



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

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31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

Dear parents and carers

It has been a busy term but so much has been achieved and your children have worked so hard under the careful guidance of their teachers and teaching assistants. We should all be very proud!

### **Catholic School Inspectorate**

We were delighted to receive our report which was shared with you last week. We were equally delighted with the covering letter which accompanied it from Nancy Conoby, Diocesan Chief Inspector who said,

“Many congratulations to you, your leadership team, the governors and all of the staff and pupils of St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School on this excellent CSI inspection report. The report highlights very well the centrality of the Gospel in the School and the pupils’ enthusiastic response to the call to action locally, nationally and globally. It is clear that St Vincent’s is Catholic in the fullest sense and works to serve the community. The School’s work with the ‘Red Shed’ and the intergenerational interaction between the children and members, is a project which truly embodies the ethos of the school and should be adopted by other Diocesan schools. Modern society presents us with many challenges but the pastoral care you provide for pupils and staff is exemplary and undoubtedly underpins their growth and development. The thought, time and energy applied to developing Religious Education has resulted in a creative and engaging curriculum the children enjoy and see the relevance of. The investment in your staff in terms of support and CPD, is clearly having a significant impact on the quality of the teaching and learning and will continue to do so. St Vincent’s is a community focused on the development of the whole person, and I have no doubt that your varied, thoughtful and sensory approach to prayer will allow the children to continue to develop spiritually and grow in faith.”

The full report can be read on our school website via the following link: [230327 St-Vincent-de-Paul-CSI-Report.pdf](#) Thank you for contributing to the inspection process by completing questionnaires – the inspectors were surprised at the level of responses and have included many of your views in the report. Thank you to a great staff and pupil team for showing our inspectors just how great our school is. A particular thank you to Senior Leaders who guided the inspection team towards what they needed to see. Well done to everyone – this is a report that the full community can be proud of.

### **Lenten efforts**

Lent has been a fruitful time of social action in school. Our children have engaged each week in Food Bank Friday efforts and are ready to share a huge trolley of goods with the society of St Vincent de Paul to support local families over the Easter period. In addition, £520 was raised through Easter raffles for Father Kakuba’s Ugandan mission project. Office staff have been busily counting contributions in our Cafod collection boxes. Please remember to bring in any remaining collection boxes after the Easter break.



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!



In school throughout Lent, children have also been working on demonstrating key aspects of Catholic Social Teaching through class outreach projects. These have involved connecting with a local care home to send Easter wishes, older children encouraging younger pupils in their stewardship through litter picking and through actively welcoming as a ministry. These projects and others will continue throughout the year.



Dignity.



Community



The poor



Work



Peace



Stewardship

### Be Spirited

During the penultimate week of term pupils across all classes were given the opportunity to explore a series of Lenten Prayer Stations. The pupils engaged beautifully in activities that encouraged reflection and meditated on Gospel themes of hope, courage and peace. The children's prayerful engagement was tangible. It was lovely to be able to explore some of these activities with parents who dropped into the school hall on the Thursday of this week. Thank you for joining with us.



During Lent we have made use of a daily Lenten reflection and worship session from One Life Music. Sessions for Holy Week continue, despite being on holiday, and Youtube links for these sessions have





been shared via Parentmail and on each child's Google Classroom page. Please do let us know how you have made use of these sessions.

### **Cathedral Choir**

20 children from Years 3, 4 & 5 were honoured to sing at the 6pm Mass at Westminster Cathedral on 11<sup>th</sup> March. This was a wonderful opportunity and such a privilege for our children. Ably guided by Yvette Murphy, our Diocesan Choral Director, our pupils accompanied by the children of St Philip Howard School, Hatfield filled the choir stalls and sung with such elegance and clarity to a packed Cathedral. We were all so very proud of them. A video of this amazing experience can be seen on our school website: [StVdeP collective worship page](#)



After Easter, our Year 5 Choir are due to perform at the Herts Music Gala at the Royal Albert Hall. Hopefully, at the end of the Summer Term we will be able to host a wonderful Summer Concert.

### **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 discretely in their times of need if we know that there is a difficulty. Please do let us know if your circumstances change and you are concerned. The following letter sent out in December has some useful links: [Cost of living support](#)

### **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**

Thank you to those parents who were able to join with us earlier this term to discuss our involvement in the Great Representation Project. This projects aims for us to ensure that all pupils can see themselves in both the curriculum presented and the learning environment. It was good to be able to explore these curriculum



developments with you and to share our commitment to actively anti racist allyship. Following the usefulness of the discussions here, we plan to use a similar format to explore a number of curriculum innovations with parents. Please do watch out for these events and come along if you can.

### **Traffic & parking**

Parking continues to be a significant issue on Bedwell Crescent. The local council have increased the presence of Parking Enforcement Officers who have been issuing penalties to those who are parked illegally. This presence will continue and has become part of the local plan to improve traffic and safety issues in Bedwell. Parents at both schools on Bedwell Crescent continue to contribute to the issues at drop off and collection time. Please abide by the highway code and local parking restrictions whilst demonstrating common courtesy to other users and local neighbours. You will have noticed that the local council have provided two 'no parking' signs for us to make use of and continue to monitor the issue. Users of the church car park must also show common courtesy and park safely or this privilege may be withdrawn, as has occurred in the past. I urge all parents to be on board with ethical parking initiatives that benefit each child in our school as well as the wider community.

