



"We are called to be the hands and face of Jesus as we learn, love and grow together"

Headteacher: Mr J White BEd (Hons) NPQH

St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School

Bedwell Crescent, Stevenage, Herts., SG1 1NJ

Tel: 01438 729555

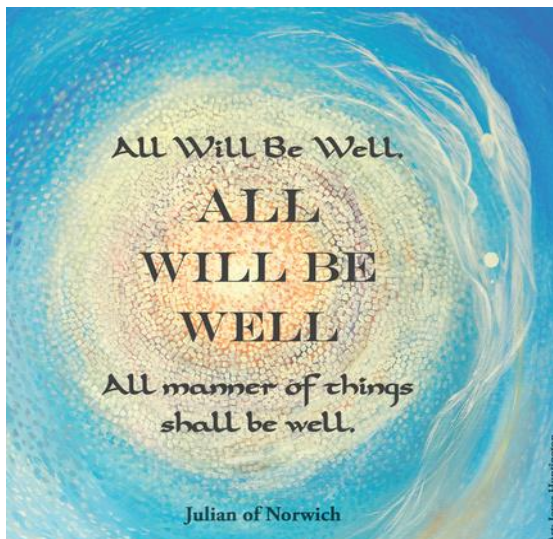
Email: admin@stvincent.herts.sch.uk

www.stvincent.herts.sch.uk

Friday 3rd April 2020

Dear parents and carers

I know that things have been turned on their head for everyone and so many of us are desperately trying to find a comfortable way through a complex situation which is set to last. Whilst many of you will be happy with the new home routine, others have expressed concern that they are doing the 'right thing'. As such, I thought that it might be useful to explain the sorts of things that might be involved in organising a new way for you and your child(ren) at home. This is just a suggestion – if your way works – stick with it!



For those who are concerned about progress and 'keeping up', rest assured that we have a plan. Please trust us that when life returns to normal any curricular or learning issues will be addressed and your child will be set back on track. These are unique times and our response to such times needs to be calm and measured.

Be secure in the knowledge that anything positive that you do now will assist your child and that our children are resilient learners who, with the care of their parents and the professional help of a talented staff team, will succeed as long as we don't create unnecessary stress, pressure or obstacles now. We are all in this together as are children and families across the country!

Age related hints and tips for home learning opportunities

In Nursery and Reception (EYFS), your children should be spending the majority of their time playing and actively exploring the world around them, being creative and thinking independently. Share and enjoy stories, songs and rhymes with them – cook, mark-make, dig and play. You may want to spend some time on Phonics Play (www.phonicsplay.co.uk) supporting early reading skills. A little time each day practising letter formation with simple words would also be useful as would some simple maths. There is a daily maths task on the White Rose Website (<https://whiterosemaths.com/homelearning/>) which might help to get the focus right. Some tasks will be available via Purple Mash, assigned by the teachers but learning through play and exploration should be the main focus. Some sheets are attached which explain what learning might look like at home during these formative early years.

In Key Stage 1 (Yrs 1 & 2) being creative, artistic, musical and explorative remain important skills. Our learning in Years 1 and 2 is not completely desk based and still encourages a beautiful exploration of the living, cultural and natural world around them. Colouring, building and cutting activities will still be

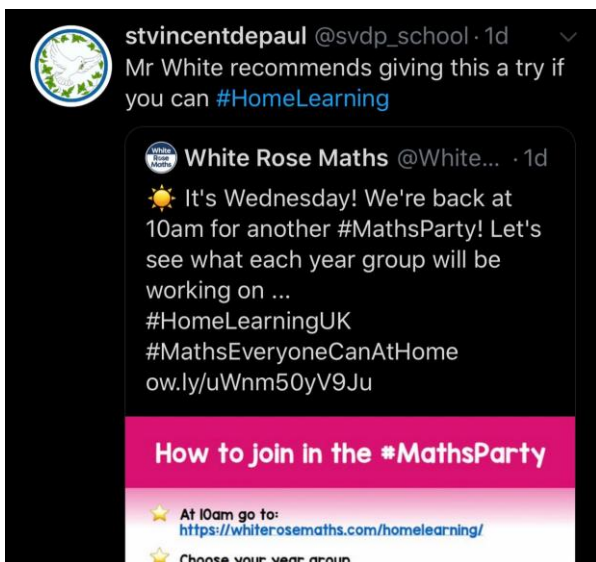


key as they improve hand control for handwriting and letter formation. Reading stories together and talking about them will be of great benefit each day. Again there is an appropriate daily maths tasks on the White Rose Website (<https://whiterosemaths.com/homelearning/>) and this allows for practise of key skills. A little writing each day of sentences to do with things that interest them would be useful in order to keep skills sharp. Most children love to make posters, booklets, leaflets, lists, letters & quizzes – any opportunity to write will be a positive one if you encourage it!

