



# St. Mary's Church of England VC Infant School

*'Sharing, Caring, Learning and Loving with God'*

## Autumn Half Term Newsletter Friday 23rd October 2020

### **Head's Message**

Dear Parents and Carers,

We have been blessed to have all our pupils back in school this half term. It has been a very busy, productive time, catching up on missed learning and forensically analysing where pupils are to provide them with their next steps in education. Pupils have had to learn how to be 'sociable' again in larger groups and we have provided a great amount of emphasis on physical, social and health education.

On behalf of everyone at St Mary's may we wish you all a relaxing and peaceful half term.

### **Safeguarding at the Heart**

#### **Health and Safety**

Our Health and Safety Governor reported that procedures for drop off and regular communication to parents are proving effective on St Mary's Way. The local police praised our parents for supporting the school in following our Covid-19 prevention measures. Staff were stationed outside the gates for most of the half term to support parents. This allocated staff time is now able to be withdrawn so that they can return to their roles as parents are clear on the expectations.

#### **Design and Technology**

Parents have been sent a permission form for handling, preparing and eating foods as part of 'Design and Technology' lessons. We politely request that parents inform us of any changes to medical or dietary needs on an ongoing basis.

#### **Staying Safe Online**

While times have changed significantly and we are all staying in more, trying to occupy ourselves please do ensure that you monitor content observed online by your child. Our pupils are taught to 'think before they click' and know who to tell if they see something inappropriate online.

#### **Network hands**

Each class has a network of hands which identifies the people in school that each individual child feels they can talk to. This is displayed for pupils as a constant reminder of who can help them in school.

### **Growing Our Church School Distinctiveness**

#### **Working Towards Our Key Ideals**

**Uphold the Values of God:** We have become very creative in our whole school collective worship, delivery virtually as we are unable to congregate together in person. All our pupils were invited to share their voice on how worship is lead and aspects that they would like to keep or change. This will help us to shape our collective worship to further engage our pupils.

Here is what our pupils said...

**Welcoming:** 'I love it when Father Andrew comes to see us.' 'The lighting of the candles makes me feel relaxed.'

**Learning:** 'I can imagine what it might be like in another country.' 'I've learnt to try and always make positive choices and to take care of the environment.'

**Reflecting:** 'I can see how the story of Jonah and the Whale links to our school.' 'I am starting to live out the values.'

**Responding:** 'I feel challenged to make my learning better.'

Pupils have enjoyed exploring the story of Jonah and the Whale and how it links to our vision. Our Reception pupils enjoyed using collage to represent the whale and gave their responses to the story. One pupil, while washing his hands underneath the whale, begged to tell Miss Edey the whole story and soon a whole group of pupils gathered to willingly give their input with accuracy!





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***Nurture Creativity and Encourage Curiosity:*** We are excited to be delivering our design and technology curriculum next half term with an emphasis on pupils using their metacognition to steer their thinking towards an outcome. E.g. instead of telling pupils what they need to do or the ingredients they might need, they have to plan themselves and problem solve until they reach a desired outcome. This encourages pupils to develop their own creativity and problem-solving skills.

***Learning Together, Flourishing Together:***

***How are we spending our catch-up government funding?***

- ***Maths support for parents and pupils at home***
- ***Comprehension, maths fluency and spelling, punctuation and grammar workbooks for over learning and consolidation.***
- ***'Get writing support' for reluctant writers across the school.***
- ***Additional phonics and reading intervention for pupils across the school over the course of the year.***
- ***Herts for Learning 'Back on track' resources and training.***
- ***ICT hardware to improve teaching and learning***

The Governors would like to report that two external early years advisors as well as our Herts Improvement Partner have all noted remarkable progress to the provision of our early years setting. The setting is now being used as a model for others. It was noted by one advisor that, 'the early years is an irresistible environment for pupils to play and learn.' A huge well done to the early years team for transforming the environment and embracing a new early years vision, which is now reaping rewards for pupils. We have received positive feedback from parents with regards to transition documentation and this helped our youngest pupils to settle in well.

