



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

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Dear parents and carers

I write to you today with my final end of term newsletter. Through this newsletter I hope to share with you something of the very special nature of this community and my reflections as I move on to new and perhaps unknown horizons.



I am very proud to be a product of Catholic Education in Stevenage. I attended St Margaret Clitherow School as a pupil. I loved school and remember Mrs Hayday in my Reception year playing the piano in assembly each week and Mrs Cropton in the office helping us to bake cakes for the teachers' afternoon tea in those early days. How things have changed!

After St Margaret Clitherow, I moved on to St Michael's Catholic School under the stewardship of Mr Nash, Mr Ash & Mr Murrell and learnt to love in particular English literature and Ancient History. In my 4th year (as it was then) St Michael's joined with St Angela's (the girls' school) to form The John Henry Newman School and things changed significantly as Catholic co-education became a reality in Stevenage. Miss Culkin was one of my new year group classmates! After JHN, encouraged by the wonderful teachers that I'd experienced, I was accepted to train for a teaching degree at Homerton via Cambridge University.

I returned to St Margarets prior to my BEd at Homerton for a 'pre school experience' in July 1991. When I completed my degree in July 1995, I first applied for a job at St Vincent de Paul School, Stevenage and was unsuccessful, but did secure a job at St Margaret Clitherow the day after! In so many ways, I am glad that I didn't get the job initially, as it was at St Margaret Clitherow that I met Nicole (Mrs White) who very quickly became my unofficial mentor and dear friend. St Margaret Clitherow offered me many excellent opportunities, taking over from a teacher who had actually taught me! My journey to leadership was nurtured at St Margaret Clitherow through the guidance of the brilliant Geraldine Cartwright (currently one of our amazing governors). I learnt so much from her inclusive practice and her faith in action. I owe so much to both Geraldine and Nicole for my 28 years in Catholic Education, including 12 years in Catholic Headship and I thank them sincerely for their wisdom and great counsel.



After 6 years of headship at St Margaret Clitherow, I felt called to something new and this is what led me to St Vincent de Paul School – yes, a calling! I hope that in my time here I have listened to my calling and have made a difference. This is a very special community and somewhere where I have really felt at home over six years.

I am leaving not because I am unhappy, but simply because I feel called to something else. At the moment this calling is directing me towards family and things closer to home but I am sure that over the next few months as I listen carefully without distraction I will be called to something new and exciting in the wider world too!

As St John Henry Newman said:

"God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work."

We have a wonderful community at St Vincent de Paul School and it has been a privilege to get to know so many families and children over my time here. Your generosity as a community never fails to amaze me in both your support for each other and for the school. Thank you sincerely for this commitment to community.

Speaking of generosity. How amazing it was to hear this weekend that parents have managed to raise a total of £13, 560.35 for the school during this academic year. This has enabled the purchase of another trolley of Chrome Books for KS2 and will ensure that the KS1 library project can be completed. Thank you to everyone for your generous support of fundraising activities and in particular to the PSA committee who work so hard behind the scenes to ensure that events can go ahead. Things would be very tricky without this level of financial support – thank you!



It has been a very special last few weeks in school. Tuesday presented us with the opportunity to shine in Sports. What a fantastic Sports Day we had. Three full hours of KS1 and KS2 inclusive sports on both fields. I managed 12,000 steps just in watching everyone! It was great to see the competitive spirit, the encouragement for others and the absolute determination and



participation across the age groups. Thank you to Mr Jennings and the whole team for this inclusive yet competitive day. We await with anticipation Thursday's result.



At the end of Sports day, I was humbled to be given such a fantastic and generous gift from the PSA and parents – thank you! I may well use the Virgin vouchers on a family experience at the Penrhyn Quarry Velocity Experience in Wales this summer! I will Tweet!!!! My flamingo wine stopper had its first outing to the Battle Proms this weekend and was very useful! I will also be spending vouchers on new plants for my garden and books to read whilst I sit in the greenhouse contemplating next steps. Thank you to the PSA for your coordination of this unexpected and generous surprise and to everyone for contributing. Thanks also to families who have sent individual cards and gifts – I have been overwhelmed by everyone's generosity and connection! Thank you sincerely!

