



It has been a very busy few weeks in school since half term with the pupils really working hard in class. It is hard to believe that we have just celebrated the feast of Christ the King and next week we enter December.

Sunday Times Top 250 State Primary Schools

Last weekend the school was highlighted in the Sunday Times top 250 state primary schools in the country. Whilst data does not tell the whole story of any school as cohorts are very different each year, it is always nice to get good news! Ranking 118th out of 16,769 state primary schools in the country is a testament to all the hard work and effort put in by the whole family of St Joseph's - Church, governors, staff, parents and the children themselves.

Anti-bullying week 16th - 20th November

As part of anti-bullying week we focused again via virtual assembly and worked through what bullying is and what bullying isn't. The pupils are all very well-versed in explaining that bullying is intentionally and continuously hurting another person either through words or actions where an imbalance of power is involved. The pupils understand that bullying is not a disagreement between friends, one hurtful incident, or an accidental bump. Although these incidents can cause us to feel hurt and upset, they are not bullying because they are not persistent and repeated. As part of our assembly, we thought about how we can all unite against bullying and how we can play our part to make sure that St. Joseph's continues to be a place where we all feel safe and sure that we will not be bullied by living out our School Mission Statement. Discussions have taken place in classrooms throughout the week to reinforce this message and the children have all completed an activity to show what they, as individuals, will do to play their part against bullying.

Parent Consultations- Tuesday 1st and Thursday 3rd December 16.00-19.00

There is still time to sign up for a consultation with your child's class teacher for next week's parent consultations. This is one of two formal consultations during the school year and will be completed online for obvious reasons. Please be aware of the following points:

- Your appointment will last for just over nine minutes as teachers have to end your appointment then move online and open up the next appointment.
- Meetings will automatically shut down at 10 minutes... this is a feature of the software and not the teachers being rude!
- You will be able to see your class teacher. Some of the teachers may be accessing the software at home as the school internet is not great for multiple users on video conference calls.
- Teachers will need to know if your child is in the room with you or potentially overhearing the consultation as this will tailor what they are saying. Ideally children will not be in attendance, as is the usual case in school.
- We are all aware that online calls and conferencing software does not always work the way we want!

School Building News

The building is still keeping to its schedule and we are still looking at ending term on Wednesday 16th December at 13.30 with pupils returning on Thursday 14th January. From Monday, moving crates will start to arrive into school and staff will start to pack up store cupboards and items not needed for the rest of term. From Monday 7th, all of our pupil laptops and ipads will be moved to the new building for testing and then the interactive whiteboards will be moved over the weekend of the 12th December. Packing crates start arriving from next week. It is all becoming very real that we will actually be moving!

Advent 2020

This Sunday sees the start of Advent, the beginning of the church year. Advent is a season of the liturgical year observed in many Christian churches. Despite the secular preparations taking place, e.g. buying presents and going to parties, Advent reminds Christians to remember and prepare for the birth of Jesus. One important aspect of Advent in the Catholic Church, especially before 16 December, is to prepare for the Second Coming of Christ in judgement at the end of time.

Due to COVID limitations, we are using this year to really prepare during this Advent season. Across the school, pupils will be focused on the themes of preparation and waiting rather than rehearsing for Christmas plays and services. Nursery and Reception will focus on Advent promises before the retelling of the Christmas story. Years 1 and 2 will be writing Advent prayers to be shared daily as part of their preparations. As their final year in KS1, Year 2 will be producing a simple nativity to share with parents remotely. KS2 will be learning the prayer form Lectio Divina and meditating on the readings during Advent. Our weekly online Gospel assemblies will help us with our Advent preparations of remembering and preparing for the birth of Jesus and the second coming of Christ. Schools in the Diocese will take part in an online service at the Cathedral. Finally as a whole school, we will be attending an online retreat afternoon during Advent focussing on the theme of us all being unique and valuable, created in the image of God.

A message from the Catholic Parish of Bishop's Stortford... Come and be part of our parish again this Advent and Christmas!

Dear parents,

This year has brought with it many challenges! Even feeling we are a part of the parish can be very difficult at the moment!

Our up-coming challenge, as a community, is how to "do" Christmas in 2020! We should be able to offer some public Masses over Christmas, but numbers will be very limited, so we are also developing a number of online offerings for you to make use of and enjoy over the festive season.

