



It has been wonderful to get back to a more normal routine in school these last three weeks with all the pupils returning. The classrooms are now really alive with learning, kindness and smiles. We are all getting used to walking on the left along the long corridors and staircases and doing our best not to put our hands onto the white walls! In terms of our attitude to learning, we are not using terms such as 'catch up' and 'lost learning' as this puts greater pressure onto the mental health of our pupils. We are assessing where they are and adapting our teaching, as we have always done, to meet the needs in each year group.

My sincere thanks for supporting your child during this term with all of their learning, particularly those who managed to juggle work and home learning. I am proud of the efforts that all the staff gave to provide effective remote lessons and the way they embraced technology.

Our hope now is that we are able to continue to plan for a more normal summer term and the great hope of some celebrations at the end. We all deserve that!

Lateral Flow Testing

In school all of our staff and regular visitors i.e. PE and music staff have access to lateral flow tests, which are undertaken twice per week.

Only students in Year 7 and above are asked to complete lateral flow tests, not primary school aged children.

Parents, carers and adults in support bubbles providing childcare are also being encouraged to take twice-weekly lateral flow tests (on themselves, not children) at home. You can find your nearest collection site and order online at: www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests. You can also book a test for yourself at one of the county council's rapid test centres: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/rapidtest

I encourage all parents in the school to undertake lateral flow testing to protect themselves and everyone else.

Report Cards and Parent Consultations

We moved the usual spring term report card and parent consultation to the summer term – it makes more sense to give you feedback once we have had the pupils back for more than three weeks!

18th May- Report Cards to Parents

25th May- Parent Consultations 16.00-19.00 (remote meeting)

27th May- Parent Consultations 16.00-19.00 (remote meeting)

Building Works Update

During the Easter break, the builders will be working through the building snags inside the school and also hopefully finishing of the preparations to our new playground ready for the tarmac. There are still lots of ground works and landscaping to be completed but the programme is still on track for a late July end date.

Start and End of Day Arrangements

I have had plenty of feedback regarding the drop-off and pick-up times that were introduced three weeks ago. They are not ideal but necessary to ensure we do not have too many people accessing the same corridor around the school building at the same time.

For the summer term we will move the KS2 drop off time to 08.55- 09.15 in order to help reduce the amount of time waiting at the start of the day. KS1 will remain 08.45-09.00.

In addition we will open up the College car park gate again in the mornings and afternoons but please do continue to use the one way system around the school - do not go the wrong way to drop off a KS1 or KS2 child just because it is shorter in distance! If this becomes the case, then, unfortunately, we will have to keep that gate closed.

Parking

College Car Park- please follow the new signs for in and out when using the gravel car park. Unfortunately, since our return, there has been a collision due to people driving the wrong way.

Dangerous Parking Along Oriole Way- local residents are complaining that cars are parking on both sides close to the roundabout, making it dangerous for those coming in and out of Peregrine Close. Please do be considerate where you park if you are using Oriole Way. With the summer term, if you can walk, cycle or use a scooter, please do - we have plenty of bike and scooter racks now available!

Dinner money for juniors

Please note: Dinner money must be paid in advance. School meal prices are £2.70 per day, £13.50 per week. You may pay any amount of your choice to keep your balance in credit. Please pay online using the School Gateway system. All you need to do to activate an account is download the school gateway from your app store or visit the website www.schoolgateway.com and click new user. You will receive a message with a PIN number and you can use this to log in. Please be sure the school office has your up to date email and mobile phone number.

Two weeks' notice in writing to Nicky Thompson, our Catering Manager, is required for any changes in dietary pattern.

Milk Order

Milk is available to all age groups through the school. If your child is over 5 years of age and you would like him/her to receive mid-morning milk, please visit www.coolmilk.com to register and place your order.

Catholic Life of the school

It was lovely that Fr Antonio celebrated St Joseph's Day with us by leading our mass in the hall with the Yr5/6 bubble and remotely for the other classes. In this year of St Joseph, it was the perfect way for us to remember our patron saint and gain inspiration from his life.

We ended our school day today with a joint mass with all of the Diocesan schools led by Fr Chris Vipers in the Westminster Cathedral Crypt - a great coming together of 90,000 pupils and staff in what has been an unprecedented year.

Science Research- inventors

Today we are sending out some whole school science home learning on inventors and inventions to celebrate British Science Week.

Message from Hertfordshire County Council

Hertfordshire County Council has asked us to share this important update with you ahead of the Easter holidays:

As we go into the Easter holidays, and some Government guidance changes around socialising outside and outdoor sport, it is so important that we do not let our guard down and increase the risk of Covid-19 outbreaks when schools return.

From Monday 29 March, you can;

- Meet up outside (including in private gardens) with six other people, or as two households
- Take part in formally organised outdoor sports with any number of people (outdoor sports venues and facilities will be able to reopen)
- Childcare and supervised activities will be allowed outdoors for all children

You and your family can continue to keep yourselves and others safe by:

- Washing your hands regularly, for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water or using an antibacterial hand sanitiser if soap and water isn't available
- Keeping socially distanced, staying at least 2 metres away from those not in your immediate household
- Wearing a face-covering where required and when it is difficult to socially distance

- Self-isolating and getting tested if you develop symptoms or receive a positive lateral flow test (LFT) result
- Not socialising indoors with anyone who is not in your immediate household. You're not allowed to have sleepovers or playdates, even if your child is in a school bubble
- Not sending children back to school ill or with symptoms of Covid-19 after the Easter break – if your child is sick, please keep them at home

If your child is in year 7 or above and taking regular LFT, you should encourage them to continue to take these and report results as normal during the Easter holidays. If they receive a positive test at home, everyone in your household must begin self-isolating immediately and you need to book a PCR test to confirm the positive result. Any positive tests received up until 1 April, should be reported to your school so that they can complete the track and trace process with the Public Health team.

