The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell joined pupils, staff and friends of St Paul's Church of England Primary School this week in praise and thanksgiving of a 150 Year anniversary. During his visit, he shared a story with the children, led prayers as part of the collective worship and toured the school classrooms with Year 6 pupils.

As part of the celebrations, the school aspires to grant 150 wishes for 150 years. At the beginning of 2024, all pupils were encouraged to write down one wish, and the school has already, with help from the whole school community and local organisations and companies, made lots of wishes come true.

Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York said; “In the playground at St Paul's Church of England Primary School, Holgate, there is a friendship bench. I've never seen one of these before. The idea behind it is that if you are feeling a bit lonely, you go and sit on the bench and this signals to the other children that you are looking for a friend.

"This was just one thought provoking bit of a hugely inspirational visit to an exceptional school. I was there as part of their 150th anniversary celebrations. In the anniversary year, every pupil has been encouraged to wish for something. Ralph, for instance, has walked the York City walls dressed as a knight to raise money for his friend who has autism. And there were many other inspiring stories. An inspirational headteacher and a dedicated staff are stretching the imaginations of the children and lifting their horizons. Everything about the school bore witness to the Christian values of belonging that is proudly printed on the children's school uniform below the school logo.

I am fairly certain that the friendship bench is usually empty. I can't imagine anyone at St Paul's school ever needing it, such is the atmosphere of friendship and mutual support. But it's there, if necessary, further testament to a very caring and very lovely school.”

One Year 6 pupil shared their thoughts on the Archbishop of York's visit and the celebrations; “It’s been great meeting such an important person and being able to show him around our school. We've had the opportunity to experience lots of different and exciting things this year. I loved hearing what the school was like so many years ago.”

The school celebrated at the end of last half term with a Victorian Day and then celebrations with the whole school community as well as a special assembly for one child who wished for all children in the school to receive a Blue Peter Badge. Due to the hard work and dedication from the pupils with their 150-year related artwork, this wish was granted along with a special video from Blue Peter themselves.

One Year 6 pupil said; “It's lovely to have the chance to celebrate 150 years in my final year at school. It's been made extremely special to have our wishes granted too. It's been something I won't forget.”
As well as in school celebrations, the school also celebrated with past pupils at a reunion. Past pupils visited the school and were able to catch up with old school friends. Two past pupils also visited the children and spoke about their time at St Paul's CE Primary school 75 years ago which was incredibly inspiring.

Headteacher, Christie Clarke shared, “This year marks the 150th anniversary of our primary school, a milestone that fills us with immense pride and gratitude. To commemorate this special occasion, we had the distinct honour of welcoming the Archbishop of York, who visited all the children in school, it was a privilege to have him in our school. I am incredibly proud to lead the school in such a historic year. The school is a place to belong and is at the heart of the community. We are so incredibly thankful to all the staff, parents and community members who have helped make all of the children's wishes come true.

“As we celebrate this significant anniversary, we reflect on the strong sense of community and belonging that defines our school. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to our journey and supported us in reaching this remarkable milestone.”
Christie Clarke, Pupils and Archbishop Stephan at St Paul's in front of the wishes that have already been granted.

Pupils and Archbishop Stephen at St Paul's with the time capsule made to celebrate 150 years of St Paul's.
Ralph from St Paul's who inspired Archbishop Stephen by walking the city walls for charity as his wish was 'to dress as a knight and help people'.

A pupil with their silver Blue Peter badge which he received for kindness for thinking of others and wishing for all pupils to receive a Blue Peter Badge.
St Paul's C of E Primary School

Past Pupils Keith and Ted who visited pupils and attended the reunion, with their school photo from around 75 years ago.