



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

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20th February 2023

Dear parents and carers

Welcome back to school after the half term break. I do hope that you have all enjoyed time with families and friends over the half term and that everyone is now ready to engage with an exciting half term of learning before we break for Easter. It will be a busy half term but I know that our children will rise to the challenge as always and will immerse themselves in their learning and relationships.

### **Parent Consultations**

Our second parent consultations of the year are planned for Monday 27<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023 and will be an in-person event again. Appointments can be booked via the Arbor parent portal – you will have received a link to this before half term. If you have any difficulties, please contact staff in the school office as soon as possible. We look forward to meeting with you.

### **Ash Wednesday – the start of LENT**

This Wednesday marks the start of our Lenten preparations. KS2 children will be attending Mass at St Joseph's at 11 am and everyone is welcome to join us. The EYFS and KS1 children will receive their ashes in a special liturgy in school on the same day. Ash Wednesday is traditionally a day when Catholics abstain from eating meat and as such our Herts Catering menu will be altered this week to enable pupils to mark this special day in a traditional way.

Lent is always a very special time of preparation in school and to help each other in these essential preparations we have produced some documents to guide families. These should help you understand the preparations taking place in school and how these can be complimented at home. I hope that you find them useful.

Throughout Lent, we have three giving projects that we hope you and your children will be able to help us with:

- **Food Bank Friday** will return! Please leave items in the trolley outside St Joseph's workshop that we can share with the **St Vincent de Paul Society** to support local families.
- Children will be sent home with a **CAFOD penny box**. Maybe they could complete jobs at home for a small fee to support overseas sustainable aid projects.
- **Easter raffle tickets** will be on sale during the last few weeks of term. Pupils can buy tickets that might earn them an Easter treat donated by the staff team. Funds raised will support Father Kakuba's [Kanyike Project](#) in Uganda



In school, throughout Lent, children will also be working on demonstrating key aspects of Catholic Social Teaching in their daily lives. Each class has chosen an area to focus on from the following list and will be engaging in practical projects which support this during and beyond Lent:



Dignity.



Community



The poor



Work



Peace



Stewardship

## Singing

Following the debut performance of our school choir during the Christmas in Song event, we are delighted that they have been invited to sing at the 6pm Mass at Westminster Cathedral on 11<sup>th</sup> March with friends from St Philip Howard School, Hatfield. If your child has been attending this choir and would like to take part, you must fill out the Google form that was circulated during half term by 9.30am on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February in order that I can confirm numbers with the Cathedral. In addition to this, our Y5 choir will be singing as part of the Herts Gala Choir at the Royal Albert Hall after Easter.

Thank you to Miss Murphy, Diocesan choral director, for enthusing our junior children in relation to singing. We are so lucky!

## Cost of living

We are all very aware of the impact of the cost of living on all families currently. Please note that there are ways that we can support families in their times of need if we know that there is a difficulty. This is always done discretely. Please do let us know if your circumstances change and you are concerned. The following letter sent out in December has some useful links:

[https://www.stvincent.herts.sch.uk/documents/221217\\_cost-of-living-info-Dec-22.pdf](https://www.stvincent.herts.sch.uk/documents/221217_cost-of-living-info-Dec-22.pdf)

## Academies – DOWAT

As I have explained in previous newsletters, we have been actively engaging with the Cardinal's wish for all Catholic schools to join a Catholic Academy Trust by 2025. We have been directed towards DOWAT (Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust) which will be familiar to many of you as it is the trust that St John Henry Newman School belong to.

We are currently engaged in a process of 'due diligence' and expect the Diocese to approve our 'joining in principle' imminently. At the point that this is agreed, we then have to apply to the Regional Commissioner for Schools, who would consider the move on behalf of the Department for Education. At this point we would be required to enter into a formal consultation process with parents, staff & other interested parties.

The more that we engage with the process of due diligence, the more that Governors, Senior Leaders and I can see the benefit of this for our school. I look forward to sharing these benefits with you all once I am able to, in the Summer term hopefully. In the meantime you may wish to explore DOWAT's website (<https://www.dowat.co.uk>).



