



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

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Dear parents and carers

This weekend signalled the end of the Church's year, marked by the solemnity of Christ the King. Next weekend we will mark the first Sunday of Advent and will begin our journey towards Christmas. Your children continue to engage with their learning with such enthusiasm, taking each opportunity offered to them and I am sure that they will engage actively and enthusiastically with the Advent path ahead!



### **Thank you**

Father Nigel sends his thanks to parents for their cooperation in relation to the use of the Church car park before and after school. It is great to hear that there have been no reported incidents since its reopening this half term. Please ensure that you do not park on grassed areas and continue to park with courtesy and consideration for others when using this facility. It is great to hear of increased use of the car park on Shephall View (SG1 1RR) which is adjacent to the play area at Fairlands Valley park and near to Noah's Ark Day Nursery – parking availability is good here currently and enables a stress free short walk to school.

### **One way system and masks**

With the majority of parents wearing masks at collection and drop off again, we can now allow parents to access the site from the front or back gate and exit in a similar fashion. At the busiest of times, however, we would still ask that parents continue to use the path by the field and the junior classrooms if exiting via the front gate. Similarly, those entering the site from the back gate (via Fairlands Valley Park) must give way to those leaving the site and should avoid entering via this route during busy periods. Under no circumstances should the steep bank to the side of the back gate be used as an exit route – this can be slippery and icy at times. Please ensure that if you are unable to socially distance that you are wearing a face covering. Staff will monitor such changes and may need to change the rules



if it is not working. Increased Covid cases in school or locally may also cause us to revert to previous measures. Please help us to make this workable and safe.

### **Covid cases**

You will be aware that covid cases locally continue to cause a problem for the local community and are considered to be high against national comparative measures. Local schools, including JHN, are already having to alter their operational day to day actions in relation to Covid outbreaks. In school we have continued to take a cautious approach in terms of restrictions and are following local and national guidance very carefully. This is working for us, and we have for some time now avoided a local outbreak (as defined by public health).

The current situation involves two live Covid cases in school, currently affecting KS2. I strongly believe that our additional measures, despite their inevitable restrictions, have helped us to avoid an outbreak and I thank everyone for their cooperation with these measures. Such additional measures have included continued restrictions in the mixing of year groups through maintaining online assemblies; staggered lunch and playtimes; consistent staffing in year groups wherever possible; limiting visitors; and continued wearing of masks for staff and visitors. Governor meetings have returned to an online model and training involving other settings is generally virtual.

Office staff have worked hard to give consistent messages when dealing with a range of covid related situations. If you are ever unclear about the message that you have been given or if you feel that our advice sits outside of national guidance that you have been made aware of, please do call or email me in order that I can look into this. Our response to situations has changed over time as guidance and local situations have changed.

Thank you for helping us to protect our staff, pupils and the wider community.

### **November Remembrance**

Traditionally, during November, the Church remembers those who have died and are now in their heavenly home. This has been a focus for us in school during this month and has been the focus of our prayers in relation to members of our community who have recently passed away.

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord  
And Let perpetual light shine upon them.  
May they rest in peace.  
Amen*



On 11<sup>th</sup> November the whole school gathered for a poignant Act of Remembrance led by the children in Year 6 and in the presence of Father Nigel. Whilst our youngest children held their beautiful home-



made poppies, the whole community joined in a two minute silent reflection before laying a poppy wreath in our garden of remembrance. On Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November, one of our Year 5 pupils proudly represented the school and laid a wreath during the Remembrance Sunday Service at the War Memorial on the Bowling Green.

Thank you for your generous donations to the Royal British Legion through the Poppy Appeal. Our three red collection tins were very heavy!

### Children in Need

Thank you for joining with us to raise funds for Children in Need. The coins are still being counted but we expect to have raised in excess of £300 for the charity. It was lovely to see the children enjoying being in non-uniform with splashes of yellow, spots galore and Pudsey ears! The children enjoyed engaging in Pudsey activities and in finding out more about the charity.



