



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

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4th December 2020

Dear parents and carers

It has been an incredibly busy few weeks in school for all of us and so I must begin with an apology that this newsletter is a little late. I hope that you have, however, enjoyed seeing what is going on in school through our Twitter feed and through the weekly Pupil Post that is circulated via ParentMail. There are so many exciting things happening in school and your children are working incredibly hard.



Welcome back!

It was wonderful to welcome back, Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 5 Teresa this week after their period of home learning. It was also wonderful to see all the fantastic things that they were up to at home as part of this remote learning. Thank you for supporting them in this. I must also thank the teachers who I know undertook a huge increase to their workload during this period in making sure that everything was right for the children. Staff have already begun to unpick it from their perspective and have shared this with the full teaching team in order that all can learn from their experience. Remote learning will never wholly replicate the school experience, but we do aim for it to be fruitful, positive and based upon what you and your children need at such times. If you have any constructive feedback on the remote learning that has taken place in these classes please email rsberry@stvincent.herts.sch.uk.

Covid-19

Although we are hearing of a reduction in positive Covid cases and despite our relief at the thought of an approved vaccine, now is not the time to be complacent and our full 'Covid secure' arrangements will remain in place. Please ensure that you stick to the one-way system and do not exit by the front



gate. We are often unable to physically supervise both gates and as such rely on everyone doing their bit to stick to the rules even when it seems inconvenient. Thank you for cooperating by being vigilant about potential symptoms in your children and isolating as a household until they receive a negative test. Please find attached a letter from Professor Jim McManus, Hertfordshire's Director of Public Health which explains a local response to the Covid-19 Winter Plan.

Advent to Christmas

Despite all of the restrictions, nothing can stop the important preparations and expectant joy in school as we journey through Advent towards Christmas. Staff have been busy ensuring that, despite the fact that things need to be done differently this year, this important season is marked in a very special way.

I hope that you have enjoyed experiencing the external decorations and that these have sparked conversations and special moments with your children as you prepare together. As we are sadly unable to invite you into school during this season, we wanted to make sure that you were able to share in our preparations and celebrations during drop off and pick up times. We will also be sharing with you our 'Story of Christmas' video presentation via an email link in the final week of term; classes have been busily preparing for this recently.



Christmas Focus Week: shared whole school themes

During the week from Thursday 10th December to Friday 18th December we have planned a whole school focus for each day which will unite us all (despite our bubbles) in similar preparations in school and which aim to capture that beautiful sense of excitement and awe as we move closer to the time for a child to enter the manger. Our week of special events will be structured as follows:

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| Thursday 10 th December | Spread a Christmas Smile - Project day 1* |
| Friday 11 th December | Spread a Christmas Smile - Project day 2* |
| Monday 14 th December | Creative Christmas Stories |
| Tuesday 15 th December | Preparing rooms and tables for Christmas dinner |
| Wednesday 16 th December | Make a crib scene to take home |
| Thursday 17 th December | Christmas parties (with covid-secure games!) |
| Friday 18 th December | End of term virtual assembly |



The children will also watch a virtual pantomime (courtesy of the PSA), a service from Westminster Cathedral (courtesy of the Catholic Children's Society) and their very own 'Christmas Story' production. It will be a very busy and festive week!

*Spread a Christmas Smile Project

This involves every class creating a Christmas package (letters, pictures and crafts) to send to a local care home for the elderly. We know that your children's joy is infectious at this time of the year and we want this to ripple across Stevenage to those who will appreciate the contact.

Christmas Cards

This traditional way of sharing the spirit of the season is able to continue in school this year, as long as we introduce some guidelines in relation to it. Children will be able to send cards should they wish to other children in their class (but not beyond their class). Each class will have its own post box. The first date for posting will be on Monday 7th December; the final date to catch the Christmas post will be Monday 14th December. On the Thursday 17th December any cards that have been posted will be delivered and sent home with any other Christmas crafts that your child has made (all items will have been quarantined in school before coming home). **Please note that cards will not be able to be distributed after 14th December.**



Christmas gifts

As we are limiting items coming into school, we are asking (as we did in the Summer) that gifts are not brought in for staff this year as there is no space to quarantine them before the end of term. I know that this will disappoint many of you and we do really appreciate your generosity but feel that it is unfair to allow this when we are preventing so many other items from coming in to school. A Christmas card in the class post box with a lovely message would be a wonderful gift and would mean so much to the staff. If you wanted to make a charitable donation instead of a gift this year to Shelter (<https://england.shelter.org.uk/donate>), a Food Bank, the Catholic Children's Society (<https://www.cathchild.org.uk/>) or purchase a Cafod World Gift (<https://worldgifts.cafod.org.uk/>) that would also be very much appreciated by all. Thank you for being so understanding.

Reverse Advent Calendar

The holidays can be a difficult time for many, especially for those living on a tight budget - many of our neighbours find themselves in a food crisis.

This holiday season and create your own Reverse Advent Calendar. Set up a box at home or at work, add one item to the box each day, and help bring some holiday cheer to a local family in need!

From Monday 7th December, throughout the week, a trolley will be available on the KS1 playground to leave donations in for our Reverse Advent Calendar Appeal coordinated by People for People Stevenage. A range of items can be donated: cereals, tea, coffee, fruit squash, custard, selection boxes, biscuits, sweets, scarves, hats, gloves, socks, Christmas puddings, Christmas cake, Stuffing, jam; in fact, anything that will brighten up someone's Christmas. This will make such a difference across the town. Thank you in anticipation of your customary generosity.





Early finish on Friday 18th December

As usual we will end the Autumn term early. In order to ensure that end times are staggered appropriately we will have two finish times for each class. If you are the earlier pick up, your child will be ready to leave between 1.50 and 2.00pm; if you are the later pick up, your child will be ready to leave between 2.00 and 2.10pm.



Wishing you a peaceful weekend and a fruitful Advent.

May God bless you and those most dear to you.

Yours sincerely

Jon White
Headteacher

