



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

1st April 2022

Dear parents and carers

I have to begin this newsletter with a message of sincere thanks to amazing pupils, supportive families and a dedicated staff team. I have been a teacher for 27 years, including 11 years as headteacher and never have I experienced such a challenging term as the one that we have all just journeyed through. However, we have reached the light at the end of the tunnel and are all ready for a well-deserved break before the Summer Term.



Staffing – covid impact

After an initial rise in Covid cases for our pupils, things settled down until Covid related staff absences began to impact in early March. Over the past three weeks staff absence peaked at 15 (one quarter of the team) and have been at 10 (one sixth of the team) at the lowest point recently. With up to one quarter of the staff team being out, this has impacted on daily operations and has led to us needing to close to nursery for two days and move to online learning for Reception for two days. It is amazing, however, that despite having up to a quarter of the staff absent for three weeks, we have only needed to reduce numbers in school for 4 days. This is because the wider school staff stepped up, extending hours, completing duties beyond their usual remit and being incredibly flexible in their response. Without this, different classes would have needed to close for a seven-day period at least. I extend a sincere thank you to our team for their resilience, determination, commitment, and passion for the school which has enabled us to operate safely despite significant limitations. I have been equally grateful to so many of our parents for their offers of support and for their daily support during this difficult period. May I take this opportunity to thank parents for their support in times when a teacher has changed at short notice or when the usual opportunities have not been available. This has been greatly appreciated.

School development visits

Despite absences, we have continued to engage with our usual programme of school improvement and development. This week we have hosted a visit from our Herts Improvement Partner, Mrs Chesworth, who enjoyed meeting children and visiting each classroom to find out all that we have been prioritising in terms of learning and wellbeing. Mrs Chesworth was impressed by the pupil response, the inclusive nature of our work and the opportunities afforded to our children. We also hosted a visit from Mr Murphy, our Diocesan RE Advisor, where we explored standards, Catholic life, liturgy and wellbeing. Mr Murphy was impressed by the pupil response in terms of the academic



experience, the spiritual connection and the Catholic social outreach that he witnessed. It is great to have our work affirmed as we plan our next steps.

Lenten charity

Lent has been a fruitful time of social action in school. Our children have engaged each week in Food Bank Friday efforts and have shared much needed goods with three local foodbanks, supporting numerous families. In addition, practical support has been sent to the Ukraine in the form of medication and food parcels. A non-uniform day raised £445 for the Ukraine Disaster Relief Fund and £399 was raised through Easter raffles for Father Kakuba's Ugandan mission project. Thank you for your amazing generosity – this is our mission statement being lived out locally, nationally and internationally in such a beautiful manner - thank you!



Prayers for the Ukraine

Pupils have been keen to support both practically and spiritually brothers and sisters in the Ukraine and those in surrounding areas. I have been impressed with the maturity of the pupils in KS2 who were keen to convert our Shrine to Our Lady in the hall into a Peace area. In this area, pupils have focused their prayers on the people of the Ukraine and of Russia, with a sincere hope for peace and justice for all. Needless to say, our prayers continue.



Be Spirited

Our Lenten preparations culminated this week in a special Be Spirited week where pupils across the school had the opportunity to engage in spiritual activities that enabled them to prepare themselves to approach Holy Week. Children have reflected on Gospel values in all Key Stages and have thought carefully about how they are ready to meet the Risen Christ at Easter. Our Be Spirited moments have been beautiful opportunities for the children simply 'to be' and to connect spiritually with the world around them. Both our Hertfordshire Improvement Partner and our Diocesan Advisor experienced these sessions and commented on the children's prayerful and reflective nature.



WhatsApp groups

I understand that class WhatsApp groups can be useful to keep everyone in touch with things that are happening in school relevant to your child's year group. These groups, however, are unofficial and are not controlled or moderated by the school. Please could I ask that everyone is very careful about what is shared on them. There are some issues that are better explored via contact with class teachers who will be able to see a fuller picture. If we are not aware of an issue, it cannot be dealt with – please do keep us informed rather than attempting to resolve sensitive issues via a public forum. Recently, such events have caused difficulties in several classes. Please do contact us if there is an issue before reverting to social media – we may already have information that will put your mind at ease and, if not, will do our very best to resolve an issue sensitively and swiftly, keeping you informed.

After school procedures

Please could I ask that children do not play with school equipment (including balls and hoops etc) after school. The school parliament have recently consulted with classes and are ready to restock the green playtime boxes with exciting equipment. This has been at a considerable financial cost, and we want to ensure that this equipment is protected. Please do not allow your children to access these boxes at the end of the day. Please could I also ask that you ensure that children (including younger siblings) do not ride scooters or bikes on the school premises as this presents an extra hazard on a busy site.

Parent consultations

We are hoping to host face to face parent consultations shortly after we return from Easter. Watch out for details and dates to follow.

PSA fundraising

Thank you to our newly formed PSA team this term. It has been wonderful to have a number of in-person events operating this term. A successful Year 2 cake sale raised a record breaking £353 and the mother's day gift sale was a hub of exciting activity, raising an amazing £772 Yesterday saw a popular environmentally friendly used school uniform sale which raised £325. Our next Bags to School collection will take place shortly after we return from Easter so if you are clearing out over the holidays, please keep this in mind. Collection bags will be shared when we return. Thank you to our



new committee for their ideas and enthusiasm and to our parent body for supporting with generous donations.



Farewell and Good Luck

This term we say farewell to Mrs Gaetos and Miss Marshall both of whom have given so much to our community over their time with us. We look forward to hearing of their future exciting adventures and thank them for all that they have gifted us during their time with us.

Welcome to Mrs Whitty

We also welcome Mrs Alex Whitty to our community, who will join us as Deputy Headteacher after the Easter break. I know that you will all join me in welcome Mrs Whitty and making her feel at home upon her arrival. Please do introduce yourself to Mrs Whitty when you see her on the playground before and after school next term. We are very pleased to have her join us to complete our Senior Leadership Team and she looks forward to meeting you all!

Return to school after Easter is on Tuesday 19th April 2022.

Easter

I wish you all a reflective Holy Week and a peaceful Easter when it arrives. My prayer for you and your families is one of peace, happiness and love. My you all feel the joy of the season and the love of the community at this time.



May God bless you and those most dear to you.

Jon White (Headteacher)