### Christmas is coming ...

Advent begins next weekend and with it comes the excitement of the building up to something so very special in school and at home. Although Covid will disrupt again, we are determined that the lead up to Christmas will be very special (as it was last year) for your children. I know that many of you were hoping for events in person this year, however this will not be possible. Year 2 will continue to lead with their nativity musical, but this will be shared digitally with Year 2 families. Similarly, although we have considered other options for a full school celebration, our Christmas in Song liturgy will be recorded and shared via email again this year. Based upon feedback from last year, we will make the film shorter and will try to ensure that all children are easily seen! Simplifying the format will help us to do this - thank you for your feedback. If your child does not currently have video permissions, we will be in contact to discuss whether you would like to grant a one-off exception for this privately shared event. I understand that experiencing these special events remotely is not ideal and our decision will upset some parents. However, we have looked at all alternative options for a live performance and, for a school of our size, this just isn't safely possible. We are aware that this may seem strange when individuals can visit theatres, attend Mass and eat out. However, schools are required by government guidance to mitigate risks if coordinating large gatherings and in our setting, this has not been possible. A large event during the last few weeks of term could risk the ability of the school to remain open if an outbreak occurred; this disruption would be devastating for all. It is important to consider that although young children are less at risk of serious outcomes in relation to contracting Covid, they can be key transmitters and work closely with adults who may be more vulnerable, even when vaccinated. Our children, of course, remain unvaccinated, unlike many children in a secondary setting.

### The Christmas Plan

Children will still have their usual Christmas parties, a pantomime (online as with last year) and we will engage with all of the usual Christmas activities that make this season in school so special including the giving and receiving of Christmas cards and a visit from Father Christmas for our younger children. Classes will continue to prepare by attending Mass at St Joseph's on a year group rota each Friday



and Father Nigel has offered the opportunity for pupils in Years 5 & 6 to receive the sacrament of reconciliation (confession) in school if they wish to before Christmas. A day has been set aside for Christmas Dinner which we will make a very special occasion for the children as we always do. The children will be able to wear their Christmas jumpers and enjoy their usual celebration on this special day (see diary dates at end of newsletter). In the absence of a Christmas Fayre this year, the PSA are arranging a number of events for both you and your children: a raffle, a children's tombola, a ribbon sale and a Christmas wreath sale. Please do help them to make such events really successful.

### **Thank you to our PSA and to each of you**

The PSA have navigated a difficult term in terms of fundraising but have managed a number of successful events for which the school is very grateful. Following recent financial donations, the school has been able to purchase a second AED defibrillator, meaning that we now have one in each building. This gives us greater peace of mind as every second counts should they ever need to be used. It is your generous donations and support of events that has helped this to be possible. The PSA has also been able to support the purchase of a significant stock of new books for each classroom library. These titles have been selected to reflect the diversity of our school population and so that the children can truly see themselves and their friends in the materials they are reading. It has been wonderful to see the children enjoying these new reading materials. **Thank you!**

### **Charity during Advent**

Our Christmas jumper day will raise funds for the Catholic Children's Society and our other main project will involve our usual Caritas Reverse Advent Calendar appeal where pupils bring in specified items during each day of Advent. These will then be distributed as our community's gift to the Food Shed and other local food banks. More details of this project will follow.

### **Parent consultations**

Thank you for engaging with our online parent consultations. Staff were pleased to catch up with you in order to share your children's many successes. From a school perspective, online consultations have worked well for us, enabling effective conversation about your children, ensuring that all parents have parity in access to staff time and in ensuring a protection of staff work-life balance. In person parent consultations have often led to delays in appointment times and have not provided parity between families in access to teacher time. As such, like many schools, we are keen that this becomes one of our 'Covid keeps'. We do intend, however, to have one face to face appointment each year to balance this. If you have strong opinion about this, there will be an opportunity for you to present your opinion via a Google form that you will receive shortly. The Teaching and Learning Committee of the Governing Body will consider your responses in January as they plan the year ahead and will consider your responses alongside those of staff before making a final decision.

### **Admissions Policy Consultation**

Like many schools in Hertfordshire, we are currently consulting on the **proposed admissions arrangements for the school year 2023/24** and are seeking responses from parent/carers, schools and community groups. The only significant change involves amending the definition and explanation for home address, where two applications are received for the same child. Our 23/24 proposed admissions criteria and our proposed 23/24 Supplementary Information Form are available here for you to consider: [Admissions Policy Consultation](#). Please send your comments regarding the proposals to the school direct at [admin@stvincent.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@stvincent.herts.sch.uk). Following consultation the Governing Body will then consider any responses received as it determines its official admission arrangements for 23/24.

