



SCHOOL UPDATES & REMINDERS

COVID-19 UPDATE:

Dear Parent/Carer,

As we transition from national 'lockdown' to local restrictions imposed upon us in 'Tier 3', there will be some changes affecting us all over the coming days and weeks with certain 'freedoms' being restored in how we go about our daily lives. We know that, for many, traversing the remaining weeks of term safely, so that we can all enjoy an illness and isolation-free Christmas, will be an ever-increasing concern.

To this end, at school, we will continue to do all we can to enact our system of controls to limit the spread of infection among our pupils and staff. We have thought very hard about how we can ensure all our pupils experience a joyous, faith-filled and festive final two weeks of term, but are determined not to let our controls fall by the wayside at the end of a long and tiring 15 weeks. We have all done so well to get thus far – with attendance at over 98% for the term – and with continued co-operation and support, I trust that we will all enjoy a safe and enjoyable fortnight before we break for the Christmas holidays on Friday 18th December. We expect all our pupils to be in school until then – of course, failing illness any imposed periods of isolation – and for the school to maintain its wonderful attendance as we move in to the new year.

During this time, you can help the school, and one another, by ensuring that you do all you can to continue following local and national guidance designed to keep the most vulnerable of our communities safe and to protect our frontline health professionals. We would also strongly encourage that families only access a test for COVID-19 for their child when their child clearly shows one of the three main primary symptoms: a temperature; a new, persistent cough; a loss/change of smell and/or taste. We empathise with the desire to 'want to be on the safe side' – especially during the lead-up to Christmas – if there are other family members suffering ill health however we would encourage families to stick to Public Health guidance which is that, at present, only those experiencing primary symptoms should access a test.

We will share with you news of our pupils' festive preparations over the coming days, and continue to look ahead with hopeful hearts toward the joyous feast of our Lord's Nativity as we journey onward through Advent.

Thank you in advance for your continued support.

Yours in faithful optimism,

Mr J Wheatley
Headteacher

ADVENT:

The theme of the first week of Advent is 'Hope'. In school, pupils have started to look ahead, with hopeful optimism, to Jesus' coming at Christmas by taking part in special Collective Worships in class and by learning about the different ways in which we as Christians prepare ourselves during Advent. In these, and many other ways, we begin to ready our hearts to welcome Jesus anew on Christmas day, and are encouraged to find time for stillness and quiet in our lives so that we may talk openly to God our heavenly Father and to give Him the opportunity to call us back to Him. Over the coming weeks, as we journey towards the joy and festivity of that special day, we pray that we may all make space in our busy lives for God and the gifts He wishes to bring to us at Christmas. Come Emmanuel, come.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS IN THE PARISH OF OUR LADY AND ST PHILIP NERI:

You can find information about the re-opening of churches in our parish and plans for Christmas – including a number of charitable appeals – on the parish newsletter which can be found each week on the parish website (www.theparish.org.uk).

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD:

The date has now passed for shoeboxes for the Operation Christmas Child appeal. **Please don't send any more boxes in to school.** If you have a shoebox, but have missed our deadline, you can find other 'drop-off' locations here: www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/find-your-drop-off-location/, and if you haven't managed to complete your box, or would prefer to donate virtually, you can do so at <https://www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/what-we-do/follow-your-box-donation/>.

REMINDER - CHRISTMAS CARDS AND PRESENTS:

We would ask that, this year, children do not bring in Christmas cards or presents for friends or staff. Instead we would ask that you consider, as a family, supporting our school Advent appeal.

REMINDER - ADVENT APPEAL

This season, we will be supporting some wonderful charitable causes funded by the Parish Gift for Life group, such cause is the Diocesan Refugee Project. We have set a target of £1000 – though we have not been inundated with donations as of yet. We understand that everyone is busy at this time of year, and if money is tight, we certainly wouldn't expect a donation. However, if you feel able, may we politely suggest that you spend 5 minutes this week organising your donation; if you experience any difficulties in doing so, we certainly would be very happy to help – please just ring the school office.

In order that we may raise as much as possible for this wonderful cause, all the events planned this year will be free of charge, and we will not be asking for donations to the school fund or the Friends of St Mary's.

Due to the current climate, we are asking for online donations via SIMS Pay (<https://www.simsagora.co.uk/Home>) 'Events' – the system used for dinner money/trips etc. If you need help setting up your SIMS Pay account (especially families in Reception Class who may have not used the system before, please contact Mrs Noble in the school office. *Please note, there is a very small service fee for payments (example: for a £20 donation, there would be a fee of 26p).*

Thank you!

REMINDER – PARISH GIFT FOR LIFE APPEALS:

The Parish Gift for Life is an umbrella group which oversees a number of charitable projects supported by the Parish of Our Lady and St Philip Neri – both abroad (Kenya, India) and at home. This year they are selling some beautiful Christmas cards and 2021 calendars showcasing the photography skills of members

of the parish. Cards are priced at £3.50 for a pack of 8 and calendars at £4 – both with free delivery to your door by one of the GfL team! To order, please email giftforlife20@gmail.com or phone 07896096747. Please do consider supporting the charitable aims of the group by making an order, and feel free to tell your friends and family to do so too! Thank you!

