

Pastoral Spotlight - January

Kindness

Why kindness matters more than ever

In a world that feels increasingly fast, noisy, and demanding, kindness can sometimes seem like a quaint extra rather than an essential skill. Yet for children growing up today, kindness is one of the most powerful tools they can carry with them. It shapes friendships, strengthens resilience, and builds emotional foundations that help young people thrive. Highlighted in Dr Hyde-Dunn's assembly at the start of term, we encourage children to see the importance of kindness.



A recent story shared widely online by Reverend Richard Coles captured this beautifully. He spoke to a woman who had taken her six-year-old to see *Paddington The Musical*. Towards the end, the little bear gives a speech recommending people learn to love each other, which he had found to be much more rewarding than being horrible to each other. When he finished, the six-year-old stood up and shouted "well said, Paddington!" and the whole theatre broke into applause. This is a reminder that sometimes the most profound lessons come from the gentlest voices.

Kindness helps children make sense of their world

For younger children, kindness is often their first experience of realising that their actions can make someone else feel happy, safe, or included. A four-year-old offering a toy to a friend or comforting a sibling is learning empathy in its earliest form. These small acts are the building blocks of emotional intelligence. As children move into the primary years, kindness becomes more complex. They begin to understand fairness, loyalty, and the impact of their choices. They notice when someone is left out. They recognise when words hurt. At this age, kindness becomes not just a behaviour, but a value.

Why Paddington's message resonates

Paddington has always been a champion of gentle wisdom, but his message resonates especially well with children because it is wrapped in warmth, humour, and marmalade sandwiches. When he urges us to "learn to love each other," he is not preaching, he is modelling. He shows children that kindness is not grand or heroic: it is everyday, it is practical, it is choosing patience, offering help, or giving someone the benefit of the doubt.

Characters like Paddington give us a shared language to talk about big feelings and tricky social moments. A child who struggles to apologise might find it easier if you ask, "What would Paddington do?" Suddenly, the conversation feels safe rather than confrontational.

Kindness builds confidence

Some people worry that kindness can make children less resilient. In reality, it makes them stronger. A kind child is better equipped to navigate conflict, stand up for others, and build healthy friendships. They are more likely to ask for help when they need it, and more willing to offer it when someone else is struggling.

Research consistently shows that children who practise kindness experience:

- Better emotional regulation,
- Stronger peer relationships,
- Higher self esteem,
- Reduced anxiety.

Kindness is not just good for the world, it is good for the child practising it.

How we can nurture everyday kindness

You do not need grand gestures to encourage kindness. In fact, the most effective lessons are woven into daily life:

- Narrate kindness when you see it - “That was thoughtful of you to help your brother.”
- Model it - children watch how we speak to shop assistants, neighbours, and each other.
- Create family rituals - gratitude moments at dinner, “kindness challenges,” or simple check-ins about someone they helped that day.
- Use stories - Paddington, books, films, and even playground moments become springboards for reflection.

Action for Happiness suggest the following simple activities for January:

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
				1 Find three things to look forward to this year	2 Make time today to do something kind for yourself	3 Do a kind act for someone else to help brighten their day	4 Write a list of things you feel grateful for and why
5	Look for the good in others and notice their strengths	6 Take five minutes to sit still and just breathe	7 Learn something new and share it with others	8 Say positive things to the people you meet today	9 Get moving. Do something active (ideally outdoors)	10 Thank someone you're grateful to and tell them why	11 Switch off all your tech at least an hour before bedtime
12	Connect with someone near you - share a smile or chat	13 Take a different route today and see what you notice	14 Eat healthy food which really nourishes you today	15 Get outside and notice five things that are beautiful	16 Contribute positively to your local community	17 Be gentle with yourself when you make mistakes	18 Get back in contact with an old friend
19	Focus on what's good, even if today feels tough	20 Go to bed in good time and allow yourself to recharge	21 Try out something new to get out of your comfort zone	22 Plan something fun and invite others to join you	23 Put away digital devices and focus on being in the moment	24 Take a small step towards an important goal	25 Decide to lift people up rather than put them down
	26 Choose one of your strengths and find a way to use it today	27 Challenge your negative thoughts and look for the upside	28 Ask other people about things they've enjoyed recently	29 Say hello to a neighbour and get to know them better	30 See how many people you can smile at today	31 Write down your hopes or plans for the future	

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A child leaving *Paddington The Musical* with a heart full of kindness is a reminder of what children naturally understand: the world feels better when we treat each other well. As adults, we have the privilege of nurturing that instinct, and helping it grow from small acts into lifelong habits. Kindness is not just something we teach, rather it is something we live alongside our children, one gentle moment at a time.

Miss E Kennerley

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