



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

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20<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Dear parents and carers

## Festive fun



As I write to you today there is a sense of festive excitement in the school, particularly this morning as the children watched and engaged with delight in a performance of 'The Snow Queen'. Throughout this week Christmas jumpers, tinsel and festive cheer have filled the corridors and classrooms as the children are enthused with a sense of 'expectant joy' at what is to come. This is what Advent is all about – that feeling of joy as we await something very special; our children can teach us so much about joy at those times when we are so rushed and busy! It has been a week of exciting moments including festive crafts (with older and younger children working together), parties, a Christmas dinner and a special performance. The staff team even have a treat planned for the children during assembly tomorrow!



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On Wednesday, cook and her team served 350 delicious Christmas dinners – the children were able to give the catering team a fantastic three cheers at the end of serving and with that our thanks! Staff had decorated the dining room and ate with the children - thank you to the entire staff team who worked so hard, using much of their own time voluntarily, to make the lunchtime such a special occasion.



### Thank you for supporting those in need

The generosity of our community never ceases to amaze me when we make a charity appeal. Your response to our **Reverse Advent Calendar** appeal on behalf of **Stevenage People for People** and the **Food Shed** has been phenomenal as you can see from the pictures on our Twitter feed. Your contributions will make a real difference for local families in need over the coming weeks. We will continue to collect for **Stevenage Food Bank** throughout the year ahead via the box at the main entrance.

During Advent we have raised £423.60 for our nominated Advent Charities: Children's Diabetes and the Catholic Children's Society of Westminster. Thank you for your generosity in our various appeals.

Your generous donations through collections at the Christmas concerts will be hugely appreciated by our two nominated charities: **Children's Diabetes** and the **Catholic Children's Society of Westminster (CCSW)**. The CCSW provide immediate financial support to families at times of personal crisis or emergency. Schools and parishes are able to refer families who may need support and, if approved, finances can often be released within days. This is a lifeline for many families and is a resource that is drawn upon locally. Any of us can find ourselves in a situation that requires support (financial or other) – please do come in and talk to us if this is the case in order that we can direct you to the most appropriate support. Thank you for supporting those around you most in need.



## Christmas concerts and plays

It has been wonderful to join with so many of you over the past weeks for such a joyful sharing of the nativity story by our EYFS and KS1 children – your children told the familiar story with such passion, enthusiasm and energy. Yesterday evening marked the culmination of our Advent preparations in our whole school 'Story of Christmas in Song' celebrations. It is wonderful to gather together as whole school community, despite the 'squeeze' factor (yes – we need a bigger hall!!!), to reflect on the beauty of the child whose birth we await with such anticipation. Thank you for sharing with us at each of our seasonal concerts this year – they are such special moments for all of us.

## School Development – an ambitious plan!

I know that a number of parents were concerned to see the performance measures recently published which were negative for our school this year. We were bitterly disappointed by this, particularly as our children in Year 6 last year worked so hard, with such determination and resilience as did school staff and parents in preparing them for the tests. The published performance measures look at the progress of children in the final year of their primary school, compared to where they were at the end of Year 2 (four years previously). Some children who were at the 'expected standard' at Year 2, narrowly missed the 'expected standard' at the end of Year 6; likewise some children who were assessed at 'above age related standards' at the end of Year 2 were not able to demonstrate a 'greater depth' standard at the end of Year 6.

Maintaining consistent and sustained progress from the previous Key Stage is a key development priority for us. It is something that our HMI Ofsted Inspector was pleased to see we were focusing on when she visited in March 2018 and confirmed our 'good' judgement. Obviously it is a four year journey from Year 2 to 6 and as such, the impact of our work here will take time to show in the official data.

What the published performance measures do not show, unfortunately, is the excellent progress and significant rise in standard that has been achieved at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (the statutory EYFS Profile); in the Year 1 Phonics Check (statutory); and in the very good outcomes at the end of Key stage 1 (statutory assessment).

You will see what our key priorities are when looking at our recently published three year School Development Plan which can be accessed on our school website or via the following link: [http://www.stvincent.herts.sch.uk/PDF/2018/svp\\_sdp\\_Nov18.pdf](http://www.stvincent.herts.sch.uk/PDF/2018/svp_sdp_Nov18.pdf)

You will see that progress measures are our number one priority in Section 9 of the plan. As you will see, we have ambitious plans for the school as only the best will do for our children. This is what staff strive for each and every day and through each interaction with you and your child, all of course underpinned by a Catholic ethos which searches for and supports the unique potential of each and every child. **May I take this opportunity to thank you as parents and the entire staff team for all that you do to promote a partnership of excellence in our school.**



## Thanks to the PSA core team

A huge thank you to our PSA team for their amazing efforts in raising much needed funds for the school. Recently the PSA committee were able to hand over a fantastic £4000 to the school which will be used to support outdoor learning equipment in Key Stage 1, classroom furniture in KS2, curriculum resources across all Key Stages, and a wonderful theatre performance for all children today. Further projects will also follow, which we will keep you informed of. In the current economic climate, we are increasingly reliant upon your support of PSA projects to fund the curriculum experience for your children. Thank you for all that you do to support these events. If you have some spare time to offer the PSA committee in the organising and running of events you would be most welcome – watch out for parent-mails about meetings or speak to one of the current committee members for details.

## Generous donations – thank you!

It was lovely to see so many from our community involved in the **St Joseph's Drama Group** production of Oliver. We were surprised, delighted and humbled to receive a very generous donation from the drama group following their production. This has been used to fund the replacement of the monkey bars with the tyre challenge for KS2 pupils. We are very grateful.

We were equally delighted to receive a smart new football kit sponsored by **'Everbrite Windows and Doors'** recently. Our footballers will really look the part as they meet their opposition thanks to this very generous offer of support – thank you! If you work for a company that may be able to sponsor resources or an event in school please do make contact with Mrs Lorimer ([finance@stvincent.herts.sch.uk](mailto:finance@stvincent.herts.sch.uk)) who will be happy to talk options!

## Cost Cutting Measures

With school budgets constantly being squeezed, the Governors and staff have been looking at ways to cut costs without impacting on the quality of educational and faith experience that we are able to offer. One such measure could involve a family voluntarily donating a box of tissues for use in school. This small act could make a significant difference to our daily expenses and would help to prevent the spread of germs! If you would like to help with this, boxes can be handed in to the class teacher when we return in January. We are incredibly grateful for your customary support of the school even if it feels somewhat strange to be asking for help towards the cost of essential items such as tissues; however this is, I suppose, a sign of the times and the impact of the ongoing underfunding of our schools nationally. I will be sharing more about the impact of budgets over the coming year. If you have ideas of alternative ways for us to save or generate funds, please do share your ideas via [finance@stvincent.herts.sch.uk](mailto:finance@stvincent.herts.sch.uk).



## Welcome to new staff

In January we warmly welcome Mrs White who will be joining the Year 5 teaching team and Mrs McCarthy who will be working with Year 2. We wish them both well in their new ventures and look forward to working with them. We also thank Mrs Allen who has been with us (on supply) for a significant period in Year 2 and wish her well as she continues to support in other schools on a supply basis.

## Christmas greetings



*On behalf of the staff team and Governors,*

*I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.*

*I pray that your homes are filled with laughter and friendship during the Christmas season and that 2019 brings you much peace & joy.*

**School breaks up at 2pm on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2018. We look forward to welcoming everyone back to school on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2019.**

May God bless you and those most dear to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon White'.

Mr Jon White  
Headteacher



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