### **Nursery and Reception admissions for September 2022**

The nursery application process will be closing on Friday, 26th November and Reception on Saturday 15th January 2022. If you are interested in applying, please either download a pack from our website or visit the school office. We do have a few dates available for a covid-secure visit to the school over coming weeks. If you would like to book, please contact the school office.

### **Mrs Sherry's retirement**

We are currently preparing our farewell celebrations for Mrs Sherry who retires at Christmas following a period of significant and dedicated service to Catholic Education. A presentation will be made to Mrs



Sherry after the 12 o'clock mass at St Joseph's on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2021. All are welcome! In the Spring term, Mrs Sherry hopes to be able to join us again for a bigger celebration once the local covid context is safer.

### COP26 – a school commitment

The children have been keen to ensure that they can commit to a brighter future for our environment, inspired by discussions in relation to COP26. Each class has been challenged to come up with one key area where they can make a visible commitment to environmental change. There has been much discussion and newly elected School Parliament representatives will bring these commitments to our first meeting of the School Parliament next week. It is wonderful to hear and see our young people engaged with environmental issues – they have much to teach us and have the support of Pope Francis:

*"Be free and authentic, be the critical conscience of society. Don't be afraid to criticize! We need your criticism. Many of you, for example, are critical of environmental pollution. We need this! Be free in criticism. Be passionate about truth, so that, with your dreams, you can say: 'My life is not captive to the mindset of the world: I am free, because I reign with Jesus for justice, love and peace.'"*

Staff are also focusing on environmental commitments, ensuring that the curriculum gives the pupils ample opportunities to be outside engaging with the natural world as well as providing opportunities to explore our impact on the environment. Staff are committed to reducing their use of plastics (limiting their laminating), to being less wasteful of resources and to increasing their recycling.

Parents can do their bit for the environment by committing to walking to school (or part walking) where possible and to ensuring that engine idling is avoided during the school run. If we all do our bit, amazing things can be achieved for future generations.

Many will be aware that this is a mission dear to Mrs Sherry's heart and, wouldn't it be a great legacy to her as she retires, that the school is even more committed to such principles?

With Mrs Sherry and recycling in mind, on her last day we will be dedicating a non-uniform day to her – children may wish to add some recycled element to their non – uniform: a recycled hat or other accessory perhaps? More details will follow from the PSA.

**prayer of stewardship**

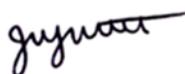


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| <p>God of all creation,<br/>At the beginning of time<br/>You placed a single mandate<br/>on humankind—<br/>To be stewards of creation<br/>To replenish and nurture<br/>through all generations<br/>What you have made</p> <p>We kneel today amid that<br/>same creation—<br/>A world that is, in many ways,<br/>more splendid than ever<br/>But, in too many ways, scarred<br/>beyond recognition</p> | <p>Turn us from our unmindfulness<br/>Help our touch be light<br/>help us renew the world that<br/>supports us<br/>So that we may once more know<br/>creation<br/>As it was in the beginning<br/><b>amen</b></p> |
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Photo courtesy of Lukasz Cholewiak/Caritas



May God bless you and those most dear to you



Jon White  
Headteacher



### Important dates for your diary:

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Sun 28 <sup>th</sup> Nov 21      | First Sunday of Advent   |
| Week beg 29 <sup>th</sup> Nov 21 | Advent preparations begin: decorations & 'go purple' week      |
| Week beg 6 <sup>th</sup> Dec 21  | Year group Christmas parties (details to follow)               |
| Wed 8 <sup>th</sup> Dec 21       | Christmas Jumper Day (or wear some tinsel)<br>Christmas Dinner |
| Sun 12 <sup>th</sup> Dec 21 noon | Presentation to Mrs Sherry after 12 noon Mass at St Joseph's   |
| Week beg 13 <sup>th</sup> Dec 21 | Virtual pantomime production                                   |
| Fri 17 <sup>th</sup> Dec 21      | 2pm School closes for Christmas holidays                       |
| Wed 5 <sup>th</sup> Jan 22       | Return to school   |
| Fri 11 <sup>th</sup> Feb 22      | School breaks for half-term holidays                           |
| Mon 21 <sup>st</sup> Feb 22      | INSET day (no pupils)  |
| Tues 22 <sup>nd</sup> Feb 22     | Return to school   |

