

Bright lights and the question of gifts

Friday 9 December 2022

Dear Everyone

This week has been a time of great excitement for the children, and intense activity from staff. Thank you to the PTA for its support for Christmas treats today.

These two weeks are about the busiest in the year. With so many staff also full of cold and under the weather, a big shout out to everyone that really made the week sing – sometimes literally, with carol services led by our school's choirs all over the city, and the choristers at full tilt through to Christmas day.

It's a time of anxiety, too, for parents waiting on senior schools, or looking ahead to make sure they don't miss the boat. It's all in hand, and we're really grateful to everyone for keeping a lid on things with good humour in this busy festive time.

In this period of advent and the coming of the light, I was interested to read of a new book in translation, *The Darkness Manifesto*, by Swedish bat scientist Johan Eklöf. In it he posits that light pollution is as serious as climate change, habitat loss and agri-chemicals on damage to biodiversity. A particular observation he makes is that the advent of LED lighting, with its low energy consumption, also has the potential for superior controllability so that the adverse effects of light pollution could be reduced. Instead, he points out, the world is getting brighter. I've been aware of this for some time. As someone who is sensitive to sharp light sources, headlamps on cars, streetlights, bare bulbs that are now so fashionable, uplighters in the pavement, I can 'see' his point. For me these intense light sources are headache inducing, and can be a trigger for migraines that linger for several days. What hope for nocturnal creatures trying to survive in an urban environment?

Increasingly in suburban and rural areas, the night sky is being obliterated, and the birds confused. The "Dark skies" movement gets my vote as these days shepherds would be hard pressed to follow any star.

It being the season of goodwill, a gentle note about gifts. Some years ago, the PTA came up with a nifty way for parents to thank staff, should they wish to, through group collections organised by the year group reps. This is important because our staff, as may be the case in your place of work, are obliged to declare individual gifts valued at £25 or more under a clause we have related to the briberies act.

There is a week and a bit left to go, culminating in the schools end of term carol service at 11.00 a.m. in the Cathedral on Tuesday 20 December. The resident team then remain in situ until Evensong on Christmas day. Let's get to the end in good shape and good spirits. And if you can keep that burning question until the New Year, that would really help.

Here's a fabulously wacky version of the *Work Song*,

<https://open.spotify.com/track/2LsavFLytyMT8ocPEzVv9x?si=UgdWFXSfSJGogg0W-flBxw&context=spotify%3Asearch%3Awork%2Bsong&nd=1>

And, thank you to the parent who flagged the most unlikely global rap sensation of the year. There is a dance that goes with it, that your child may know.

<https://open.spotify.com/track/1I4ICSP69P74nU3a6Su5L2?si=xNqmFZ4pRrOcAZwldzYQxw&context=spotify%3Asearch%3Ajiggl&nd=1>

Best wishes

Simon