This includes some excellent Advent and Christmas resources for the family, which can be accessed via our brand-new parish website:

<https://rcstortford.org.uk/>

For access to these resources, please click the "resources" link in the main menu bar at the top of the page and then click on "Advent and Christmas Resources". You should find lots there to help you make this season special!

Alternatively, you can check our parish facebook page, which will be regularly updated with all the latest news and events:

<https://www.facebook.com/RCStortford-103224481616259>

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!! We will be beginning to offer public masses again – especially over Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. However, we can only do so with YOUR HELP! Please do consider whether you could spare an hour or your time to help steward and sanitise after a Mass during the festive season – volunteers from the parish community (that's you!) are the *only* way we can possibly open the church to the public! If you would be willing to help, please send your name and contact details to Sophie Sullivan at the following email address: bstortfordcatechist@rcdow.org.uk

Many thanks in advance – remember, many hands make light work! So please do seriously consider helping as a small act of service this Christmas!

Children - Come and be part of our Virtual Carol Service!

Dear children,

We are looking for those of you who enjoy singing and would be willing - with permission from your parents and carers, of course - to help us create a special recording of "Away in a Manger" for the Virtual Carol Service we are producing, for parishioners to enjoy watching at home.

We are asking for those who are interested to record themselves singing to a specially prepared backing track, on your mum or dad's mobile phone or device, and then to send the audio recording to one of our parishioners (and school dads), Mr David Ring, who will be putting all the singing together into one track!

If you would like to take part, please ask your mum, dad or carer to email David, using the following address: Honestdave2@yahoo.com and he will send you the track to sing to. He will also be able to tell you how to upload your finished recording.

We hope a number of you will take part and help to make Christmas extra special this year!

****Note to parents:****

Please rest assured that:

- 1) You will be asked to give your express permission for your child to be involved in the audio recording, in the full knowledge that the audio would be part of a visual presentation posted onto the parish website and youtube channel and therefore, in the public sphere. This will be done by way of a form sent out to you, once you contact us to say you would like to take part.
- 2) Audio recordings are to be created at home and no singing will be taking place at the school.
- 3) Audio recordings will need to be submitted by a specified date, given to you once you make contact.
- 4) No child will have their names attached to the finished edited presentation, in order to ensure child protection.

For any questions you may have, please do not hesitate to contact Sophie Sullivan for further clarification: bstortfordcatechist@rcdow.org.uk

Watches in School

Due to safeguarding risks, pupils should not be wearing watches or fitbits that have the facility to record images, sounds or receive internet access. Unfortunately these have been used in other schools around the county and countrywide inappropriately. If your child wears a watch to school, they must be the traditional plain dial face or simple digital display type. Thank you for your support on this issue.

Outside Play

Unfortunately the state of the field is really becoming an issue in terms of drainage and mud so we will have to reduce access over the coming days in order for there to be grass in the spring term. Your child should still bring in suitable footwear as we will be accessing the paths outside. Thank you for your patience and understanding with having to clean uniform, particularly trousers... it has been a good sign that they have been active and having fun!

School Applications for Reception Class 2021

A reminder to all of our Nursery parents that you must complete your local authority's online application for a school place as well as completing and returning to us our school's information form with all relevant documents by January 15th 2021. More information can be found on our website.

And finally

Thank you to all of you for: remembering to wear a facemask entering the school premises; finding the time to read to your child and for your child to read to you; working on the home work each week; getting your child to school on time with everything they need; supporting the governors school building fund and the school association fundraising. It has not been easy for any of us during this challenging year but please do take a moment to reflect on the great job you are doing as parents, which we see reflected in your children.

If you are going through tough times at the moment, Hertfordshire wellbeing service offers free and confidential talking therapy and practical support for Hertfordshire residents experiencing a wide range of mental health problems. Their website can be found here: <http://talkwellbeing.co.uk/>

Advent Prayer

Come Lord, come again

Come Lord, your wounded world is yearning
for you to come again.

Come Lord, your weary world is crying out
for you to lift us up

out of our despair, our hunger,
our thirst for something better,
our need for the food that will last.

Come Lord, come again,
we need to begin again.

Amen

(Sue Allerton/CAFOD)