



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

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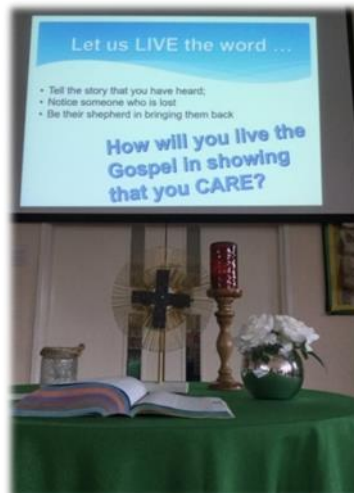
25<sup>th</sup> November 2019

Dear Parents and carers

It has been a busy term of learning and exploration for all children across the school and we are now entering that even busier period as we approach the season of Advent, with all the excitement and anticipation that it brings as we prepare for the great feast of Christmas.

### THE GOD WHO SPEAKS

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has designated 2020 as a year devoted to 'The God Who Speaks'. This is a Year of the Word to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Verbum Domini (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation on 'The Word of the Lord'), and the 1600th anniversary of death of St Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin. During this Year of the Word we will be focusing on different ways to bring the Gospel alive for our children. As such, we aim to make much more use of the 'Wednesday Word', and we hope that you will be able to enjoy sharing this with your children each week as we prepare for the Sunday Readings. In assembly, each Wednesday, the children hear the Gospel for the forthcoming Sunday and explore its themes or key words. They are then tasked with taking its message out of the hall into their classrooms and home, evangelising The Word for themselves. As a sign of this, one child from each class collects the Wednesday Words and holds them up high as his / her class follow behind The Word, back to their class. It is quite a sight!



## YEAR 6 RESIDENTIAL

Just before October Half term, 60 energetic Year 6 pupils travelled to PGL Liddington for a week full of energetic and often high adrenaline activities. This was our first visit to Liddington and we were all impressed with both the adventurous activities, the excellent food and the accommodation.



May I take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to the six members of the staff team who gave up their full week to join with the children on this residential trip. The staff, like the children, returned exhausted but enthused and ready for a well-deserved half-term break. The children, of course, did us proud showing great resilience and determination with some challenging activities. Well done to everyone!

## CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

You will be aware that we don't just focus on getting things right at school. In fact, getting it wrong can provide an excellent learning opportunity if handled carefully. At St Vincent de Paul School we focus on that sense of a 'learning struggle' when grappling with new ideas, concepts and skills. We are currently trying to make use of the ideas contained in James Nottingham's concept of 'The Learning Pit' with all children. Displays relating to this can be seen in each classroom and a useful clip explaining the philosophy behind it can be found here:

<https://youtu.be/3IMUAOhuO78>



This complements our work on the 17 characteristics of effective learning based upon the research of Professor Guy Claxton. Both the Learning Pit and the 17 Characteristics of Effective Learning can be explored further through our Curriculum Statement which is available on the school website.

## ACTION FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Following on from our Action for Climate Change day in the early Autumn Term, the children have been making a concerted effort to reduce their personal impact on the environment. The School Parliament



are planning an environmental Christmas crafts project and we are all trying to reduce unnecessary waste when using paper in particular. The children were keen to source some trees to plant in order to support the environment and we have been lucky to receive about 100 saplings that we plan to care for in pots, ready to plant in the school grounds later in the year. Have you thought about reducing 'single use plastics' when putting together a school packed lunch? Every action helps – please watch out for Year 4's motivational climate change Tweets for further ideas.

### **CARITAS PROJECT**

This term we have been busy collaborating with Caritas Westminster with social action projects. This began with a collaboration with the Felix Project to redistribute foods that would have gone to landfill despite being fit for use. The Felix Project and Caritas also supported our Half Term Holiday Club which enabled 25 families (48 children and 25 adults) from across both Catholic Primary Schools in Stevenage to join together for fun, cooking and companionship on one day during the half term holidays.



Thank you to the 17 volunteers from our school and parish community who enabled this event to happen. Feedback has been excellent and we hope to host something similar again soon. I am currently in conversation with volunteers from Caritas to plan a 'Love in Action' project across school and parish. Watch this space for more details!

### **ADVENT CHARITY**

With Advent nearly upon us, the Christmas Countdown soon begins and as we all begin preparing for the excesses of the season, it is perhaps a good time to stop and reflect on those who aren't as fortunate as we are. With this in mind, we will be participating in People for People Stevenage's Reverse Advent Calendar appeal again this year. This was really successful last year and we hope to send even more goods this year to support the Stevenage Food Shed. Suggested items were sent out in a Parentmail last week – please check for details and encourage children to bring their items in. Retiring collections at school Christmas functions this year will all support the Catholic Children's Society Westminster, an organisation which supports local families within our parishes and schools at a time of crisis. Please do support both of these worthy charity projects if you are able to. May I take this opportunity to thank you in anticipation of your customary generosity.