### **Pedestrian Crossing Patrol – work opportunity**

As you will be aware we have been without a Crossing Patrol for quite some time now, which is concerning. Hertfordshire County Council are looking to re-appoint for this role. If you know of a suitable person looking to take on a new role, please pass this information on. The pay is £10.60 per hour (excluding enhancements). If you are interested or would like further information please contact The Active and Safer Travel Team on 01992 556816.

### **Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)**

There has been much discussion via social media and news platforms recently in relation to Sex and Relationships Education in schools, with concerns that programmes may be giving too much information in areas that children are not ready to deal with. I would like to assure parents that our programme of RSE fits in with both Government expectations and that of the Catholic Church. Our approved programme is Ten:Ten's *Life to the Full* programme. You can find out about materials used through Ten Ten's Parent <https://www.tentenresources.co.uk/parent-portal/>. Our username for this portal is **svp-sg1** and the password is **herts-658**.

Currently, our delivery of the programme occurs mainly during the Summer term. Next year we aim to spread the units covered over three terms instead of one. Our programme encourages a diverse and inclusive view of families but does not cover LGBT+ issues. The programme is taught weekly by class teachers and throughout the lessons pupils are helped to develop their own worth and self-esteem whilst recognising their individuality and love from God. They learn what to expect when growing and changing and help to prepare them for change and growth. This includes how to respond to these in a safe way whilst developing their communication skills, especially online. Pupils begin learning about puberty in Year 4 (and then revisit it regularly); types of abuse are introduced in Year 3 and are then broadened into the four areas of neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse in Year 5. In Year 6, the programme introduces pupils to what to do if they come across pornography when they search on line; sexual intercourse is also covered in Year 6. In the parent portal you may come across newer materials in relation to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and a new unit on bereavement – these are currently not included in the school's scheme of work as they will require further research and professional development.

The materials have been really well received in school over the past two years and teachers have appreciated the rigour of a carefully designed programme, supported by a very distinct Catholic ethos. Parents have been incredibly supportive of its implementation. Currently Mr White coordinates the implementation of the programme – please do make contact with him if you would like to discuss aspects of our programme. We welcome your feedback. There is a wealth of information about our approach to RSE on our website at <http://stvincent.herts.sch.uk/pi-relationships-sex-education.html>. Please do spend some time exploring the materials available here.

An information meeting in relation to our RSE programme will be held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 6.30pm in the KS2 Hall. I urge you to join us.



## PSA – Thank you!

I am delighted to inform you that through your amazing fundraising this year, the PSA plan to hand over enough funding to ensure that:

- We can order a further 15 Chromebooks for KS2. This will ensure that every year group in KS2 can share 15 Chromebooks to deliver the curriculum through ICT. This means that we will now have an amazing 60 Chrome books across KS2! This was our aspirational target for ICT in KS2 and has been realised a year earlier than we expected! Thank you!
- £2000 has already been donated towards a new £8000 EYFS and KS1 project which aims to set up a new library for EYFS and KS1 pupils in the entrance lobby to KS1 and the small group room. This will enable exciting texts and comfortable furnishings to encourage a great love for reading for our children.

The PSA and the school are working very closely together to reach these targets (and have another significant KS2 reading project up our sleeve if we achieve our goals sooner than expected!) Working together for a common goal, our projects aim to build community and relationships too in a post Covid era.

## Could you help?

To realise these ambitious but exciting plans, we need PEOPLE TO STEP FORWARD AND HELP, filling key roles but also giving of their time to enable key campaigns, supported by others. Everyone has the opportunity to give whatever they can of their time for this common purpose. Please help if you can in whatever way you can! Please speak to a member of the current PSA or to Mrs Whitty, Mr White or Mrs Lorimer to find out more about what might be expected and useful.

A **Special General Meeting** will be held at **7pm on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023** to ensure that we have the right people in place to fulfil our Charitable status roles. If this is not possible we will need to plan for the dissolution of the PSA which would be a regrettable event but one that I'm sure we can avoid if we all pull together. Please attend, even if you are not sure what you can offer.

## Capital Projects

Following a successful bid for capital funding towards improving energy efficiency in the school, we have secured 90% funding to replace lighting with a more energy efficient LED solution in three KS1 classrooms. This will include PIR sensors so that energy isn't wasted when the rooms are empty. We have also supplemented the funding for this to enable the ceilings in the three classes to be lowered as the current ceilings are in a poor condition. This will improve the learning environment significantly and we look forward to the work being completed over the Easter holidays.

Almost a year ago, I discussed the potential for a full roof replacement project across both buildings. Sadly, due to inflation, quotes came in significantly over budget and, as such, we have been working with the Diocese of Westminster to rescope the project to a more affordable option. As such, after Easter, we expect re-roofing to begin in Nursery, Reception classes, Year 6 and in some of the admin areas. Scaffolding will be put up in key areas of the school over the holidays ready for work to begin in the Summer term. It is expected that this work will continue until the end of the term, causing some disruption on site. We will then look to plan for other areas of the roof to be replaced as further funding becomes available, prioritised according to current conditions.