***Assessment for Learning:*** Our Assessment for Learning policy remains the same this year. Where pupils make progress towards or meet the learning intention, we refer to this as tickled pink. If a pupil needs to further develop an answer and further 'grow' their learning, then they receive green for growth. Where pupils receive adult feedback to make progress within the lesson then they respond in purple to show that they have taken heed of questioning and advice. Please do use this methodology when learning at home to gain consistency between home and school.

***Enriching our Music Curriculum:*** Our Year 2 pupils are always very excited to attend their recorder lesson with our peripatetic teacher, Mrs Gwynnett. Miss Edey listens every week from her office and every week notes how the pupils are just getting better and better at playing in time and in tune! These sessions have had a noted impact on pupils' resilience, confidence and listening skills. "I like that we get to play songs and tunes" "Mrs Gwynnett is fun and we get to play the recorder every lesson" Year 1 have also enjoyed their sessions. The children have been humming songs, learning what a beat and rhythm is through rhymes and making up their own beats. They have also been listening to and taking part in action songs. In Reception, pupils have enjoyed performing on their outdoor stage and exploring a range of musical instruments and the sounds that they make.

***Supporting Parents to Support Learning at Home:*** All parents should now have received an update in their reading diaries with regards to the particular phonics sounds and common exception words that children need to learn. Please do focus on these over half term to aid your child's fluency in reading. Year 2 teachers will be sending some support for parents with regards to this on Dojo this week.

Our Remote Learning policy is now available on the school website. Home learning in the event of local lockdowns and self-isolation is now a legal expectation. Please ensure that you are aware of your parental responsibilities with reference to this that are within the policy. This will ensure that all pupils continue to have access to a broad and balanced curriculum even if they cannot be taught in school.

To support parents in teaching maths we will be providing parents with a subscription to 'MyMaths' after half term which will support parents in teaching the maths strategies that we teach in school and will also provide pupils with games and activities that are at an appropriate pitch for each individual pupil.

***Lunchtime Provision:*** This is important to our pupils in developing their social interactions. We identified that many pupils required additional support when re-integrating back into school life therefore we have invested in sports coaches who are modelling games and effective social interactions to those pupils who want to join in across all lunchtimes. This will run for the remainder of the term.

***Connecting Communities:*** Miss Edey continues to be part of the 'Alternative Board' supporting other Hertfordshire businesses outside of education in leading with success.

Ms Britton and Miss Edey are continuing to liaise regularly to enhance the consistency of communication and policies across both schools so that systems and procedures are familiar throughout your primary school experience.

Miss Edey meets with the Baldock Headteachers regularly to make local agreements to support families.



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Our Early Years leader co-ordinated a moderation with an outstanding church school to agree on the baseline data for our Reception pupils.

Mrs Thomas' sports premium strategy available on our website is being used as a model by the North Herts Sports Partnership for other schools as an example of best practise. Well done Mrs Thomas!

Our early years environment will also become a model for other settings wishing to undertake the same approach.

Thank you very much to all parents who brought in donations for our local foodbank. These will be donated to the Trussel Trust and given to people who need it in our local community. The children took part in a virtual harvest festival this year by the Diocese of St Albans. The Bishop of St Albans spoke about harvest and there were children from other schools in Hertfordshire taking part and conducting readings.

We want parents to feel that they can view the inside of the building as well as exactly what makes our school distinct from others. By the end of term, we will be having a 'St Mary's' video made so that you will be able to do exactly this. Watch this space!

**One Message:** We have reviewed our internal communication systems to ensure that all staff get the right information at the same time so that parents receive the same answers when asking questions to staff.

**Stimulating Surroundings:** This half term we have continued to use the environment as the third teacher in the classroom. This is having a positive impact on pupils remembering their prior learning. We have consistent reading areas in all classes which promote reading strategies (also shared with parents) and display the common words that pupils must know.



#### **Where Next in Developing our Church School Distinctiveness?**

We will be developing our pupil leadership roles so that pupil voice has a positive impact on outcomes. We are reshaping our worship in line with pupil voice. Mrs Thorp will be leading in the high-quality delivery of religious education lessons.

