.

One of our school priorities this year is to help our children be more resilient. We know that some of our children struggle to keep going when learning becomes difficult, or when their ability is tested. Much of this is down to confidence and self esteem, a fear of failure, and an aversion to taking risks.

We have invested heavily in providing ways to boost pupil achievement and to help them identify their special talents, whether they are sporting, artistic, academic or musical.

This year we have also introduced a nurture programme called Thrive – a celebrated new approach which draws on the latest research to help teachers and carers understand and support children's emotional and social development from an early age. Significant numbers of our staff are now trained practitioners and we hope to be recognised as a Thrive school this year.

This year's Friday afternoon enrichment activities have included the following: Arts and Crafts, Cartoon Club, Story Telling, Cooking, Movie Makers, Drama, Sewing, Puppet Making, Cricket, French, Spanish, Cookery, Storyboarding, Coding, Archery, Jewellery Making, ICT Animation, Music Production, Samba Drumming, Science, Origami and Life saving.

In addition we host after school clubs including Melody Makers and Showstoppers, Craft Club, Board Games, Thinking Skills, Dance, Lego, Art, Badminton, Ballet, Tag Rugby, Football, Netball, Hockey, Imagineering and Young Voices.

If you have any special talents you want to share with our pupils, please let us know, we'd love to hear from you!
ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Knitting and Handicrafts

Rugby on the sports field

Animal Keeping at Wolverley Secondary

Fun and Enjoyment

Exciting skiing lessons at the dry ski slope at Wolverley Secondary School
The corridors of Franche have always been filled with the sound of music – but it’s fair to say the standard and range of musical opportunities has never been higher or more magical.

Under the leadership of music coordinator Miss Thomas, pupils are enjoying singing, learning instruments, performing on world class stages and forming their own bands.

This term alone more than 40 children in Key Stage 2 have taken up learning a new instrument for the first time – we even have waiting lists for some instruments. Costs are kept to the absolute minimum and lessons are given during the school day, keeping the burden on parents to the minimum.

Lessons are offered on wind, brass and string instruments, alongside drumming and vocal coaching, all provided by expert teachers. We are also considering introducing violin lessons following inquiries from pupils and parents.

In addition, every pupil in Year 4 takes part in Play To Learn weekly music sessions on the violin or cornet.

In the next term we also expect to see the first Franche rock band established from among a group of Year 5 pupils!

Singing and performance is a particularly strong aspect of school life. Showstoppers Club, for older pupils, has had an overwhelming response and there are now 30 in the Wednesday lunchtime club and 40 in the Tuesday after school club.

They will perform alongside our younger Melody Makers club at a Christmas concert on the evening of December 11th.

Pupils in years 5 & 6 will also take to the stage at the world famous Genting Arena (formally the NEC) in Birmingham on January 12th at the annual Young Voices concert.
This is a song we have been singing at Franche Community Primary School, thinking especially of those who need our support against injustice:

"GET LOUD"

Life is a mystery
Full of uncertainty
Makes little sense to me but I’m trying,
I’m trying

Life can be so unfair
The rich are slow to share
Does anybody care when you’re crying,
you’re crying.

We’ve got to take our chance now

Time to get loud (time to get loud)
Find your voice in the crowd
It really matters what you say
’cos this is your day.
Time to feel strong (time to feel strong)
Find out where you belong
You wanna make us proud?
So get loud!

Are you ready for this?
We’re not gonna miss
The chance to go oh
We’re gonna change and rearrange yeah
We’re gonna find a better day
We’re gonna show the world the way

Get loud get loud, we’re gonna get
Get loud get loud woah
Get loud get loud, we’re gonna get
Get loud get woah!

We waste so much each day
So much is thrown away
Is there a better way? well I’m yearning,
I’m yearning.

The world is going mad
I think it’s so sad
We ain’t all good from bad but I’m learn-
ing, I’m learning.

We’ve got to take our chance now
SPOTLIGHT ON SPORT

Franche is developing a formidable reputation as the school to beat in a range of sporting activities. The boys’ football team have just been crowned best in the district and go on to represent Wyre Forest in the county championships next year. Our hockey team made the final of the district event, losing a tight final 1-0 to Bewdley; and our girls’ under 11s football team has won the Wyre Forest challenge event for the second year running. A new tag rugby after school club is thriving, and an inter house tag rugby competition has been fiercely fought.

Pupils have made huge efforts in cross country, with dozens of boys and girls across four year bands taking part in training and district events. All of this has helped us achieve the Gold Kitemark award for the second year running. This reflects our creative curriculum, our network with clubs within the Wyre Forest, our competition structure and results from district events, and the high level of practice and delivery of skills. We are only one of three schools that has been recognised at this high level.

