



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,

Writing to you as we are about to break for Easter, it is a good time to reflect on the impact of our Lenten preparations. During the season of Lent we have encouraged the children to focus on three important acts: prayer, fasting and almsgiving ('pray, fast, give') and they have been incredibly successful in their commitment to all three aspects.



'Pray, fast, give'

Last week all children took part in a sponsored walk around the school site – the children walked enthusiastically despite the bitterly cold weather and were keen to clock up so many laps. On Friday, the children also gathered in the infant and junior halls eagerly awaiting the drawing of the Easter raffle. Staff kindly donated many Easter Eggs and children bought raffle tickets over the course of the week. We had many lucky winners and sold many tickets. Thank you for your customary generosity in supporting both events. Funds raised will be divided between Father Kakuba's Kanyike project (providing improved educational facilities for a deprived community in Uganda) and CAFOD (Catholic Association For Overseas Development). I look forward to sharing with you how much has been raised after the Easter break. Many families have also actively supported the Stevenage Foodbank through generous donations via the collection box near the front door. Thank you for your support which is helping local residents in great need. This will continue after Lent too. It is good to know that our Lenten efforts are impacting locally as well as nationally.

'Pray, fast, give'

It has been a very prayerful Lent in school. On Monday, Year 4 led pupils, staff, governors and parents in a moving 'Way of the Cross'. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the children of Year 4 and their teachers and teaching assistants for preparing themselves so well for this beautiful liturgy.





Personally, I found it an incredibly moving start to my Holy Week and have now been able to reflect deeply on the events of the Passion, preparing me to fully meet the Risen Christ on Easter Sunday. Thank you year 4 – we are all very proud of you!



Likewise, it has been lovely to join with parents, pupils and staff for 'Open Door Thursday' before school during the weeks of Lent. On these occasions we have considered how to deliver '40 Simple Acts' for the 40 days of Lent; have spent time being still; and have reflected on the Stations of the Cross.



In our final 'Open Door Thursday' this week, there will be an opportunity to explore the prayer stations that have been used during our 'Be Spirited Week' which spans Holy Week in school. It has been lovely to share use of the 'Be Spirited' prayer stations with the children this week. Their devotion, prayerfulness and sensitivity is humbling.



OFSTED

You will be aware that Kim Hall, HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector), visited the school on 6th March 2018. We were delighted that she agreed that 'This school continues to be good' and 'Safeguarding is effective.'



She noted 'significant changes' that had taken place and 'precise school improvement plans.' She was particularly taken with the enthusiasm and maturity of the children and the positive support of parents. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the whole community (pupils, parents, staff and governors) on such a positive outcome, demonstrating that we are on the right path as we continue to strive for excellence in all that we do. Please do take time to read the full report which is available on the school website as well as on the Ofsted site at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/117498>

ParentMail

It has come to my attention that some families may not have been receiving the regular parentmails that go out. Please do check your 'spam' box to see if they have ended up there – moving an email from here to your inbox should ensure that future emails from this address go straight to your inbox. Parentmail remains our main method of communication with you. All newsletters, however, are also tweeted (@svdp_school) and a link to the school Twitter feed is also available on the front page of the school website. Newsletters are also stored in the Parents' section of the school website. We are currently in the process of reviewing the information that is provided here and hope to launch a new website platform soon. Please do let us know what you would find useful by emailing head@stvincent.herts.sch.uk. We look forward to hearing from you.

Junior Travel Ambassadors

Our Junior Travel Ambassadors have been doing a fantastic job of promoting safer routes to school. You may have noticed their large banners on the hedge with hard-hitting messages that we all need to pay attention to. Thank you to the many families who are regularly parking elsewhere and walking the last bit to school. As well as being a great way to start the day, this also makes a huge difference to safety first thing in the morning.



Some drivers, however, continue to ignore the Highway Code and put other users at risk during the school run. Certain habits need to be broken before a serious accident occurs: this includes parking on the roadside (near the corner) by the church; dropping off in the entrance to the Church car park and also the entrance to the school car park; and performing U turns in the road after parking in the lay-by. Now that more people are walking, it would be helpful if those parking could ensure that engines are turned off whilst waiting, in order to protect the air quality around the school. A working group is currently looking at ways to begin using the church car park again but are going to need the support of all users if this is to work – details and further consultation to follow. Please do support our Junior Travel Ambassadors to make travel to school safer.

Finances

We are currently in the process of setting our budget for the forthcoming year. As I have already warned, we are not immune to the difficult decisions that many are facing across the country as schools continue to be underfunded. Despite very careful financial management by our Governors and School Business Manager, we are looking for ways to make significant savings this year and in the years ahead without compromising the quality of education that your children deserve. If, through contacts at work or elsewhere, you know of companies that may be able to sponsor us in providing resources or services (even as a one-off) please do let us know via finance@stvincent.herts.sch.uk. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our wonderful PSA committee for all of their incredibly hard work in raising much needed funds for the school. Without their efforts and without your support of their activities we would struggle even more to provide the very best for our children.

Thank you!

School Council

When we return after Easter, I intend to re-form the School Council. This forum will act as a 'School Parliament' enabling our children to have a voice about their school which will be carefully listened to. Representing their classmates, councillors will help the Senior Leadership Team to make some key decisions and will be able to give their feedback on school initiatives. Watch this space for further details ...

Lego & board games

We are looking to increase the range of equipment available to our children at lunch and break times. Lego can be particularly therapeutic for some children. If you have any spare Lego lurking at home that you would be willing to donate please do send it in to school. Similarly, board games encourage cooperation: if you have any good condition board games that you no longer require please do send them our way. Both requests can be directed towards Mrs Curry via the school office. Many thanks!

Good luck to our Year 2 dancers who are due to perform to a huge audience at the Gordon Craig Theatre on Thursday afternoon. We were given a sneaky preview in school on Wednesday. Thank you to Mrs McGuire and Mrs Pearce for coordinating and to parents for the costumes. Your children, as always, make us very proud. Well done Year 2!



On Thursday we break for the Easter holidays at 2pm. We return to school at the usual time on Monday 16th April 2018. Have a wonderful break!

May I take this opportunity to thank the staff and Governors for their hard work over the past term for their firm commitment to providing your children with an excellent education and the opportunity to grow in their faith.

May I also take this opportunity to thank you for your support of the school and the excellent partnership that you enable between home, school and Parish. Without this partnership, excellence would not be possible.



I pray that your Easter will be full of the joy of the Risen Christ and will be a time of family, friendship and relaxation as well as much excitement.

Wishing you and those most dear to you a joyous Easter, full of blessings.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon White".

Jon White
Headteacher