**Our value of the half term** has been 'respect.' This has raised the importance of showing respect not only to humans, but places, objects and ourselves. Our children have been demonstrating respect for our whole community and our school environment.

#### **Parents, Carers and Wider Families Working in Partnership:**

**We have been very blessed by the generous gift of time and support from our families.**

A huge thank you to Mr Gerrard who made us a 'mud kitchen' to enhance creative play in our outdoor EYFS environment. Our pupils love opportunities to grow their learning in the mud kitchen. (So do the staff!)

We would also like to thank one of our grandparents, Mr Healy for designing our collective worship and calm area. He has been busy carving tree stumps ready for pupil seats in our exciting new area. A huge thank you!

Another shout out to Mr Handy who has been very busy making us a cross for our outdoor collective worship and calm area which will be a focus point when looking out of any classroom window. We are excited that soon our collective worship and calm area will be open for use to all our classes. We will also open this opportunity to our Junior School neighbours.



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### **Pupil Voice:**

**Eco-Warriors** have been introduced to their roles and have asked their class about the ways in which we, as a school, care for the environment. They have also gathered ideas about how we could improve our eco-practices in class and as a school community.

**Worship Acolytes** are supporting during worship by; delivering the greeting, lighting the candles to represent the father, son and the holy spirit and saying the prayer. They will have an input in shaping the future of worship based on pupil feedback.

**Pupil Parliament** are working together to ensure that everybody's voice is heard and valued at St Mary's. Next half term, we will be organising projects based on the feedback collected from all the classes.

**House Captains** have started their newly appointed roles. They inspire and motivate their teams by sharing an inspirational quote and share the weekly and cumulative points achieved by each team to date during the Friday Achievement's Assembly. Our pupil leaders should be receive their badges after half term.

### **Parent Voice: 'Listening to Each other So That We Can all Flourish Together'**

<b>You Asked for ...</b>	<b>So we...</b>
Further support in how to teach maths at home	Will provide parents with a subscription to MyMaths to support parents and pupils
More reminders of events coming up	We are going to work on adding dates onto a calendar on our website.
Continue to support friendships and games at lunchtimes	Employed three sports coaches to model games and developed an enrichment programme for this term.
A review of communication given that parents cannot see staff face to face	Organised parents evening on Microsoft Teams Communicated to all parents with regards to communication processes Set up Class Dojo as a messaging service with regards to pupil learning.
Further support with distancing on St Mary's Way	Delegated staff for five weeks to chaperone parents
Support with pupil mental health and behaviour at home.	Recruited an in house 'Pastoral Leader'

### **'Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds'**

We find ourselves in unprecedented times and the children have experienced a time of being away from their friends and family and not having the social confirmation that friendships usually provide for them. Due to this, we have noticed that the children need additional support to rebuild healthy friendships and develop positive relationships once again. It has been our focus to give the children experiences and opportunities during lunchtimes, P.E. Lessons and during PSHE to develop these crucial social skills. The children's physical development, both gross and fine motor skills, have suffered and so we are encouraging them to take part in activities that will help get them back on track. We highly recommend taking part in regular family fitness activities to support your child's physical and mental wellbeing. Most importantly make it fun so that it becomes a way of life and develops your child's physical literacy.

### **'Growing Our Staffing Team'**

We have welcomed many new members of staff this term who are already having a very positive impact on the direction of our school. Our vision is all about flourishing and this is our intent not only for our pupils but our team too. We are delighted to have recruited Mrs Breckon as our Teaching Assistant after half term. She has been a part of St Mary's infants for over 20 years in other capacities. She is our lunchtime supervisor as well as cleaner and she has been in training for this role. We are delighted to enable her to grow and flourish into the position that has been her goal.



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Mrs Archer is currently our Venus class teaching assistant and has been promoted to our Pastoral Leader and Higher-Level Teaching Assistant from after half term. Mrs Archer has a wealth of knowledge in this area and will be a key driver in supporting families. Mrs Archer will be leading our forest school curriculum and working with families who require support for pupil mental health, behaviour etc. She will, I am sure, be developing relationships with many parents after half term in her supportive capacity.

