



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

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Cost of living support

At St Vincent de Paul School we recognise the difficulty that many people will be facing with cost-of-living issues, in particular due to the rise in fuel and energy bills.

We have provided details and links to national and local sources of advice, support and financial assistance that may be able to help you and your family. Please also be mindful of scams during this time – never give your bank details to anyone without being sure of their identity.

We hope you find this information useful should you need to use it. If you have any concerns, particularly about how cost of living issues may be affecting your child, please do contact the school on 01438 729555 and we will do our very best to direct you to the right support mechanism.

School support:

- **Uniform** – our second-hand uniform program can help save the cost of purchasing new uniform. This is coordinated by the PSA. The school may also be able to help put with items of school uniform – please email Mrs Lorimer (finance@stvincent.herts.sch.uk) .
- **Free school meals** – the government’s criteria for eligibility can be viewed at www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals. We would strongly encourage all eligible parents to apply for free school meals, even if your child intends to use a packed lunch. Being registered for Free School Meals, automatically entitles your child to free school trips etc.
- **Emergency fund:** the school operates its own emergency fund, using charitable donations. This could be used to help out with unexpected financial demands, a failing washing machine or day to day financial difficulties. We also have access to a limited supply of supermarket vouchers to help with food shopping. Please do not be proud and come forward if you need some help – it’s what the fund is there for! Please email head@stvincent.herts.sch.uk or finance@stvincent.herts.sch.uk for further details. Alternatively catch Mr White or Mrs Whitty on the playground before or after school for a chat.

Local support:

- The school is able to refer families to the **Bedwell Branch of the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP)** which operates from St Joseph’s Church. The SVP is able to provide food parcels and other support to families in need of support. Please speak to Mr White if you would like us to make a referral.
- [The Trussell Trust](#) – this charity operates a network of foodbanks and provides confidential crisis support. Foodbanks can provide food vouchers for eligible parents to be exchanged for a minimum



of three days' emergency food. Available at local centres, by telephone (0808 208 2138) and online at trusselltrust.org/get-help.

- [Food Aid Network](#) – in addition to Trussell Trust foodbanks, independent foodbanks may also be available near you. You can check a map for local support at <https://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/our-members>.
- [Citizens Advice](#) – an independent organisation specialising in confidential information and advice on legal, debt, benefit and housing problems. Available at local advice centres, by telephone (0808 223 1133) and online at citizensadvice.org.uk.

Financial support:

- [Turn2Us](#) – a charity helping people living in poverty in the UK, specialising in information on welfare benefits and charitable grants. Available by telephone (0800 802 2000) and online at turn2us.org.uk.
- [StepChange](#) – the UK's leading debt charity offering expert debt advice and free debt management. Available by telephone (0800 138 1111) and online at stepchange.org.
- [Money and Pensions Service](#) – a government service providing impartial and free guidance on money and pensions. Available by telephone (0800 138 7777) and online at moneyandpensionsservice.org.uk.
- [MoneySavingExpert](#) – a consumer finance and discussion website focussed on providing advice and tips on how to save money, including a dedicated cost of living crisis section. Available online only at moneysavingexpert.com.
- [Migrant Families](#) – online tool available that will help you find out what support you may be eligible for as a migrant family. Available at migrantfamilies.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/. This forms part of the NRPF Network, available online at <https://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/> and through regional networks.
- **The Catholic Children's Society** are able to make one of emergency grants to families in a time of crisis. You do not have to be Catholic to receive the grant. The school is able to apply for a grant on your behalf. Please speak to Mr White (head@stvincent.herts.sch.uk) to discuss whether your situation qualifies you for this support.

Household bills and goods:

- [British Gas Energy Trust](#) – a charitable trust providing advice on energy bills and grants paid directly to energy suppliers to help clear debts. Available online only at britishgas.co.uk/energy/British-gas-energy-trust.html.
- [Ofcom](#) – Ofcom has a list of available social tariffs; these are cheaper broadband and phone packages for people who claim Universal Credit, Pension Credit and some other benefits. Available online at ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/costs-and-billing/social-tariffs.
- [CCWater](#) – the Consumer Council for Water is a statutory consumer body for the water industry in England. They have an advice hub with information and tools to help reduce water bills and access financial schemes. Available online at ccwater.org.uk/households/help-with-my-bills/. (**Please note:** Every water company should have a social tariff scheme to help low-income families – check with your provider for more information.)
- [Freecycle](#) – a grassroots and non-profit organisation that allows people to claim household items for free. Available online at freecycle.org.
- [Family Fund](#) (**parents of disabled or seriously ill children only**) – this charity provides families raising a disabled, or seriously ill, child on low incomes with wide-ranging grants for essential items,



such as kitchen appliances, clothing, bedding and play equipment or technology. Available online at familyfund.org.uk/grants.

- Fuel voucher – if you use a prepayment meter and cannot afford to top it up, you may be able to obtain a fuel voucher. Contact your local council for help getting one.
- Energy debt grants – a number of energy suppliers offer grants to customers in need. Check with your supplier's website or contact them directly for more information.

Government benefits and support:

- [Universal Credit](#) – a monthly government payment to help with living costs for those on a low income. Available to apply online at www.gov.uk/universal-credit or by telephone (0800 328 5644).
- [Short Term Benefit Advance](#) – those in urgent financial need may be able to get an advance on benefit payments, which is paid back later through benefits without interest. Find out more at gov.uk/short-term-benefit-advance.
- [Cost of living payments](#) – a government support package to help mitigate the cost of living crisis. Factsheet available online at www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-support-for-the-cost-of-living-factsheet/government-support-for-the-cost-of-living-factsheet. Payments are made automatically to those who are eligible so there is no need to apply – if you think you are eligible but did not receive a payment, make a report online at secure.dwp.gov.uk/report-a-missing-cost-of-living-payment/welcome.

Housing and rent:

If you are struggling to pay your rent or mortgage it is important that you seek help early.

- [ACORN](#) – a community union that can provide support and advice for those who rent on housing issues and tenants' rights. Get in touch online www.acorntheunion.org.uk/contact.
- Council Tax reduction – low-income households might be able to get a council tax reduction. See if you might be eligible online at www.gov.uk/council-tax/who-has-to-pay and contact your local council for more information.
- [Shelter](#) – Housing charity that runs local services. You can access their emergency helpline (0808 800 4444) and find advice online at england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice.

We hope that there is some useful information for families here. If you know of organisations that are able to help, please do let us know.

If you find yourself in a situation where you need help, please do let us know. There is help available out there and we are keen to signpost those who need it to useful services.

As a community we are keen to work with all of our families to offer whatever support is required. Please do ask for help; we can't promise to solve the issues but will do all that we can to help you along the way.