In Key Stage 2, sustaining reading habits and talking about what they have read will be important each day. I would also suggest that if you are able to, make use of the daily White Rose Maths tasks (<https://whiterosemaths.com/homelearning/>) with their useful videos, practice tasks and explanations. Maybe your child could engage with a longer written task or use their reading and writing to research something that really interests them. Remember, writing isn't just about stories – children love to explore instructions, biography, historical reports, explanations, song writing and poems – use ANY opportunity that you can to get them writing!

Twitter and website links

Over the next few weeks, we will be focusing on reorganising the class pages of the website to group as many ideas and links that we think will be useful. Twitter has been an excellent source of shared resources recently – do follow the school account (@svdp_school) as we often re-tweet learning opportunities as they arise. If you have pictures of your children engaged in tasks at home do send them so that I can Tweet them – it's a great way for our children to keep in touch!



Religious Education & Love in Action

Throughout the school, children will benefit from times to **read bible stories and to pray**. Obviously a focus on Holy Week and the great feast of Easter will be really useful. We have already shared some links to some great daily prayer resources via TenTen (<https://www.tentenresources.co.uk/primary-subscription/prayers-for-home/>). Focusing on being an active person of faith, living their call to help others at this time would be brilliant. How about drawing a picture or writing a letter for someone that you know on your street or who is in a care home? This is real Love in Action and is the ultimate response to our Religious Education experience.

There are some resources attached in relation to **guiding your family through Holy Week**. I have also attached a digital copy of the **Wednesday Word booklet** for the next four weeks. I hope that you find it useful.

Other web links

If you want to explore more opportunities for learning, the staff have put together a list of age appropriate links that may be helpful in the attached files. Please do not try and visit them all! Equally, your child may



have a real interest that they want to explore in a project fashion. Aim for some time each day where your child tries to work independently – they don't always have a member of staff learning alongside them in school! I would also suggest some time each day where your child directs what they are doing themselves – let them find a way into something interesting. It is important to remember that although the children from Year 1 upwards have about one hour of English and Maths each day, they also have lots of exercise and other creative opportunities – not all of their learning is desk bound or has a written outcome. This is a time to be really creative and some days you may just go with the flow, following your child's lead, rather than the tasks set on Purple Mash and this is completely fine! There may even be days when nothing particularly get done because your children need some down time (as may you!) – do not worry!!!



Purple Mash

Teachers will continue to set tasks on **Purple Mash** where appropriate, but please do not feel that these all have to be completed. Please find attached a guide to help you and your child find your way around Purple Mash. This site is getting heavy usage nationally and sometimes does not cope – do not worry if completed activities do not seem to be registering; the vast majority of them can be seen by staff so do not panic! If access to digital resources is becoming an issue please do make contact with the school so that we can find a way to help.

The tasks that are provided in Purple Mash are to help you find your way around the complex and varied issues of motivating your child to learn at home. Our homes are not classrooms or schools and we want to help you to protect your home life rather than creating tension and resentment in the work that is being set. We recognise that all are different and whilst some may appreciate lots of links to activities, others would rather focus on some core skills (as suggested in earlier paragraphs) as well as enjoying creative times with their child where possible. Both ways are equally valid. Do remember that all of the tasks that you complete and activities that you carry out are part of a unique continuum of learning – a learning journey – and this will be different for each child in the class. Do not worry what others are doing; you know your child best and if you aren't sure, ask. **No one is checking or judging – do what is right for you and your family!**



Communication

If you are concerned about anything at all in relation to your child's wellbeing, development or learning please do email their class teacher who will respond to your query as best they can when they are able to. I have instructed staff to try to restrict their responses to your enquiries to 'office hours' (8.45am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday); as such, please do not expect an immediate response – they will get back to you as soon as they can providing they are well! If your enquiry is of an urgent nature, please do email Mr White or Mrs Sherry. In responding to any emails, staff will copy in a member of the Senior Leadership Team for safeguarding purposes and in order to aid further communication.