We are delighted to announce that we have just today recruited a teaching assistant who will join our team after half term and will be leading outdoor provision across the school. Mrs Archer will work with our new teaching assistant in the first weeks after half term in Venus to support transition of roles. Mrs Archer will continue to work with the pastoral needs within the class and therefore Mrs Archer will continue to be a familiar face to the pupils of Venus class. Further information about this will be communicated after half term to the relevant class once all recruitment processes are complete.

We have reviewed our support staffing structure and we will be utilising our teaching assistants after half term to ensure that they are working directly in relation to the needs of the pupils as well as their teaching strengths across the key stage. This will therefore mean that teaching assistants will work more fluidly across classes for greater impact on our learners.

Teaching assistants who are likely to be present in Reception are: Mrs Evans, Mrs Ellen, Mrs Green and Mrs Archer

Teaching assistants who are likely to be present in Key Stage 1 are: Mrs Ellen, Mrs Breckon, Mrs Gamble, Mrs Gathercole, Mrs Archer and Mrs Mascaro (Miss Waldwyn on her return)

### **PTA 'Connecting the Community to Raise Funds to Enrich our Provision'**

A huge thank you to our PTA as even though we cannot operate face to face, our PTA have powered on and are busy behind the scenes as always. All parents are automatically a part of the parent teacher association so please do get involved. The PTA are keen to recruit support from our new Reception parents. If any parents/carers in any year groups are interested, please message [pta@stmarysinfants.herts.sch.uk](mailto:pta@stmarysinfants.herts.sch.uk) for log in details to our first virtual meeting on Friday 6th November at 9.30am.

Perfect Poppy Colour Comp - deadline is Monday 2nd November 9am. Please help in raising money for both the Royal Legion and St Mary's Schools.

School Lottery - this new initiative replaces the old lottery and we hope it will be even more successful. Act soon! If entries are bought before 24th October (ie TOMORROW, Saturday, if you have not already) you will automatically go into a draw for a family ticket to Warner Studios Harry Potter Tour.

Festive dress - Wednesday 18th December - £1 for festive dress. This replaces Jumper day of previous years.

The funds raised for these events are going to be used for what we hope will be a truly magical - COVID-19 safe - Christmas event for the children. But Sshhh! We do not want little ears to overhear us and spoil the surprise just yet.

Half term attendance (%) Autumn 1									
Week ending	4.9.20	11.9.20	18.9.20	25.9.20	2.10.20	9.10.20	16.10.20	23.10.20	Average across the half term
Starlight	100	92.5	90.8	93.3	96.1	96.2	96.3	93.98	94.56
Sunshine	100	95.8	96.4	99.1	95.5	91	96.4	95.83	95.88
Venus	95.6	95.2	98.1	97.3	98.2	96.5	98.2	97.83	97.28
Mars	100	95.1	96.5	98.4	95.7	99.2	93.8	97.12	96.78
Saturn	96.4	98.6	97.3	97.2	96.5	95.5	92.7	96.98	96.41
Jupiter	97.4	97.6	94.2	95.3	98.3	98.3	96	97.06	96.73
Whole school	97.92	96.3	95.5	96.74	96.79	96.2	95.49	96.46	Whole school average 96.3



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**Upcoming Dates**

**26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> October**

**HALF TERM**

Monday 2 <sup>nd</sup> November	Poppy Colouring Competition Deadline	9am
	Parents Evening	4pm – 7pm
Tuesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> November	Parents Evening	3.30pm – 6pm
Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> November	PTA team meeting	9.30am
Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> November	Children in Need	
Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> November	Flu Vaccinations (Catch Up Session)	During school hours

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November**

**OCCASIONAL DAY**

Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> December	Festive Dress Up Day	
Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> December	End of Term – School finishes at 1:30 pm	

**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

**INSET DAY**

Tuesday 5 <sup>th</sup> January	Return to School	
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