### **CAR PARK**

This week Mr Sloan and I met with Father Nigel and Father Michael in order to evaluate the impact of the use of the St Joseph's car park for school drop-offs. We are all keen to ensure that this valuable resource remains open to parents and as such please could I ask that we all follow the rules in relation to it. In particular, if the 'car park full' sign is displayed, those approaching must drive on and find alternative parking. If you arrive late to school (i.e. after 8.50) please do not attempt to park here as it causes difficulty with those trying to leave the car park. Equally, at this time those working in the parish or attending Church may well be arriving. In particular, please do not obstruct entry to the car park for Lynne, the Parish secretary, who drives a cream mini; if Lynne can't get in, Parish life is disrupted



significantly! Volunteers to help with the administration of a safe car park environment are very much appreciated – please do help if you can.

### **SAFETY**

Staff on the main gate have been concerned recently about the disruption and potential danger posed to both pedestrians and drivers due to poor road habits displayed by some. Please do not park on the yellow lines (particularly near to the corner of St Josephs) or hold up the traffic by performing a dangerous three point turn in the road when leaving the school. Please do not block the passage through the chicane, by leaving your vehicle overhanging the road adjacent to the coach bay. Traffic Enforcement Officers from the Council do patrol the area and have issued tickets recently. Beware!! Thank you to those families who have made an extra effort to park elsewhere and walk the last bit (even in the colder weather). I gather that there are still plenty of parking spaces at the Noah's Ark / Fairlands Playground Car park each day.

### **NOVEMBER REMEMBRANCE**

It was lovely to see many involved with our school community at the Act of Remembrance in the Old Town on Remembrance Sunday. For the second year running, I was proud to accompany two children from our community to lay a wreath at the memorial on the Bowling Green.



Our Act of Remembrance in school on the following Monday was a poignant opportunity for the whole school to gather together in remembrance. It is a privilege to share such occasions with your children, who take such matters so seriously. Lest We Forget.

### **CHRISTMAS FAYRE**

This exciting event takes place after school on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November. Please return your raffle tickets in order to be in with a chance to win some fantastic prizes. In order for the event to be a success, the PSA need to expand their team of volunteers to help in setting up on the day and during the actual event. Please see a member of the PSA team if you are able to help at all and please do come along to support the event. The school now relies upon the profits from such events to support the general day to day running costs of the school. The PSA have a target of £10,000 to raise for the school over the course of this academic year and they need your help to do this! Many thanks to our PSA team for all of their fantastic efforts in raising much needed funds for the school. It really is appreciated.

### **CONNECTING CLASSROOMS – NEPAL**

We are delighted to be a part of the British Council's 'Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning' project. You may have seen from the Tweets that Mrs Curry spent a week in Nepal earlier this term and spent time at the Junior Citizens' Academy, Pokhara which is our partnered school. The children have already started researching about Nepal and created some fantastic home learning projects which have been on display in the junior hall.



Our partner teacher will visit us in either the Summer or Autumn term and we look forward to developing a strong relationship with our new friends.



### SHARING CONCERNS

No matter is ever too big or too small for us to deal with. The school operates an open door policy and we encourage you to make contact with your child's teacher as soon as a concern or worry begins to arise. A phone call after or before school is usually the best method or catch the teacher at the end of the school day. Please do not let a small concern grow over time – often there is a simple solution as long as we know about it! If you are still concerned the matter will then be referred to a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Please do not hesitate to make contact should you need to.

### ABSENCES

You will be aware that our Safeguarding procedures require us to initiate a phone call to follow up on any absences on the first morning that a child is absent. Please assist us with this by promptly informing the school of absences by emailing [absence@stvincent.herts.sch.uk](mailto:absence@stvincent.herts.sch.uk) or telephoning the school office. Even if a message has been passed on to a member of staff, please do inform the school office as well. This ensures that an accurate record is kept up to date.

We all look forward to joining with you in the various events occurring in school in the lead up to Christmas. God bless you and those most dear to you

Jon White  
(Headteacher)

### FORTHCOMING DATES TO BE AWARE OF:

<b>Friday 29<sup>th</sup> Nov</b>	<b>Christmas Fayre - 3.15pm onwards</b>
<b>Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec</b>	<b>INSET Day – no pupils in school</b>
<b>Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	<b>Nativity Play @ 2pm, Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> @ 10.45am and Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> @ 2pm</b>
<b>Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	<b>The Story of Christmas in Song – 6.30pm start (more details to follow ...)</b>
<b>Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	<b>Christmas Dinner and Festive Jumpers Day!</b>
<b>Friday 20<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	<b>School finishes at 2pm</b>
<b>Monday 6<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020</b>	<b>Pupils return to school for the Spring Term</b>