We are always keen to extend our sporting repertoire – if anyone has any ideas or recommendations to share, please contact sports coordinator Miss Running.
A celebration of British culture, cities and the arts launched the new school year in style. It was a magical celebration of all things British, culminating in a whole school carnival march and musical show on the school playing fields.

The sun shone as pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 paraded in front of hundreds of parents and grandparents, with each year band focusing on a different city or part of the UK.

Birmingham, Liverpool, Belfast, Edinburgh, Cardiff and the Isles of the UK were studied and the children created artistic displays, artworks, poems, stories and sculptures which told the story of each area.

Every child also got to design and keep a t-shirt to commemorate the week. It was a wonderful week and a great way for the children to express themselves while learning about our country.

Our pupils created some stunning pieces of work and put on a brilliant display for our families.

We are so proud of all of our staff and pupils for rising to the challenge in such a wonderful way.

We have definitely seen a positive impact on the children’s enthusiasm and passion to pursue the Arts: more children have signed up for instrumental lessons and there is a high interest in art and craft enrichment and clubs.
Nursery & Reception

It has been an exciting and eventful first term for our younger pupils, who have been supported to settle in beautifully into school life. The year’s first big topic was Ourselves – an enjoyable way for the children to get to know each other and their teachers and gently introducing them to vital literacy and numeracy skills. A fantastic harvest thanksgiving festival featured songs, story telling and drama.

Year 1

Progress in this first term has been phenomenal, with children knuckling down quickly to tackle the wide range of skills and knowledge they are expected to acquire in Year 1. Maths sets and guided reading groups have been focussed and well organised, ensuring all ability levels are producing work of high quality.

We have focussed on the brilliant children’s author Julia Donaldson, writer of Room on the Broom, Smartest Giant in Town, Monkey Puzzle and The Gruffalo, among others. This has helped children consolidate their numeracy and writing skills, with a strong focus on handwriting and story telling. Fantastic science lessons have focussed on different types of animals, their eating habits and their habitats.

Year 2

Year 2 have had a really busy start to the academic year. The children have settled really well into their new classes and are busy working hard.

Through the topic of Sea Adventures, the children have been studying the work of famous authors. They have been analysing texts and writing their own versions of stories. They have particularly enjoyed researching non-fiction texts to discover facts about sea creatures, of which they have included in their own stories. The Sea Adventures theme has also encompassed work about famous explorers through a history unit. The children are currently finding out about Sir Francis Drake and Ernest Shackleton. They are focusing on historical questioning, using research skills and gathering information from a variety of sources.

In Science, the children have been exploring uses of everyday materials. The children have identified and compared the uses of a variety of materials and they are currently investigating how the shapes of solid objects can be changed. They will use their findings to help to design and make an item for an expedition to the Antarctic.

This is the first year that Year 2 has studied the revised National Curriculum. There is greater emphasis on spelling, grammar and punctuation and we have made amendments to accommodate this change. The children have a new set of English Skills books to work from and they are enjoying their ‘SPAG’ style lessons.

Year 3

Year Three children have settled into the new school year with great enthusiasm and determination. We have maintained five sets for Mathematics and continue to set for Guided Reading. Morning sessions are dedicated to comprehension, phonics and SPaG activities, allied to Bug Club, set up to support the children with a variety of eBooks online. Thanks to generous donations, each classroom in Year Three also has a home-school library in which children are encouraged to choose and take home books that may not necessarily be in their book band. This has been very popular and members of staff have received positive feedback from parents during parents’ evening.

Year Three’s first topic, Wild West, enlisted pupils to help the Sheriff of Texas find the ruthless bandit, Vicious Vince. This helped develop key skills, such as collaboration, negotiating and finding solutions. Children have been using their super science knowledge in order to complete the various tasks given on forces and magnets. They have also become history detectives by researching and investigating key events during this period and creating some wonderful artwork to support their adventure story writing. Pupils are currently investigating the most effective way to transport precious belongings by designing a traditional Wild West wagon to protect their goods from the bandit but travel smoothly across the Appalachian Mountains!

Year 4

Year Four have got their feet muddy with their first
topic, Field to Fork. They received an intriguing letter from local farmer, Mr Hogan, requesting their help with maintaining his crops. They took on this challenge by researching and designing scarecrows for his fields. Pupils also investigated how we could support and persuade the local community by writing a leaflet, encouraging them to buy more Red Tractor products.

To further support Farmer Hogan, pupils have enjoyed designing and creating interactive computer prototype farm toys using the program Scratch. They were challenged and were successful in using algorithms to logically sequence the instructions for their toy. To conclude the unit, children will present and use their computational thinking to explain the function of their toy in a ‘dragon’s den’ environment.