## Great Representation Project

In December's newsletter, I mentioned our involvement in the Herts for Learning's Great Representation Project. This project has linked us up in partnership with four other schools to explore how we can encourage a greater sense of belonging through work, race and diversity. Unfortunately, our parent meeting in relation to this was cancelled in January due to staffing issues – we hope to be able to rearrange this before we break for Easter. We encourage as many members of our community to join this rescheduled meeting as possible as we are keen to seek the views of all groups in our beautiful diverse community. A date will be shared via parentmail later this week.

## World Book Day – Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023

As part of our drive to maintain, promote and engage pupil interest in reading, the school is celebrating World Book Day on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March. Following previous successes on this day, your child is invited to come to school dressed as their favourite character from any book. Dressing up is an optional choice and to avoid any extra cost involved, we suggest using everyday items of clothing or recycling previous outfits to create your character. During this week, the children will be participating in lots of exciting activities and can bring in their favourite book from home to share with their class.

As a further exciting challenge over the course of this half term - pupils are encouraged to decorate a stone with a book theme. They may choose to paint their favourite character from a story or write the title of a loved book on the pebble. Any creative book related design is encouraged and welcomed; the possibilities are endless! These can be brought into school at any point before Easter and will be used to create displays within the classroom and around the school.

Please continue to encourage the love of books by reading with your children whenever you can. Now might also be a time to join the library if your child doesn't already have a membership.

## NEU Strike Action

There are still three days of strike action planned by the National Education Union (NEU). The next of these is on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023. Staff do not actually have to indicate their intention beforehand but have previously been willing to do so. I hope to be able to be more specific about this by the end of this week. I expect the level of disruption to be similar to that on the previous strike day. Therefore, I would suggest that families begin to make alternative childcare arrangements just in case.

## Amazing Sporting Successes

Congratulations to all of the children from our school who represented Stevenage in the recent **Cross Country Championships in St Albans**. Our children did brilliantly, but we are still awaiting the final results. Fingers crossed!

Good luck to our **Girls' Football team** who have recently qualified for the **English Schools' Football Association South East England Regional Finals**. The finals will be played in Thamesmead on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March and we look forward to hearing of our girls' success. We are so proud of them and to mark this we have bought a new football kit for them!

