

Well done and thank to everyone who has helped to make this half term a success.

Teachers have once again rapidly adapted to the Government changes and parents have adapted and adjusted with each new twist and turn.

The children, their well being and learning have remained at the centre of our focus. Many of our parents are faced with increasing challenges and pressures but continue to find ways to move forward.

Our community should be proud of our shared achievements.

Thank you to all of our families.

**Please note we have an INSET day on Monday 22nd February. As such, if your child is currently in school the first day back for them is Tuesday 23rd February.**

Boris Johnson has stated that he will speak to the nation on Monday 22nd February to announce the road map that will take us forwards. There has been much talk about schools returning as soon as possible but nothing has been confirmed. We hope that we will be told on 22nd. Until then we know that we for the first two weeks after half term will continue to have keyworker children in school along with children identified as needing to be in school with all others accessing school learning from home. We are grateful to all parents and families for their on going support. We will update as soon as we can on any actions after 8th March.

Covid levels nationally are still high but everywhere they are falling and the number of people vaccinated continues to increase. We are all needing to recognise how this year has taken its toll on everyone. In school staff are now tested twice weekly using self tests at home. We continue to work hard in school to clean in classrooms and across the school throughout the day and are amazed that we have still not had a single positive case. We are very grateful to you our families for playing your part in keeping to safety rules.

**Half term Covid safety**

Where pupils who have attended school **test positive having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school (Friday 12th February-Sunday 14th February evening)** please telephone the schools emergency telephone number on 07512 079 520. This will enable us to identify all close contacts as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school. We hope that this will not be necessary but should it happen please help us by following the action above. If we need to contact Parents and Carers we will do so by phone or email. You do not need to contact us if you test positive or develop symptoms after the 48hour period. After this date then you are asked to follow the normal Government advice re testing and self isolating.

Internet Safety Week

This week we have had a focus on internet safety. At this time with children being asked to spend time on line to access learning. The internet creates so many opportunities for all of us but we are also aware that it can bring challenges for our children.

There has been headlines on the news and radio this week as well as a tv advert about the dangers to young people of being on line too much and in particular adults pretending to be young people and others drawing young people in to extremist thinking. Attached are links to nationally support websites for parents.

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

Actions to support every day safety when children are engaging with their own friends. It can be easy for a child to type something they would never say. We remind our older pupils frequently of this danger. We always suggest that they imagine that they are saying what they are about to type in front of one of their teachers or to a parent. Would this be ok? Would they be embarrassed ? Would they feel it was a wrong choice ? We would advise you to encourage them to always think this way and to tell if they receive or send messages that they don’t like. Parents are also advised to work with their children to let them know that they will check in on what they are typing via phone or other electronic device. Giving them this safe boundary will support them to stay safe.

With the increased use of internet use even for young children there are now a growing number of parent advise sites. Please follow the link for advice for children aged 6 – 10 <https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/6-10/>

And younger <https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/0-5/>

**Reading and Bug Club**

We all know that time spent reading can build children’s vocabulary, their sense of story and their language as well as helping to learn to read. Let’s not forget that reading is also something that for many is a very happy activity. Reading with someone else, curled up sharing a book is a great source of joy. All of these are good for every child.

Since lockdown 1 with all of the challenges of Covid safety we have asked all parents to read with their child every day where possible and have asked you to read via the Bug Club website. Reading any book is helpful but Bug Club texts chosen by your child’s teacher for your child will mean that they are practising the sound and word skills that will really take their learning skills forward. Thank you to all parents who continue to make this a priority. It really will make every difference for your child’s learning now and going forward.

If we said that there is something you can do at no financial cost that will guarantee your child’s learning success then every parent would say show me. Bug Club is it.
If you are facing any challenges at all with supporting your child’s reading speak urgently to your child’s class teacher.

**RE teaching new learning curriculum : Come and See**

This term we began teaching RE with a new curriculum which we did tell you about last term. It is a very discussion and practical based curriculum. Teachers have tried hard to break down the tasks for remote learning and have been very appreciative of the thoughtful and careful work competed at home.

**Half term special days**

Half term starts with Chinese New Year on Friday 12th Feb and includes Valentines Day, Shrove ( Pancake ) Tuesday and Ash Wednesday which marks the beginning of Lent. Great opportunities to break up the week and give a focus to some of the days. This week we have been writing prayers and using these to say thank you. Children have been saying thank you for friends, family, food to eat.so many aspects of everyday life that they do not take for granted. Perhaps next week you could continue this and encourage them to take a moment to notice some positives.



**Half term visits**

If you can’t go the zoo or aquarium why not let it come to you this half term.

The Plymouth National Aquarium have some great weekly activities and story teller events. Follow the link for more information: <https://www.national-aquarium.co.uk/learning-at-the-aquarium/home-learning-sessions/>

Paignton Zoo have lots of ways to engage with <https://www.paigntonzoo.org.uk/education-clubs/wild-at-home-education-activities>

**Blue Peter Badge Challenge**



Last year the Blue Peter badge challenge took off at St Mary’s. For many years there was only one design of Blue Peter badge. Not anymore. There are now eight badges. Children love to earn these badges so perhaps this half term is the perfect time to send a letter, drawing, photo of something your child has made to the Blue Peter team. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/joinin/about-blue-peter-badges>

**Catholic Children’s Society-Grant to help provide families with white goods and essential household items**

The Catholic Children’s Society is a voluntary organisation supporting families of all faiths and none within the Diocese of Plymouth which covers Devon, Dorset and parts of Cornwall. They have successfully bid for various grants and funding which can be used to provide financial support to families who may need help through their Essential Grants programme. This grant programme can help provide the basic essentials of life such as children’s beds or white goods like cookers, fridge/freezers and washing machines. If you or anyone you know would benefit from this grant, please contact the school office and we will provide you with the application form to apply for the help.

**YMCA -The Big Sleep Over!**

YMCA are inviting families to join them over half-term.  From Monday to Friday next week they will have lots of stories, ideas for you to share and things to create as we think about the challenges and issues of homelessness.  Then on Friday night they will be coming to you live through your computer, smart TV, laptop, tablet or phone, from 7pm to 8.30pm. They will be watching videos, chatting together, enjoying entertainment and ending with a bedtime story.

After 8.30pm the choice is for joining in a game for older children or watching a recommended fun, family film.  Later on in the evening there is a special, mellow After Hours get together for adults in partnership with the University of Exeter YMCA Homelessness Society … bring your favourite refreshment, relax and join them when the children are settled!

To find out more and to register for this free event, please visit [www.ymcaexeter.org.uk/events/sleepover/](http://www.ymcaexeter.org.uk/events/sleepover/)

Wishing you a very safe and happy half term from all at St Mary’s

