



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

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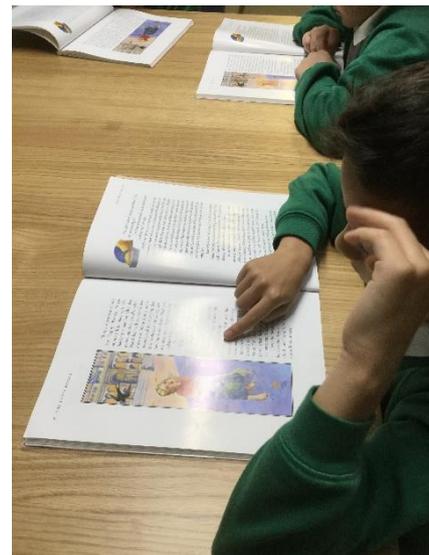
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12th March 2019

Dear Parents

How is it possible that we have passed the half-way point to the school academic year? Time flies past so speedily and your children have been wonderfully engaged in their learning. I do hope that they come home and tell you about the exciting things that they have discovered, questions posed and new skills acquired. It is a privilege to witness their determined spirit and their resilience in approach to learning new things. Carefully guided by a skilled staff, and supported by your valuable input at home, our children are so keen to leap into 'the Learning Pit' and grapple with new ideas. It is great to see them climbing out of the pit on the other side and having that proud 'eureka' moment of 'I've done it!' If you want to find out more about the Learning Pit Model (based on the research of Professor James Nottingham), take a look at the video in the following link (which can also be seen on our website): <https://youtu.be/3IMJAOHuO78>



Coronavirus (Covid19) Update

Our return after half term was followed by a global concern in relation to the spread of the coronavirus. This concern was heightened when shortly after our return a confirmed case was discovered in Stevenage. Two messages have been sent out in relation to the school's reaction to these concerns, detailing the measures that we have put in place to protect both our families and our staff. These measures are embedded in school life now and classes are all in good routines in relation to regular handwashing at key times. Children have all been shown how to correctly wash their hands. Any concerns of the children in relation to the virus have also been addressed in an age appropriate and level headed manner. Please do continue to work with us in presenting the key messages of regular and effective handwashing alongside the mantra of 'catch it, bin it, kill it!' in relation to coughs and sneezes. We continue to follow the advice of Public Health England, Public Health Herts, the Department for Education and Hertfordshire County Council in relation to any measures that we should be taking and I personally check for updates on a daily basis. Some parents have been



concerned recently in relation to whether they should send their child into school if they have a temperature. Coronavirus aside, I would suggest that if a child has a temperature, they are poorly and, as such, shouldn't be in school. If you are ever concerned about whether to send your child into school or not, please do call the school office who would be happy to advise accordingly. Specific advice in relation to children in school with individual symptoms may well change over coming days – I will, of course advise should this be the case. Some parents have asked what would happen if the school should be directed to close for a set period of time. Please can I assure you that staff are already making contingency plans for how work could be forwarded to you in order that learning time isn't unduly compromised. This would most likely be delivered via parentmail, so please ensure that you are able to log in to your account now just in case! Mrs Levey will be able to assist with passwords should you need to – please contact her as soon as possible if you are unable to log in. Parentmail, Twitter (which can be accessed from the front page of the school website even without a twitter account) and texts (please ensure that we have an up to date number) would be the main way that we would communicate arrangements with you should we need to. In the event that children are not able to be in school (or if they just want more to do!) please remember that there are useful links to age appropriate websites on each class' page on the school website. Please do take a look – this is an excellent source of information!

A LENTEN JOURNEY

We are now two weeks into our Lenten journey and the children are taking their preparations very seriously. We began Lent with a beautiful Mass on Ash Wednesday at St Joseph's and Father Nigel was keen to let us know that although we may be giving something up, just as important is a sense of giving something of ourselves to others through acts of kindness, friendship and generosity of spirit.



There will be many opportunities throughout Lent for us all to further enrich our preparations so that by the time we arrive at our Easter destination, we are fully ready to see the Risen Christ in His full glory, having engaged in prayer, fasting and almsgiving – the three pillars of traditional Lenten practice. Events planned include the following:-

- (1) On 10th and 17th March all classes will engage with key themes of Catholic Social teaching through **'Love in Action' workshops** that will be delivered by volunteers from the Westminster 'CARITAS' team. The following themes will be explored from Reception to Year 6:



Find out more about Love in Action from <https://www.stepforwardinlove.org/> and also ask your children what it is all about. Watch this space for further developments which may include children acting as trained Caritas Ambassadors.