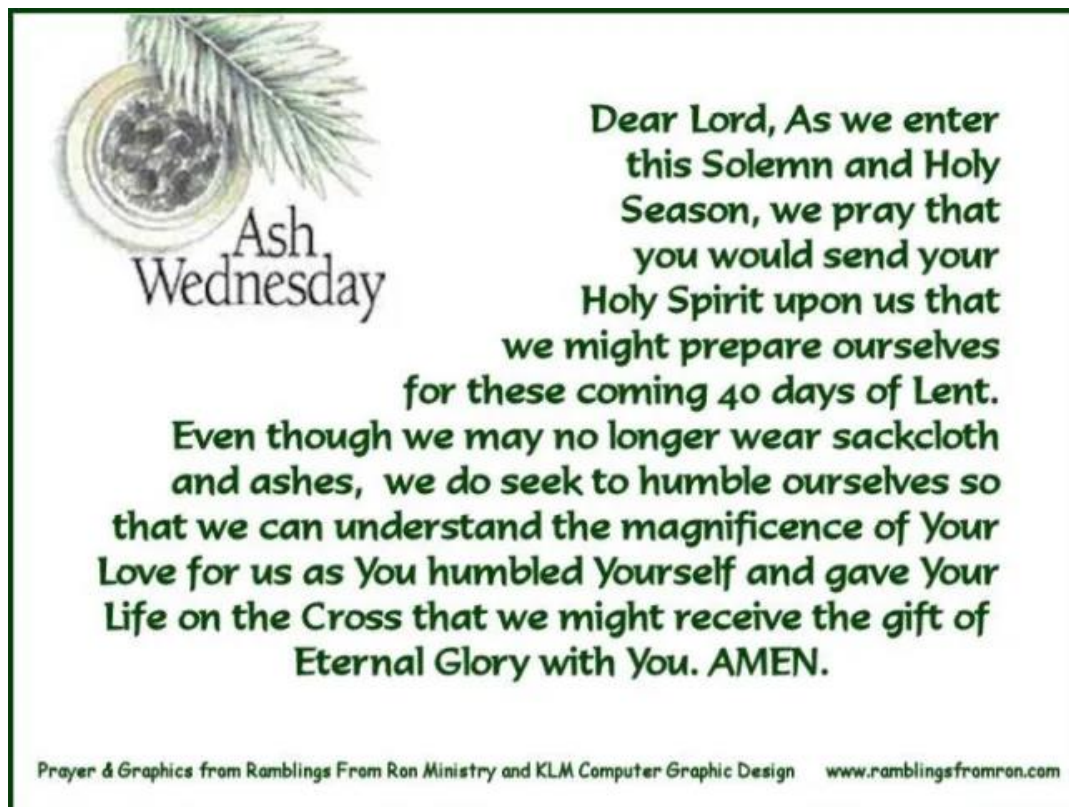


This year we have used some of our Sports Premium to ensure that we have a teacher without class responsibilities to really push our sporting enthusiasm forward without distraction. I am sure that you will agree that Mr Jennings has managed this superbly and we are very grateful to him for it. Well done Mr Jennings!

### Thank you – Turkey & Syria fundraising

Thank you to everyone for your generous donations on our charity non-uniform day at the end of last half term. As a result we were able to send an amazing £855 to the Disasters Emergency Committee to support relief work in Turkey & Syria following the devastating earthquake.

### Let us all join in prayer:

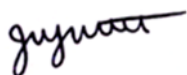


Ash Wednesday

Dear Lord, As we enter this Solemn and Holy Season, we pray that you would send your Holy Spirit upon us that we might prepare ourselves for these coming 40 days of Lent. Even though we may no longer wear sackcloth and ashes, we do seek to humble ourselves so that we can understand the magnificence of Your Love for us as You humbled Yourself and gave Your Life on the Cross that we might receive the gift of Eternal Glory with You. AMEN.

Prayer & Graphics from Ramblings From Ron Ministry and KLM Computer Graphic Design [www.ramblingsfromron.com](http://www.ramblingsfromron.com)

May God bless you and those most dear to you



**Jon White**  
Headteacher

### Dates for your diary

**Monday, 20 February**

[Back to school](#)

**Wednesday, 22 February**

11:00

[Ash Wednesday Mass KS2 St Joseph's](#)

**Friday, 24 February**

[Reconciliation Opportunity Yrs 4, 5 & 6](#)



**Monday, 27 February**

15:30 – 19.20

PARENT CONSULTATIONS

**Tuesday, 28 February**

15:30 – 17.20

PARENT CONSULTATIONS

**Thursday, 2 March**

World Book Day - optional costumes ... bring a favourite book!

**Tuesday, 7 March**

19:00

PSA AGM

**Saturday, 11 March**

15:55 – 19.00

Cathedral Choir - Westminster

**Monday, 20 March – Thursday 23 March**

BE SPIRITED reflections and activities

**Friday, 24 March**

EASTER RAFFLES

**Friday, 31 March**

Break for Easter holidays 2pm

**Sunday, 2 April**

PALM SUNDAY

**Thursday, 6 April**

HOLY THURSDAY

**Friday, 7 April**

GOOD FRIDAY

**Saturday, 8 April**

HOLY SATURDAY

**Sunday, 9 April**

Alleluia! EASTER SUNDAY.

**Monday, 17 April**

Back to school

**Sunday, 30 April**

Royal Albert Hall Gala Choir Y5

**Monday, 8 May**

EXTRA BANK HOLIDAY - KING'S CORONATION

**Tuesday 9 May – Friday 12 May**

KS2 SATs testing

**Monday, 15 May – Wednesday 17 May**

BOOK FAYRE

**Monday, 29 May – Friday 2 June**

HALF TERM HOLIDAYS

**Monday 5 June**

Return to school

**Thursday 20 July**

End of School year – 2pm close

**Friday 21 July**

INSET DAY (no pupils)