As a voluntary aided school, we are required to put at least 10% towards the grant funding for such projects. This means that this term we will need to find in the region of £65K towards these two projects. Your contributions to the School Building Fund over the years alongside some careful financial planning will enable this work to be completed. However, we will need to ensure that our School Building Fund is built up again for future roof projects and other building needs. Thank you for your generous contributions to this essential funding stream. If you would like to know more about establishing a standing order or other methods of contributing, please contact Sally Lorimer on [finance@stvincent.herts.sch.uk](mailto:finance@stvincent.herts.sch.uk).





## Amazing sporting successes continue!

It has been a term of significant sporting achievements, having got through to the regional finals of the national girls' football tournament, representing Hertfordshire and also having represented Stevenage in the County finals of the sportshall athletics tournaments. Our football and netball teams have also achieved brilliantly this term and are performing superbly in the Stevenage league. Congratulations to all!



PE & Sports was a focus for a [Hertfordshire](#) Improvement Partner (HIP) visit to the school last week. Linda Chesworth (HIP) visited a number of lessons (across the Key Stages) with Mr Jennings and members of the Senior Leadership Team to explore the quality of provisions, progression, achievement and engagement in learning. Mrs Chesworth also met with groups of pupils to discuss their attitudes to learning and sporting engagement. This was an incredibly positive visit, with pupils articulating the importance of PE for their wellbeing and staff demonstrating how well the curriculum is matched to the needs of each pupil. An inclusive, yet competitive, sporting spirit was acknowledged as being a real strength of their school.

## Attendance

You will have noted an increased focus on attendance over this past year from high profile figures in Ofsted and the Government. As such, schools are being put under increased pressure to ensure that attendance that falls below 95% for any pupil is followed up as a matter of urgency. This is to ensure that pupils do not miss out on essential learning. I am grateful that the vast majority of our families understand the importance of excellent attendance. However, I have noted a significantly increased number of requests for holidays during term time and extended leave to visit families overseas. Although Governors appreciate the financial pinch and the increased cost of holidays during the usual holiday period, this does not amount to exceptional circumstances for absence. I am only able to authorise leave in the most exceptional of circumstances (as per our policy), planned in advance. The local authority are increasingly putting pressure on schools to issue fines as a deterrent. Our school wide attendance is currently sitting at 93.4% which is just below the national average of 93.6%. Unauthorised absences are sitting at 0.62% but during the last week of term were at 1.8%. Being accountable for attendance, I will be expected to put measures in place to enable school wide attendance to get back to our pre-pandemic average of 96%+. Please could I urge everyone to support us in doing this.

## Approaching Easter

As I write, we begin the special journey through Holy Week which prepares us all for the great celebration of the Risen Christ at Easter. As we approach this great celebration, I wish you fruitful preparations during Holy week, after an impactful Lenten journey. May the joy of the season when it arrives, enable you and your families to celebrate together with laughter and love, and to feel a sense of hope for what is ahead, knowing that we are all held in Jesus' loving hands. As I look towards the weather forecast for the week ahead, there may be more of a sense of spring in the air and some periods of sunshine which in itself should bring some hope and comfort to all!



# Easter Prayer

The veil of darkness  
Transformed to the brightness light.

The most dreadful end  
Became the most beautiful beginning.

The depths of despair  
Fade to reveal hope everlasting.

The curse of death  
Defeated by eternal life.

Thank you Lord, for the wonder of Easter.

[www.lords-prayer-words.com](http://www.lords-prayer-words.com)



May God bless you and those most dear to you

**Jon White**  
**Headteacher**

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### EASTER HOLIDAYS

Apr 3, 2023 - Apr 14, 2023

### HOLY THURSDAY

Apr 6, 2023

### GOOD FRIDAY

Apr 7, 2023

### HOLY SATURDAY

Apr 8, 2023

### Alleluia! Easter Sunday.

Apr 9, 2023

### Back to school

Apr 17, 2023

### SRE Information Meeting

Apr 18, 2023 6.30pm

### Royal Albert Hall Gala Choir Y5

Apr 30, 2023

### BANK HOLIDAY

May 1, 2023

### HCL Coronation Menu

May 5, 2023 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM

### EXTRA BANK HOLIDAY - KING'S CORONATION

May 8, 2023

### Yr 6 SATS

May 9, 2023 - May 12, 2023



## BOOK FAYRE

May 12, 2023 - May 17, 2023

## HCL Gourmet Burger Day

May 18, 2023 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM

## BANK HOLIDAY

May 29, 2023

## HALF TERM BREAK

May 30, 2023 - Jun 2, 2023

## HCL Diversity Day Menu

Jun 5, 2023 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM

## HCL Eid Special Menu

Jun 28, 2023 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM

## LAST DAY OF TERM - close 2pm

Jul 20, 2023

## INSET day (no pupils)

Jul 21, 2023

