



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

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Saturday 21st March 2020 (2.00pm)

Dear Parents/Carers

Friday was a very strange and rather surreal day and I know that many were upset at the uncertainty that lies ahead. However, we know that as a community we will be brought back together at some point. This is not an end point, it is the beginning of a new way of working for some time and at the end of it we will have all learnt something new and will, I hope, be more appreciative of the things that we have and of the beauty of our community. I have been incredibly touched by the support of our community at this unusual time – thank you for the many beautiful messages and kind words – it really has been appreciated.

I know that our Year 6 children were particularly unsettled by the prospect that Friday could have been their last day at St Vincent de Paul School. Although this is a possibility, it isn't certain and we shouldn't dwell on it for too long. If it is the reality, I have promised them that we will invite the children of our current Year 6 back for a big celebratory event in the new school year. Their transition to new schools and a celebration of their time at this school will be marked – that is my promise!

I thank you all for the calm manner in which you approached these unprecedented measures and, above all, I must thank sincerely my amazing staff team who have constantly gone above and beyond to make sure that our children have been reassured, loved and carefully directed. Their actions have been nothing short of heroic!

To those of you who are Keyworkers, thank you for all that you are doing to keep us safe and to ensure that essential services are provided – you are amazing! By way of a thank you, we will do everything within our power to keep the school partially open for you so that you can still work. We are indebted to you and hold you very dearly in our prayers.

From Monday 23rd March 2020 the school is closed to the vast majority of pupils, apart from those Keyworkers and other specified groups who have already registered from Nursery to Year 6.

In order to protect staff and pupils it is essential that I do all that I can to limit the number of pupils in school over the coming weeks. If there are too many pupils in, social distancing (already really difficult to manage) becomes almost impossible and that would put individuals at risk. **As such, even if you are a Keyworker, if there is anyway that your child can be safely cared for at home, I urge you to do this.** This is the very clear message promoted in Government advice. Although we will be mitigating any risks that we can, staying at home is the best option.

We are expecting 84 pupils (19% of the school community) across the school and as such plan to run 4 age related groups.

Classes will join together as follows:

- Nursery & Reception: in Mrs Hargrave's Reception classroom
- Year 1 & Year 2: in Mrs Heath's Year 1 classroom
- Year 3 & Year 4: in Mrs Blythe's Year 3 classroom
- Year 5 & Year 6: in Mrs White's Year 5 classroom



Staff, subject to availability, may be working on a rota and, as such, your child will not be working with the same adults each day although we aim for there to be some familiar faces around. This may not always be possible. For the first week, all staff who are able to, will be in school as there will be much to organise!

We will not be following the usual curriculum for your child. Tasks completed will be dependent upon the skills of those available and the interests of the children. Pupils will also have regular access to their Purple Mash activities. As such, although a routine will be developed, it will not be the normal school day. **No homework will be set** as all pupils will still have access to the materials that have been shared in each year group.

- Doors will open promptly in the morning in order that you can drop and go without the need for gathering in large groups.
- Pupils will be expected to wear their uniform
- Pupil meal patterns will remain the same (Herts Catering will be providing lunch, however, the menu will be subject to change according to supplies available)
- Schools opening and closing times also remain the same: 8.50am-3.15pm.
- To avoid large gathering on the playground after school, departure will be staggered between 3 and 3.15pm. When staff see parents arrive, children will be dismissed. **Please leave the site immediately.**
- To minimise disruption and regardless of your work pattern, children will be completing a full day.
- Pupils are asked NOT to bring in items from home including toys, playing cards, pencil cases, books or any other items as we need to reduce the potential for contamination.
- Your child may bring in a healthy snack in their bag and a water bottle for their own use as there will be no classroom cups available.
- There may be occasions, when due to the lack of available staff, the school will have to close at short notice. This would be communicated via ParentMail, the School Website and Twitter.
- We will be limiting access to the building in order that areas remain free from potential contamination. As such there will be no access to classrooms that are not currently in use or lockers in areas other than where children have them re-allocated.
- Parents of children not in school will also be unable to access the school: arrangements will be made for the collection of any things that pupils have left in school at a later date.
- No children, parents or staff will be allowed on the school site if they are displaying any coronavirus-like symptoms. The isolation period remains 14 days. **This is not negotiable under any circumstances.**
- An 'isolation room' will be set up in Mr Crump's Year 6 classroom, so that any child needing collecting can be collected from the external door to Year 6, adjacent to the staff car-park. This ensures that we are able to control any potential contamination or spread of infection.

Breakfast and Afterschool club

We are currently planning to keep our Breakfast Club and Cool After School Club open to anyone who has been permitted to be on the school site. Usual operating hours will be adhered to. Please contact the Cool After School Club to confirm any bookings you have and to check availability. The Club will need to know in advance as appropriate staffing will need to be organised. Again, this will always be dependent upon the available staffing.

The school set a deadline for applications which has now passed. If you are a Keyworker and have not applied for your child to attend school, and you need them to, you will need to contact me as soon as is possible as we have already based our staffing on those Keyworkers who have registered. For these families, a delayed start date may have to be negotiated. Please use keyworker@stvincent.herts.sch.uk for any communication regarding Keyworker queries.



Children not in school from Monday

For those of you working at home, I hope that you soon get into a good routine. Setting aside an organised space to work is important as is ensuring that you get regular breaks including some fresh air in the garden if this is possible. Limit your screen time. Make time for some creative activities too and don't forget to exercise and read regularly. Your teacher and I will be in touch again soon and after Easter will set some more work. We are looking for ways to further use facilities in Purple Mash to communicate with each other in a safe manner. I will be in touch as soon as I know more.

Free School Meals

The Government has requested that families who are entitled to receive a benefits related Free School Meal (**not** the universal free meal available to all infants) continue to be supported whilst they are absent from school. Anyone who qualifies for this has already been contacted and a digital weekly voucher to the value of the school meals will be emailed.

Access to ICT

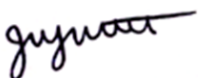
We are aware that for many families, access to ICT facilities and broadband services can be a challenge. I am aware that many of the resources that we are sharing will be digital. I am also aware that should we be using Purple Mash to communicate with children, this might not be possible for all. As such, if your child will have difficulty in gaining regular access to online materials please do call the school office and register this so that we are aware and can make alternative arrangements. I ask that these calls are made in the afternoon as the office is incredibly busy in the mornings currently.

Keeping in touch

Please do keep in touch over the weeks ahead. Should you find yourself in a vulnerable position and need some advice, school staff are still available to support you remotely. Equally, should there be financial troubles ahead, please do get in touch so that we can direct you towards support available. Please do not be too proud to get in touch under such circumstances. I can be emailed on head@stvincent.herts.sch.uk as can Mrs Sherry on rsherry@stvincent.herts.sch.uk or a call to the school office will enable you to request a call back from either of us.

Thank you again for all that you are doing to support the school during this unprecedented period. Rest assured of our prayers; please keep us in yours.

Yours sincerely



Mr Jon White
Headteacher