Babies and children in early years settings, nurseries, infant and primary schools should not be taking LFT, please do not do home tests on younger children. If you are worried about small children or they develop symptoms, please seek advice from your GP or call 111. Thank you again for playing your part and helping to keep our schools safe and open for face-to-face learning.

We wish you all a safe and happy Easter.
Hertfordshire County Council

Message from the Church

St Joseph's Easter Newsletter March 2021

Parish News

Dear Parents/Families,

As we approach the end of another challenging term, I just wanted to let you know about some of the things that will be on offer by the parish this Easter, which is coming upon us imminently! As you may have guessed, with restrictions still in place, much of what is on offer will be online – but we hope you will find something to help make Holy Week and Easter memorable as a family.

With best wishes for a very happy and holy Easter,
Sophie Sullivan
(Parish Catechetical Co-ordinator)

Holy Week for our children:

To help you and your children make the most of Holy Week this year, we have prepared an online hub aimed especially at our children: <https://rcstortford.org.uk/holy-week-for-kids-2021/>
Each day of Holy Week, starting with Palm Sunday on 28th March until Easter Sunday on 4th April, there will be at least one activity to do, a prayer to say and a song to listen to. It will also include a special online Children's Stations of the Cross on Good Friday. So do check it out and consider making it part of a daily routine this holiday.

NB Parents - you may like to look at what is on offer for the entire week in advance, so that you can gather any resources needed.

Easter Liturgies:

As we are still finalising exact arrangements (as this newsletter goes to press) we ask that you check regularly the "news" section of our excellent website over the coming days, which will soon have details of all Easter Services and Masses this year: www.rcstortford.org.uk

Attending Mass:

The Diocese has asked churches to continue to limit numbers attending Mass over Easter and it is likely that many of our longer Easter liturgies will be online only, so as to protect parishioners from covid. However, there will be the usual live-streaming of all our Masses and daily Mass does continue to take place, for those individuals or families who wish to book a physical place. Be assured that stringent sanitisation routines are in place and facemasks are compulsory. The booking system is very straightforward. Go to the "events" section of our website and simply click on the date you wish to attend Mass and then fill in the online form with your details. For three or more people in a bubble wishing to attend a Mass, you must ring Debbie in the parish office on 01279 654 063 – rather than booking online - to confirm your place. For those whose children are making their First Holy Communion this year, you may particularly consider booking in with your child, which will allow them to experience Mass "live" – this will help them tremendously towards their understanding and bring their special book to life!

Good Friday - Open Afternoon for Private Prayer:

On Friday 2nd April, the traditional Good Friday Service is likely to be live-streamed only at 3pm. However, the church will be open for private prayer - for any individuals or families who would like come for a few minutes of quiet reflection in the presence of the cross - between 5pm and 6.30pm. All are welcome. No booking required.

Volunteers:

As you know, the church is required to carry out thorough daily cleaning and sanitisation of the church after every Mass, as well as providing stewards beforehand to ensure proper distancing inside the church. This is something we have been doing for a year now. It does not happen by magic! A small team of very dedicated volunteers are to thank for making attendance at Mass possible, under very trying circumstances. However, as I'm sure you can imagine, we are always in need of more help and it is not likely that - even after restrictions have been lifted completely - that the routine of having to sanitise the church will cease any time in the foreseeable future. As a public space, we assume we will be required to continue to show that we are taking steps to limit the continued risk of transmission of germs.

We therefore ask that each parent consider very carefully if they might be able to make a commitment to helping with stewardship and the cleaning of the church, whether it be as a one-off or part of a more regular contribution.

When we need help specifically:

- 1) For our "open evening" for private prayer on Good Friday 4-7pm (anytime within that window) – one-off help required.
- 2) For daily Mass, between 9.15am and 10.30am – Committing to help over the holidays or more regularly (one day a week) would be wonderful!
- 3) For the celebration of Sacraments – in particular Baptisms and Weddings – which will recommence from May. We have a huge backlog and can only restart with extra sanitisation routines in place. Volunteering for this would suit people who are happy to be called upon to help on the odd weekday afternoon or at the weekend to help with a specific event. It could be a one-off commitment or a case of being happy to be asked and saying if you can help that week or not.

Please – we need the whole community to consider if they can be available to help, so we don't leave it to the "usual suspects"! Please do contact Debbie at bishopsstortford@rcdow.org.uk or on 01279 654063 to offer your help. Many thanks in advance!

New Children and Families Portal:

Finally, not Easter-related, but we have also created a new Children and Families portal, including a special section for Children's Liturgy, where you can – as a family – access excellent online resources to help your children understand the readings from Sunday Mass and to feel more part of things, given the ongoing restrictions. There is also a page for parents and links to other family-orientated resources available on our website. Check it out using the following link:

<https://rcstortford.org.uk/children-and-families-portal/>

Please note, children return to school on Monday, 12th April

Prayer

Lord God,
You sent your Son into the world,
And before his hour had come,
He washed his disciples' feet.
You had given all things into his hands.
He had come from you, and was going to you,
And what did he do?
He knelt down on the floor,
And washed his friends' feet.
He was their teacher and their Lord,
Yet he washed their feet.
Lord God, help us learn from his example;
Help us to do as he has done for us.
The world will know we are his disciples
If we love one another.
Strengthen our hands and our wills for love
And for service.
Keep before our eyes the image of your Son,
Who, being God, became a Servant for our sake.
All glory be to him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and forever.
Amen.

I wish you a peaceful and reflective Holy Week and break.