- (2) Friday 13th March will mark the start of our fundraising in the form of a non uniform / wear something red day with a £1 donation for Sport Relief.
- (3) Thursday 19th March will be our **annual sponsored walk**. Children will soon need your help to collect sponsorship for their walking laps of the school grounds (forms were sent out just after half term). Funds raised here will be split between Father Kakuba's Kanyike Project in Uganda (<https://www.kanyikeproject.org.uk/>) and CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development: <https://cafod.org.uk/>)
- (4) Between Monday 23rd and Wednesday 25th March, **Easter raffle tickets** will be on sale during the school day so that children are in with a chance to win Easter Eggs and other Easter goodies donated by the staff team. Prize winning tickets will be drawn later in the week with proceeds going to the Catholic Children's Society of Westminster (<https://www.cathchild.org.uk/>).
- (5) Week beginning 30th March – '**Be Spirited**' **prayer stations** will be explored by children in each class. This is a beautiful chance for each class to have time to reflect on their special journey and engage in a range of prayerful activities. Some examples of these stations will be available for you to explore with your children in the last of our '**Open Door Lenten Thursdays**' from 8.30am in the junior hall on Thursday 2nd April. Please do come along and share some quiet reflective time before school with your child. All are welcome!
- (6) On Thursday 2nd April (2.15pm) and Friday 3rd April (9.30 and 11am), Year 4 will lead us in a poignant **Way of the Cross**. Please do join us for the readings, prayers, music and tableaux scenes. Invitations are extended to the wider community, especially those of the Parish for this beautiful Lenten liturgy.



- (7) **Open Door Lenten Thursdays**: each Thursday during Lent before school (from 8.30am) in the Junior Hall, children and their families are welcome to drop in for some quiet time and a space for personal reflection. The first two sessions focused on 40 simple acts that children can do to make a difference during Lent and a modern Way of the Cross through images and scripture. These are intended as drop ins – just pop in and spend some time being 'still' at the start of a busy day: 1 minute, 5 minutes or 15 ... stay for as long or a short as you wish. All are very welcome.



CARITAS HOLIDAY CLUB FUN

Our continued engagement with CARITAS Westminster this term, led us to offering another **free Half Term Holiday Club** to families at both our school and at St Margaret's during one day in the February break. This was supported by the Cardinal's Project and the Felix Project. 42 individuals attended from both schools. All families left with a bag of redistributed food from the Felix Project. Stevenage Football Club provided some of the activities this time.



This is a great opportunity for families to keep in contact during the holiday period and for parents to catch up. Thanks to the volunteers from both the school and parish who enabled it to happen again. I am currently in conversation with volunteers from Caritas Westminster about future Holiday Clubs as feedback from these events has been really positive. Do sign up for the next event, either as a participant or a volunteer. Watch this space for details!

SCHOOL PARLIAMENT: Environmental issues and the maths curriculum

Did you know that pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 are represented in a School Parliament which meets regularly to consider the views of all children in the school? Our current School Parliament have environmental issues very high on their agenda and recently launched a campaign in the school dining room to raise awareness about unnecessary waste associated with school packed lunch boxes. You may have seen their display during parent consultations. Your children will be able to advise about ways to cut down on this waste. We also use the School Parliament to gauge how children view the taught curriculum in school. Most recently they discussed their experiences in mathematics.





Pupils suggested that the following things in maths really helped them:

- “Everyone tries to push themselves”
- “Being taught different methods is helpful.”
- “Children being the teachers and showing the class how they could work out answers.” (see picture above)
- “If we have a question/problem we discuss as a class how to solve it and are given strategies. This makes a harder problem seem easy.”
- “The way it is taught is fun.”
- “When it is levelled and if we finish one task, we can push ourselves by doing the harder work or a challenge.”
- “Having resources to use to help us”.

The members of parliament were asked what they and their friends did if they were stuck in maths. They explained that some ‘got out equipment to help’; others ‘asked a friend’ or used ‘three before me’ strategies; some referred to the maths working wall or examples on the interactive whiteboard; and others asked the teacher or teaching assistant. It is great to hear our children talking about a range of strategies that they can draw upon when the challenge is present – this helps them to be so much more resilient and less immediately reliant upon the adults. This is all part of our ‘Building Learning Power’ and ‘Learning Pit Strategies’ which are really beginning to have an impact upon the learning of our children.

You can find out more about these strategies in our Curriculum Statement and through links on the Curriculum page of our website at the following location: <http://www.stvincent.herts.sch.uk/pi-curriculum.html>.

Pupils also had lots of ideas about ways that we could make maths learning even better. These included: ensuring that all children were encouraged to use the resources more often; children looking after the resources more carefully, including having ‘our own pouch of resources’; varied ways to manage challenge and support sooner; and more quizzing and testing. These are all things that staff will be discussing over coming weeks in their staff meetings. Interestingly, some children also spoke about wanting to be ‘set’ for maths. Mrs Blythe explained to the children the reasons behind our removal of setting some two years ago in order to remove a ‘ceiling’ upon achievement.

