**Newsletter November Updates**

**30th November 2020**

***It is the beautiful job of Advent to open the door to all of our good memories and bring us hope for what is to come.***

***Joy. Hope. Peace and Love***

**Dates for your diary**

Christmas Lunch Wednesday 9th December - book via Parent Pay

Friday 18th December Christmas jumper day for Save the Children £1 voluntary donation – if your child does not have a Christmas jumper they are welcome to wear something bright – please do not feel you need to purchase a jumper for this event.

Break up for Christmas Friday 18th December

Back to school for Pupils Tuesday 5th January 2021

**Hands – face – space – The Covid Journey**

I’m sure you have been watching the national and local Covid news and data to see how lockdown 2 has been influencing Government decision for now and in the next step.

Many did not understand why cases had begun to rise in September given we had a summer of people being out and about. Some suspected that schools were responsible so although it has been challenging to not be able to have the same activities open to us and to know that many business again are closed, it is also clear that across the country the number of cases have begun to fall during lockdown 2 and showing that schools are not the reason for the rise.

It does mean we are extra thankful to you, our parents, for being so thoughtful about your actions out of school and for your prompt and sensible actions around possible symptomatic adults and children. When in doubt parents have phoned us and agreed actions. We have had children and families tested throughout the term but to date have not had a positive outcome. I hope that it is reassuring to you all that the community of St Mary’s has chosen to act so responsibly.

We do accept that going forwards we may have a positive case but we are reassured that you will support the necessary actions to keep everyone safe in this event.

A reminder that if there is a positive case within one of the class hubs all children would be required to self isolate for up to 14 days ( depending on their last contact with the person with the positive test ). As a school we have worked to set all children up with either Tapestry ( Robin Class ) or Google Classroom ( all other classes ) to ensure that remote learning can continue. If you know that your child cannot access this please do let me know directly by emailing school.

**Polite request**

At the end of the day increasing numbers of children are running around the playground and sometimes running in, around and through class groups as they are waiting to be collected. This is causing some concerns : this movement of children make it difficult to safely and promptly see parents and then release children to them, concerns that the children running are themselves not safe and that this across bubble contact is not supporting the wider principles of Covid safety.

A reminder that this is a time to collect your children and leave as promptly as possible to minimise Covid risks. Thank you to all parent who have supported the wearing of masks; whilst not mandatory it does add to the sense of safety of all.



**The Evolution from normal to full lockdown to as normal as can be**

In school we are constantly working to positively navigate the necessary changes due to Covid safety. This has to be the priority over everything else but we do feel we are working to give the children a positive experience. So much isn’t normal but they seem happy in school and able to focus on new learning.

We now know that we cannot consider any form of face to face parent evenings this term.

We work directly with any parents where there are concerns so if you are not hearing anything about your individual child this will mean that they are progressing well. If you do have any questions yourself or your child shares concerns speak directly with your child’s class teacher.

If you find that at the end of the school day, in the playground, with your child and others around, this is not the right time to speak with the class teacher then arrange for the teacher to phone you or make an appointment to see you at a convenient time. This can be arranged directly with the teacher or by emailing in to school.

We are considering a range of ways to keep you informed about class and individual pupil learning going forwards and plan to have phone meetings with parents early next term.

**Advent and Christmas at St Mary’s**



Advent began on Sunday 29th November. In a year of isolation, restrictions and social distancing perhaps there has never been a more important time to try to stop and breath and to keep hope at the centre of our thinking. In school we will be reminding children of the joys of this special season as we move towards Christmas.

The tingle and shine does not have to go out of this year’s Christmas preparations. We will have a **Christmas lunch** on **Wednesday 9th December** and we will have a **Christmas jumper day** for **Save the Children** on the last day of term **Friday 18th December**. Children will be asked to bring in a £1 contribution to this charity.

We cannot have traditional Christmas services but each class is working on an age appropriate reflection. We are working out how this will be shared with you ensuring that we respect Covid and safeguarding regulations. Whilst these will be simplified performances they will support the quality work and reflection that is happening in RE, music and literacy across the school at this time.



One thousand acts of kindness 

  



Last year we achieved a ‘good’ outcome in the Diocesan Inspection for Schools. This inspection considers RE teaching but also the much wider aspects of school life that Catholic Life has on our school family. I was personally pleased to see the recognition of the quality of relationships and of behaviour of our pupils as well as the inspectors feedback about the children’s desire to make a difference to each other and the wider world. Comments about the power of music and signing at St Mary’s to create a sense of the spirit in the school also resonated with us. In considering this it is easy to see how Covid restrictions are impacting on these aspects of school, particularly in this Sdvent season as we prepare for Christmas.