Last Friday it was wonderful to come together with our children and families in Year 3 and Year 4 to give thanks for their First Holy Communion celebrations across our parishes. How wonderful for them to join as a group to receive the Eucharist together. As they returned to school, they were greeted by the whole school community who clapped their procession to the KS2 hall. Here they were presented with a holding cross ahead of their class celebrations. What a wonderful day!



This week we also prepare to say farewell to our wonderful Year 6 students. It was wonderful to present Year 6 with their traditional dove lapel badges at their beautiful Leavers' Mass on Monday concelebrated by Father Nigel and Father Michael. On Wednesday our Year 6 leavers will be treated to a bowling trip and a meal out and we look forward to joining with them for our outdoor (weather permitting) Leavers' Assembly on Thursday morning. The whole school will gather to make some noise for them and wish them farewell at the end of the day in what has become a great end of KS2 tradition in recent years. This cohort have been amazing and are



such ambassadors for our faith. I first knew them in Year 1 and have taken great pleasure in seeing them establish themselves as great leaders in our community. We are grateful for all that they have gifted our school over their time with us. We wish them well as they move on to bright futures at their secondary schools – Good luck to you all!



This week also marks key staff leaving the school. These include:

- Mrs Chowdhury & Mr Richardson (supply teachers) who have gifted us the consistency of a year's teaching and learning for our Y2 and Y6 pupils.
- Miss Kewley and Mrs Reid who have worked with love and care for our youngest pupils via the nursery team
- Mrs Jackson, our brilliant supply Teaching Assistant, covering in Year 4
- Mrs Holland ('Cook'), having provided excellent dinners for us since January. We will miss her brilliant flavours
- Mrs Cascarino, Year 2 TA, who leaves us after 17 amazing years at the school where she has supported our younger pupils in their readiness for school learning and the fun that follows.
- Mrs McGuire, who retires after 27 incredible years at the school supporting pupils so brilliantly with their creativity & learning and having been a key player in our faith community.
- Mrs White, who as assistant head and class teacher has supported so many children in KS2 so beautifully and sensitively with their learning, faith and wellbeing and is now moving to bring her inclusive experience to KS3 in a new school environment.

We wish all of our staff leavers the very best of luck and thank them sincerely for all that they have given the school over the years.



During our final assembly on Thursday, we will join together with the following traditional blessing for all leavers, pupils and staff:



We have been blessed with a great team at St Vincent de Paul school – families, staff and governors all working together for our wonderful children and I have felt supported by you all in this great partnership – I thank you sincerely for this. As we draw to the end of a year of exciting change in the school, I would particularly like to wish Mrs Whitty (Acting Headteacher Designate) and Mrs Curry (Acting Deputy Headteacher Designate) and all of the Senior Leadership Team, along with the whole staff team and Governors, every best wish for the years ahead. I pray that everything you do will lead to amazing intentions for the pupils and happiness for the whole community.

I would like to end with my own prayer for the school's future intentions:

Loving Father

May this beautiful school continue to be blessed with peace love and happiness.

May its leaders be inspired with love, hope and compassion.

And may its learners be led by an urge to follow the way of Christ in all that they do.

May God's blessings be always upon you, held secure in His love.

Amen.

I wish you all well for an amazing Summer, for the year ahead and for all that follows.

May God bless you and those most dear to you.

Jon White
Headteacher



Important dates for your diary:

Wednesday 19 th July	Y6 bowling and lunch out
Thursday 20 th July 9.30am	Leavers' Assembly (Y6 parents welcome) – please gather near to the KS2 playground
Thursday 20 th July 1.40pm	Leavers' Parade – Y6 parents welcome – please gather from 1.35pm
Thursday 20 th July 2pm	Early finish for the Summer Holidays
Friday 21 st July	INSET DAY (no pupils)
Friday 1 st September	INSET DAY (no pupils)
Monday 4 th September	INSET DAY (no pupils)
Tuesday 5 th September	First day of new academic year for pupils