I know that many parents often ask how they can best support their child in mathematics so that a positive mindset towards maths can be created. This can be tricky as the methods and equipment used by our children may seem different to the mathematical learning that we were exposed to at



school. To help with this the school published a document in the Autumn term to help parents see how **written mathematical methods develop from KS1 to KS2**. It can be found on the curriculum page linked to above and also on your child's class page on the website:

http://www.stvincent.herts.sch.uk/documents/progression_in_calculation_methods_ks1_2.pdf

WORLD BOOK DAY: celebrating our love of books

It was wonderful to see the children and staff engaged in World Book Activities last week. Many children and staff dressed up and everyone shared a love of reading through talking about their favourite books and sharing activities with children in other classes. Many book characters were represented, including our very own Willy Wonka in Year 3 who turned up with envelopes for all of his peers, some of which had lucky golden tickets inside!



SPORTING SUCCESS

As you will be aware, we pride ourselves upon our sporting success at St Vincent de Paul School and, as such, I am delighted to be able to share with you the following news. Our Sports premium plan is available on the school website and aims to get all pupils involved in a range of sport and exercise. I think that the following two announcements make clear how the Sports Premium spending is impacting on outcomes for our pupils:-

Cross Country

Having performed so well in the Stevenage Cross County Festival last term, a group of Year 6 pupils were sent to represent Stevenage in the Hertfordshire Games. Their success here has led to two pupils being invited to the Cross Country Primary Nationals! This is a first for us and we are very excited. Congratulations to Sophie and Karol who will be representing us in Leicester.

Basketball:

This week sees a team from St Vincent de Paul competing in the Hertfordshire Games having won the Stevenage Basketball Tournament. Again we are very excited ... maybe it will be another trip to the nationals following this? Congratulations to the whole team for your amazing success!



May I take this opportunity to thank you for your support of sporting activities. I know that transporting to and from events can be a logistic nightmare for parents. However, both the children and the school really appreciate your support.



FIT KIDZ

If you have a child in Year 3, have they told you about their Tuesday Fit Kidz sessions this term? This is a course that we have funded with our Sports Premium in order to help our children see the benefit of active lifestyles and fitness. The children have really enjoyed engaging with new equipment and a circuits style session that really gets the pulse racing. Year 3 parents will be able to come in and see a FitKidz session on Tuesday 24th March (more details to follow). Please do join us if you can.

THANK YOU

Thank you for all that you do to support the partnership between home, school and parish. This is an essential key to success in providing the best that we can for each and every child. Our partnership with you is very much appreciated!

Please note some important dates for your diary which follow.

May God bless you and those most dear to you

Mr Jon White
Headteacher



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY: Spring Term 2020

Friday 13th March	Sport Relief non uniform (£1) – wear something red Reception school trip to Tring Natural history Museum Y2 Pasteur Class Assembly (2.30pm KS1 Hall) Boys Football – away to Lodge Form
Thursday 17 th March	St Patrick's Day CARITAS workshops part 2 – 'Love in Action'
Thursday 19 th March	Annual Sponsored walk around grounds (for Kanyike Project) Y5 Netball at Trotts Hill
Friday 20 th March	Y2 More Class Assembly (2.30pm KS1 Hall) Y3 cake sale after school
Mon 23 rd – 26 th March	Home Visits for 2020/21 Nursery Class
Mon 23 rd - Wed 25 th March	Easter raffle tickets available for children (Catholic Children's Society)
Tuesday 24 th March	Fit Kidz (KS2 Hall) – Y3 parents are invited to attend (time TBC)
Thursday 26 th March	Easter raffles drawn
Thursday 26 th March	Reconcillation (confession) opportunity for Y4 to Y6
Friday 27 th March	Y5 Teresa Class Assembly (KS2 Hall 2.30pm)
30 th March – 1 st April	'Be Spirited' prayer stations for EYFS, KS1 & KS2
Tuesday 31 st March	Y3 Class Trip to RAF Hendon
Thursday 2 nd April	Y4 lead a Way of the Cross Liturgy (KS2 Hall 2.15pm)
Friday 3 rd April	Y4 lead Way of the Cross Liturgies (KS2 Hall 9.30 & 11.00 am) School Breaks for Easter at 2pm
Monday 20 th April	INSET DAY (no children in school)
Tuesday 21 st April	Children return to school for Summer Term
Thursday 23 rd April	St George's Day Y4 cake sale
Friday 1 st May	Reception O'Connor Class Assembly (KS1 Hall 2.30pm)
Friday 8 th May	BANK HOLIDAY (No school) – please note national change of date
Mon 11 th – Thurs 14 th May	STATUTORY KS2 TESTING FOR Y6