In Science, we have explored the functions of our teeth and identified the parts of the tooth. To demonstrate how various liquids affect the enamel of our teeth, children have observed how eggs have reacted to these drinks. We have discovered the importance of drinking water and keeping our teeth clean.

**Year 5**

Children and staff enjoyed immersing themselves in our first topic this term, The Vikings. The children’s literacy, science, spelling and grammar sessions, music and guided reading were all themed around the topic.

We are now deep into our Narnia-themed topic looking at winter, story telling, adventure and intrigue, while Year 5 also coordinated the Operation Christmas Child project this year.

There is a continued focus on maths, with children grouped into sets to ensure all children achieve success at their own pace and ability level, with additional challenge to ensure none are left to coast. Teachers are supported by our incredibly hard working TAs who help the year group run smoothly and are engaged in group teaching, one to one support and guided reading groups.

Year 5 runs a homework club on a Monday for those children who struggle to complete homework at home for a variety of reasons and our doors are always open to children and parents who require additional help or support.

Two very successful parents evenings have been held and feedback was very positive on both sides. There is a really positive vibe running throughout the year group and children are showing mutual respect for each other and the staff.

**Year 6**

Year 6 has delved into the world of Kensuke’s Kingdom, learning about longitude and latitude and how hurricanes are formed whilst following the journey of Michael as he has sailed around the world.

In English we have been writing in the role of Michael as he has experienced some amazing times; however, there has been occasions when it has not gone so well for him. We have written letters of persuasion, taken on the point of view of the coastguard as Michael has been swept overboard, and even begun to learn survival skills for a deserted Pacific Island. We have used the Franche forest to learn how to light fires; built solar stills to produce water; erected shelters to protect us from the heat of the sun and the torrential downpours and even tried nettle tea. Using our new skills, we have been able to produce some fantastic survival guides that Bear Grylls himself would be proud of.

In science, we have continued to use the world of Kensuke’s Kingdom to inspire us. We have been classifying the animals Michael has observed whilst visiting places such as Brazil, South Africa and Australia. In addition, we have been trying to use our scientific knowledge to produce filtered water (just in case we ever get stuck on a deserted island).

We have also been applying our practical problem solving skills in maths: designing shelters using our knowledge of triangles and quadrilaterals, using algebra to work out possible solutions to how much of each resource Michael could take on a rescue raft and proportion calculations to make drinks for any given number of people.

**All in all, a fantastic start to a challenging year for our older pupils!**
We also want to ensure that we do not overlook the wonderful opportunities available from new technology, coding and apps.

This year we have introduced new Digital Leaders. These are pupils who monitor the huge range of technology we use in school.

Our team of nine Digital Leaders have undergone special training and their role is to model good behaviour, support their teachers and classmates and show what is possible.

The Digital Leaders were all chosen after completing applications in a range of formats, including videos, programming demonstrations, posters and powerpoints.

They all have a high profile in school, wear badges and have official roles and duties.

We kicked off the project by launching a Digital Leader blogging website and a FCPS Digital Leader Twitter account to promote the exciting things we will be doing and to communicate with other schools.

Our next task is to collaborate with digital leader schools to see how they are using their digital leaders as well as acting as a model for those schools who are still only at the very start of their digital leader journey.

With the continuing focus on Computing and its importance within the curriculum, the school has invested in 150 laptops, as well as introducing and rolling out the new computing curriculum.

We use the Rising Stars programme, Switched on Computing, to meet the needs of each year band, including the introduction of new systems and programs such as Scratch, which the pupils are really enjoying.

Teachers have also received training on a range of iPad applications to help us further use this exciting format. We now have a library of useful apps which have been installed on our iPads, which are now distributed around school.

Alongside these investments we are continuing to ensure that e-safety is of paramount importance across the school.

This year we have upgraded data storage and incident reporting procedures, introduced additional training for staff and intend to take part in the Hour of Code 2015 event this month and eSafety Week in February to remind pupils of their responsibilities and risks.

The dangers posed online to children have been making the headlines nationally, and we are very keen to do all we can to ensure children are safe online.

December 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 17th: Christmas play performances by year groups. Times, dates and ticket details notified by each year and posted on the school website.

December 11th: Christmas concert, 6pm onwards, Upper School Hall, with mulled wine and mince pies.

December 14th: Christmas Lunch for all pupils

December 18th: Christmas panto for pupils: Jack & The Beanstalk

December 18th: Last day of term – happy Christmas!

January Mon 4th: Teacher training day (Franche extended services reopens providing daily childcare, 7am-6pm)

January Tues 5th: Back to School

January 12th: Pupils in years 5 & 6 performing at Genting Arena (formally the NEC) at the annual Young Voices concert.