



St John Vianney Catholic Primary School

Elton Head Road, Sutton Heath, St Helens, WA9 5BT

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St. Helens
Council

Thursday 21st December 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

I wanted to write to you as this first term of the year draws to a close and I would very much like to provide you with a termly update on school to give you a little insight into daily life at St John Vianney. I hope you find it informative and please do let me know if you would like anything in particular including on the next one. It has been such a busy term for the children and staff, so here are some updates on priorities and events.

New Beginnings

As we began in September, we welcomed our new starters in Reception and Nursery, as well as a further five children across the school who joined us this year. The children have made a fabulous start to their time here with us and we look forward to continuing to watch them grow and learn over the next few years. We were also joined by Mrs Wesley-Abbot, our Year Two teacher and Mrs Kirk, our most recent addition to the Midday Supervisor team. We were delighted also to welcome our new Parent Governor, Mike Roberts, to our Governing Board. He has a child in our current Year Three class and brings a wealth of experience to add to the board. We are working with Edge Hill University to support initial teacher training and currently have four student teachers working in Key Stage One (Year One and Two) and Key Stage Two (Year Four and Five), shadowing our own staff and beginning some teaching themselves. Many thanks to our volunteer, Josie, who has been visiting school each week to support the Year One children and Dave Aspinall, our very own Miss Aspinall's dad, who has just begun volunteering in Upper Key Stage Two. We love having you with us.

Key School Priorities

Each year, we identify a range of key priorities that we will be working on across the three terms. This year, we have started to adapt the way we approach the teaching of reading. All teaching staff have received 'Are You Really Reading' Training and have been combining the techniques alongside our existing teaching. The children are loving the new methods. You can find out more about the project at <https://shinetrust.org.uk/case-study/are-you-really-reading>. We have been continuing to work towards achieving the Therapeutic Schools Award. All staff are undertaking ongoing training on how to adapt the environment and enhance support for our children across the school. Alongside this, we have started PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) training with Barnardos. This includes aspects such as pupil of the day and regular PATHS lessons. Again, staff have been trained on its delivery and we have regular 'PATHS Days' with our linked trainer. You can find out more about PATHS at <https://www.pathseducation.co.uk/what-is-paths>.

Curriculum and Enhancements

There have been many changes in the Archdiocese of Liverpool, including the advent of a new RE Directory (RED) – essentially a new way of teaching RE, which replaces 'Come and See'. This is being rolled out one year group at a time, alongside staff training from the Archdiocesan RE Team. We have rolled it out in Nursery and Reception (EYFS) and we are beginning Year One in January. We have entered into our final year of a four-year journey of Maths Mastery which has allowed us to continue enhancing our teaching of Maths across the school, ensuring children 'master' the content to enable them to succeed. Writing also continues to be a key priority across the school this year.





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We have had many activities for the children throughout this term, including sessions with Year Six from the St Helens Wellbeing Team, plus a workshop for Year Six with St Helens Mental Health Support Team (MHST), our own 'Wellbeing Wednesday', the Wiggly Roadshow, across the school, in addition to Year 5/6 swimming and Key Stage Two Art Workshops from CulturEd. Year Two, Five and Six have visited the library this term and we have held an art week competition and 'Crafty Café'. Over £200 was raised by school this term in support of Children in Need. Thank you everyone! We have been delighted to welcome a Therapy Dog, 'Alan' into school this term. He has loved visiting St John Vianney and has greatly helped a number of children in different ways. Thanks, Alan and handler, Carol. Alan will be returning in the new year.

Christmas Preparations

Christmas is such a magical time of the year and we are so lucky to work in an environment full of excited children, ready for the festive season. We have enjoyed nativities from EYFS and Key Stage One, as well as a Carol Concert at St Austin's Church and the long-awaited return of our Community Afternoons! We have also had a lovely Christmas Mass, celebrated by Father Martin. These have all been beautiful experiences and we were so happy to be able to share them with you. During this time, our choir have been to sing at Reeve Court Retirement Village, Year Five have visited the foodbank to drop off donations and we have enjoyed PTFA discos, Autumn Bingo (with a somewhat dubious bingo-caller!!) and a Christmas Shopping Evening. We even managed to squeeze in a full financial audit from the Council!

What's next?

In January, before we even return, Conor Powell will be holding another EF92 Football Camp (Tue 2nd to Fri 5th Jan). On our return, we will see the Toddler Group starting again (held every Monday afternoon from 1.30pm to 3.00pm in the school hall) as well as a host of school events and activities which I will update you on as we break for Easter. These include SENCO drop ins, with our in-house SENCO, Mrs Mills, plus regular School Nurse drop ins. Keep an eye out for invitations to parent workshops and events moving forward throughout the year.

Here to help

Please do let us know if we can help with anything at all, at any time. We have an open-door policy, so please let us know how we can support you, as our much-valued children and families.

Finally, on behalf of all the governors and staff, may we wish you all a very merry and blessed Christmas. We look forward to seeing you on Monday 8th January 2024!

Take good care

Mrs Friar