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During Advent we will share the theme of a thousand acts of kindness. Each class will choose a Unicef Gift from their giving site : <https://market.unicef.org.uk/inspired-gifts/> to support the children’s on going awareness about the rights of children across the world to access, healthcare, education and to be able to play.

**Poppy and Family Update**

We know that many of you have been keeping Poppy and her family in your thoughts and prayers over the term. Poppy had begun to recover from her operation and the family had even begun to plan a return home from Bristol when, during a routine scan, two blood clots were discovered. Whilst the family are very thankful that the clots were found they were extremely deflated by the need to have to stay in Bristol for more procedures. We continue to hold each one of them in our thoughts and feel sure you will wish them well going forwards.

**Pupil Lunch Parent Pay Choices**

Thank you to so many parents for booking lunches for the half term and for those who have already booked the 9th December Christmas dinner to help with the kitchen planning.

Please note that some of our younger children are saying that they do not like the selections made for them and then not wanting to eat their lunch. Please check with them when you make the booking so that you know they can enjoy the food that you have booked for them. We always encourage children to have a go at the food and ensure that if younger children have not eaten very much they access fruit and or milk during the afternoon however we obviously prefer that they access the hot meal chosen for them by you. Thank you for your support with this.

T**he Impact of Covid \_ a community response to food shortage .**

HALFF in Axminster ( now know as Project Food ) have worked with us on a range of pupil and parent food projects. In response to the on going Covid challenges they have been given a national grant to help meet the needs of those who, for a variety of reasons, would benefit from regular hot meals and fresh fruit for themselves or their families. There are no specific criteria which needs to be met to access this support and their staff are happy to discuss each person’s individual need, but to date, they have been delighted to help:

* Those who have been furloughed, resulting in a temporary drop in income.
* Those who are self-isolating or whose children are self-isolating, and so are not able to get out to the shops.
* Those whose mental or physical health is suffering and would benefit from letting someone else provide a nutritious meal a few times a week.
* Low-income families who are struggling to make ends meet.

If you, your family or somebody you know could benefit from this service, please get directly in touch with the friendly staff at Project Food who will be very happy to advise you on the help they can offer. You can get in touch for an informal chat in any of the following ways below:

Phone number-01297 631782 Email-kerry@project-food.org.uk Facebook page- projectfoodsw WhatsApp- 07487376904

**The Catholic Children’s Society** have invited families to take part in a Christmas sleep out sponsored event. Please see the information attached. This very local charity supports children and families in the South West in very real ways. Historically the trust has helped families with providing school uniforms, furniture, cookers and fridges as well as being available as a source of advise and support. As a very local charity every penny given them does make a difference to very local families. They also the providers of Patchwork Parenting, where a trained facilitator will work with a small number of parents in a school setting on a six weekly programme to provide opportunities for parents to support and encourage one another. We hope to be able to hold this course in school once Covid restrictions are over as they are an extremely valued opportunity for parents.

**We are all in this together – Community Matters**

In a recent report compiled by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, data shows that across the country, a large percentage of families have seen a dramatic drop in household income as a result of the current Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, research carried out by Child Poverty Action Group has shown that for low-income families, up to 83% are now struggling to pay for food.

We do not know yet how the pandemic has specifically impacted on all families here in East Devon. Each and every family is unique, navigating their own challenges but we should be encouraged in knowing that there is support; people want to help. Community does matter. If you know someone who needs support in any way encourage them to ask. We at St Mary’s can be here to listen. We may not have the answer but we are likely to know where you can refer to begin to access the advice and support needed. Mrs Stimpson ( formerly Miss Clist ) is a fountain of wisdom and knowledge so please do speak to her or email into school and ask her to contact you.

**January New RE Curriculum : Come and See**

The Diocese RE team have introduced a new teaching resource to deliver RE in all of the Plymouth CAST Trust schools in the South West. It has been It was designed by RE advisors and teachers and has been widely used in other areas of the country for many years. Some of our Trust schools have been using it since September and we will begin to use it from January 2021. We will share more information in the new year.



Christmas to do list

Be Buy presents

Wrap gifts those in your bubble in a hug

Send gifts peace

Donate Buy food

Be put up the lights