



# School Newsletter

With Christ we live, we love, we learn and we grow

03.09.21

**Dear parents/ carers,**

Welcome to the new school year for all our children, staff and parents. And welcome, in particular, to our new starters in the nursery and reception classes. The children settled in beautifully today. There were many smiles as the children re-joined their friends, met up with their new teachers, teaching assistants and welfare staff and started work in their new books. Hopefully, we can look forward to more straightforward year in school for the children.

## **Welcome Message from the Governors**

The Governors of the school met earlier this week to discuss the school's opening and I was asked by them to extend a warm welcome back to school from them to the children, parents and staff. They also asked me to pass on their wishes of good luck for the start of the new school year.

## **COVID measures**

School has returned to a little nearer to normal but we need to retain a small amount of caution. So, I hope you don't mind me reminding you that if your child has symptoms of COVID, however mild, that they do not come to school and we would ask you to arrange for a PCR for them. Similarly, if a child develops symptoms of COVID in school, however mild, we would send them home until they have received a negative PCR test result.

One of the changes for this term means that if your child is a 'close contact' of someone, e.g. a parent, who has tested positive for COVID, but has no symptoms themselves the child no longer needs to self-isolate, they may come to school. However, in this instance, we would also ask that your child has a PCR test (but they can still come to school while awaiting result – if no symptoms).

This time last year, I upset the children by telling them that they could not bring in sweets to share with the class to celebrate their birthdays. One of the children who celebrates a birthday in the next few days asked what the rule was now.

We had that particular rule because we did not want items travelling between home and school. Whilst this principle generally still holds true, I think we can make an exception for birthday treats. However, it would be helpful if the treats were in their own little wrappers.

### **Mass at St Mary's Church Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September**

The juniors are going to Mass at St Mary's Church next Wednesday morning at 9am. This will be their first visit to Church, as a group, during the pandemic. For COVID safety, Father Marsden is celebrating Mass exclusively with the children (and the staff).

The Mass will be an opportunity to celebrate simultaneously, the start of a new school year, Our Lady's Birthday (September 8<sup>th</sup>) and the harvest.

I am aware that the current Y3 and Y4 will probably not have visited Church with the school before. So hopefully, by doing this it brings an element of normality to the children's experience of school.

We ask parents of children in Y3-6 to bring the children directly to St Mary's Church and not to school on **Wednesday morning from 0845**. Y3-6 children who attend Breakfast Club will walk up to Church with members of the school's staff.

Usually children from each of Y3, 4, 5, and 6 would sit and wait in the Narthex at the rear of the Church together before entering. However, so that the different year groups are kept apart to a degree they are going to go straight to their benches in the Church. Staff will be there to organise this.

At the end of Mass, at approximately 0945-1000, the classes will leave Church and walk back down to school.

While we are celebrating the harvest at this Mass, we will not be collecting food items next week. We do intend to do so in a few weeks' time. Keep your eye out for more details.

### **OFSTED Inspection 29-30 June 2021**

As many of you will remember, we received a visit from OFSTED at the end of June last term. I received the report from OFSTED yesterday and have attached it to this newsletter. It is a very positive report. As the HMI, John Donald, left, he said to us, 'You should all be very proud of your contribution [to this school].'

I am very proud of the entire school community: children, parents, grandparents, staff and governors for their contribution in making St Mary's such a good place to come to live, love, learn and grow with Christ.

**Free School Meals – Are you missing out?**

## **Free School Meal Eligibility and Pupil Premium Funding**

Because all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to a free school meal, many parents do not realise that they might be entitled to something called **free school meal eligibility**. And we understand why this might be the case because the system is confusing! At St Mary's, we have noticed a fall in the number of infant children whose parents have claimed eligibility since the introduction of free school meals for all infants –other schools have noticed the same.

**This free school meal eligibility** can be applied for in Reception, Year 1 and in Year 2 even though children are receiving a school meal anyway. And parents in Y3, 4, 5 and 6 can also apply.

### **Why bother applying if your child is receiving a free meal anyway?**

If you think you might be eligible it is very much worth applying for two reasons:

1. Your child will continue to receive free school meals on leaving the infants in Y3, Y4, Y5 and Y6 and beyond
2. The school receives additional money (pupil premium) for children eligible for free school meals (over £1 300 per pupil).

If you receive any of the benefits below, St Mary's School can access this extra funding, called pupil premium.

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit

### **How can you find out if you are eligible?**

#### **Apply by phone – and you can find out in a matter of minutes!**

You can ring the local **Free School Meals and Pupil Premium team on 01772 531809**

It must be the person claiming the benefit that rings.

You will need to provide your:

- Name
- Date of birth
- National insurance number

They will confirm whether you are entitled over the telephone.

**Apply by post**

Download the application form from <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/schools/free-school-meals.aspx> and return it to your local area education office.

**South Area Education Office**

Level 1 Christ Church Precinct

County Hall

Preston

PR1 8RJ

**Free milk** If you receive benefits, your child could also get free milk. Contact us to find out what arrangements we make for school milk.

**STARS OF THE WEEK w/e 04.09.2020**

Best wishes,

P Smyth 03.09.21