Staff can be contacted as follows:

Nursery:	Mrs Humphries	shumphries@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
Reception:	Mrs Hargrave	vhargrave@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
	Mrs Lambert	klambert@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
Year 1	Mrs Caswell	pcaswell@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
	Mrs Perace	npearce@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
	Mrs Heath	cheath@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
Year 2	Mrs Cooper	jcooper@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
	Mrs McGuire	lmcquire@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
Year 3	Mrs Blythe	cblythe@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
	Miss Culkin	sculkin@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
Year 4	Mr Arnese	darnese@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
	Mrs Hodges	shodges@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
	Mrs Lawton	tlawton@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
Year 5	Mrs White	nwhite@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
	Mr Jennings	rjennings@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
Year 6	Mrs Glover	eglover@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
	Mr Crump	scrump@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
SEND Coordinator	Mrs Curry	mcurry@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
Deputy Headteacher	Mrs Sherry	rsherry@stvincent.herts.sch.uk
Headteacher	Mr White	head@stvincent.herts.sch.uk

Here to support you ...

We are thinking of all of our families as they adapt to the necessary changes in this difficult period. You will have seen on Parentmail that the Stevenage Community Trust has offered some grants for families who have been particularly challenged financially as a consequence of COVID-19 and may be suffering hardship. If you would like to apply or discuss an application please email Mrs Sherry. There are also other sources of support that we may be able to access or signpost you to as well and we are as keen as ever to help each and every one of our families. Some of you may now be facing challenges that you had never expected to present themselves a few months ago. We are linked to a range of partnerships and if we don't have an answer ourselves can nevertheless work with you to research a way forward. Please do not hesitate to email Mr White or Mrs Sherry if you are in need or have a question and would like some support from school We are all in this together!



An Arc of Hope Joining Stevenage Schools – please help

We have recently signed up to a wonderful local project where Stevenage schools are collaborating to collect photos of children and their families dressed in all the colours of the rainbow. These images will be used to create a digital rainbow, an **Arc of Hope**, to submit to the Royal Academy of Arts to be part of this year's Young Artists' Summer Show. Please check your Parent Mail for more details. If you haven't received the Parent Mail or have any questions about the project please contact Mrs Blythe.

Easter Holidays

This Friday we would be breaking for the Easter Holiday and it is important that this break is marked somehow in our homes if we are to sustain things. We will even be doing this in school when we provide the emergency care for Key Workers' children which will look very different to what we have been delivering on school days!

It is strange to be breaking for Easter without the usual Holy Week preparations in school. We have missed Year 4 performing their poignant Way of the Cross and have not had the opportunity to take part in our traditional Be Spirited Activities or Lenten fundraising. However, maybe we can all join together in marking each day of Holy Week by reading a bible story together and praying as a community. We may be apart at this time, but our prayers can bring us together. Watch out on Twitter for ways that we can do this together during Holy Week as I plan to put on some posts. Prayer is a powerful thing and now is the time to join together in this pursuit as individuals across our world cope with loneliness, illness and uncertainty.

Watch out for my **Friday video message** which can be viewed via this link; <https://youtu.be/hPqYV09hUkk> – as you will see, I haven't learnt to juggle yet but I'll keep working at it! Teachers have sent a class news sheet to their children today via Parent Mail.

As we move towards the Risen Christ at Easter, perhaps we can reflect on our recent journey as explained by Pope Francis in his recent (27/03/20) Urbi et Orbi poignant blessing in Rome:

“The Lord asks us and, in the midst of our tempest, invites us to reawaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be floundering.

The Lord awakens so as to reawaken and revive our Easter faith.

We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved.

We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed.

We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love.

In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side.

The Lord asks us from his cross to rediscover the life that awaits us, to look towards those who look to us, to strengthen, recognize and foster the grace that lives within us.

Let us not quench the wavering flame (cf. /s 42:3) that never falters, and let us allow hope to be rekindled”



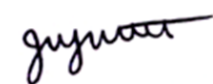
This will be the last full newsletter before Easter and so on behalf of staff and Governors may I wish you all a happy and peaceful Easter.

May each of us be enlightened by the light of the Risen Christ when He fully reveals himself to us on Easter Sunday and may this give us strength, resolve and faith to find a path through any uncertainty ahead.

Rest assured that each of you and your children are held in the heart of our daily prayers.

May God bless you and hold each of you in his loving hands.

Yours sincerely



Mr Jon White
Headteacher

