



St John Rigby Catholic Primary School
'God's will be done through work and play, as we follow Jesus day by day'

NEWSLETTER



January/February 2018

Message from the Headteacher

As we have started off in this new term, all members of staff have looked very closely at the achievement of our children. We have looked both at the national indicators such as end of key stage national tests but also at the in-year assessments of every year group.

There has been much to celebrate and attainment remains high. For example, children who may start off at low ability or have an Educational Health Plan do very well over time in our school. Children who might have English as a second language also do extremely well. Like all schools, there are areas where we would like to see improvement. We would like to see the gap between boys performance in literacy compared to that of the girls narrow. This is something that does exist nationally but there are things we can do here to address this over time (more on this in a moment). We would also like to look at how we can provide more challenge for higher ability pupils. Finally, we would like to look at ways in which children who are eligible for pupil premium are given support that meets their individual needs.

I will take some of these development points in turn.

First of all, with literacy and challenge for the more able, we have introduced a new teaching methodology called "The Write Stuff". Its founder, Jane Considine, led one of our INSET days in December. Traditional teaching of literacy in schools is often a game of two halves. A new theme is introduced and in our classrooms, we find a wealth of stimulating activities which really foster enjoyment, creativity and use of the imagination. In the second half, children then put pen to paper. As adults, how often do we find ourselves in situations where our head is alive with all of these ideas but getting them down on paper, in a way that ensures that spelling and grammar are where they need to be can turn what seemed to be an exciting opportunity into a laboured experience of constant editing and redrafting? How do we think children feel in this situation? Are we in danger of losing the enjoyment factor? If children don't enjoy it are they going to be successful? Isn't this where perhaps boys, in particular could switch off?

"The Write Stuff" methodology involves a much more structured approach. The constructs from vocabulary to grammar to literary devices are explicitly modelled at every stage by the teacher in the class. It could be argued that English is being taught more like Maths. The actual output from the lesson will be lower in quantity but higher in quality. At the risk of being generalistic, isn't that going to suit boys?

"White Rose" Maths is designed to address the balance that all successful mathematicians need to demonstrate between fluency (practice until you get it!), reasoning (explain how you got to...) and problem solving. We may look back at our own experience of Maths as pupils and recall that perhaps the way we were taught was all about the fluency and little else. The reasoning is key, it is about articulating the process. Research shows that the biggest impact we can have on the lifelong learning of children, and especially those who are disadvantaged, is to develop "metacognition" which is the ability to articulate the learning process, in other words, reasoning.

Finally, I would like to thank all of those parents who have engaged with our pupil premium personal budget meetings. These have been very enabling for parents and staff as they look for individual ways to support their children in their academic progress, their involvement in school life and their well-being. Much of the focus here has been on reading. For all pupils, but especially those who experience disadvantage, infecting children with the reading bug has the biggest impact on academic success.

The St Thomas More prospectus uses this quote from St Irenaeus which reminds us all why we are working with our children in this way:

The glory of God in each person fully alive.

Website and communications

Please do check out our new website at www.stjohnrigby.org "Latest news" articles are being added all of the time and these are linked to our social media feeds.

Key term Dates for this Lent Term (updates are placed on the website calendar)

Monday 5th February: Year 6 assembly for parents (10.30am)

Monday 5th February: Year 6 Parents Evening (Part One)

Tuesday 6th February: Safer Internet Day (activities taking place all week)

Wednesday 7th February: Year 6 Parents Evening (Part Two)

Tuesday 20th Feb: Group Photos in School

Tuesday 27th Feb: Author visit in School: Michelle Robinson

Thursday 8th March: SJR Maths Day

Monday 12th March: Year 5 Liturgy to Parents (10.30am)

WB Monday 19th March: Year 6 Mock SATs week.

Tuesday 20th March: Year 4 Ukelele Play Day at King's House

Year 3 Easter Trail at Primary Methodist Church

Wednesday 21st March: Year 4 Easter Trail at Primary Methodist Church

Thursday/Friday 22nd/23rd March: Pupil Learning Reviews go home

Friday 23rd March: MUFTI day for Easter Raffle

Sunday 25th March: Palm Sunday (Holy Week begins)

Monday 26th March: Parents' Evening I (EY to Y5)

Wednesday 28th March: Parents' Evening II (EY to Y5)

Thursday 29th March (Holy Thursday): PTA Easter Raffle and last day of term.

CLARIFICATION ON TRIPS AND VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

We have had one or two queries recently about the requests for "voluntary contributions" when it comes to school trips. All schools are prohibited from using language such as "the cost of this is..." even though "voluntary contribution" is open to interpretation. Note that the request for a "voluntary contribution" is always followed by a sentence or phrase regarding the option of contacting the school if payment is an issue so that a confidential and sensitive conversation can be had. There have been some cases, recently, where lack of contributions is leading to a situation where a trip could potentially be cancelled which naturally we want to avoid. A statement to this effect will be added to future trip letters.

We are always very sensitive about the financial outlay on trips and we work hard to keep costs as low as possible. Nearly every trip is subsidised by the school budget either in terms of travel costs or entry fees to an event.

CAR PARK

Please could you remind your child that if he/she is coming into school from 8.30am onwards, **not** to walk across the car park but to stick to the footpaths. Many thanks.

Congratulations to 2W: EXPERT PIZZA MAKERS

Pupils from Early Years, Year One and Year Two had great fun on Thursday 18th January in their pizza making competition. The eventual winners were 2W. To mark their victory, members of the class were invited to sit at the Italian themed table for lunch. As you will see below, this table was decorated with Italian flag placemats, straws and balloons. The winning pizza makers also received a special "Gummy Pizza".



Literacy Competitions

The children have been invited to take part in a whole school handwriting competition. We have selected poems for the children to copy out in their best handwriting. Entries should be given to class teachers by the closing date of 23rd February.

We are also running a reading competition leading up to our annual celebration of World Book Day. Children are invited to create a story museum in a shoe box. They decorate their shoe box to reflect a book or story (filled with characters, objects, artefacts or clues from the story). Entries should be given to class teachers by the closing date of 1st March.

The winning entries from both competitions will be displayed in school and the winners and runners up will be presented with prizes.



School Dinners and Wrap Around Care

Please may we remind you that dinners **need to be booked one week in advance and paid for online**. To ensure we are able to order and prepare enough food each lunchtime, even if your child is entitled to free school meals (for which you will **not** be charged) – you still need to book online. If your child will **always** have a home packed lunch, please inform the school office in writing they will then block book your child's preference for you. **Any child that has a dinner that has not been pre-booked online will be charged a £5.00 administration fee at the end of each month.**

Wrap around Care - your child's account needs to be in credit for you to use the Wrap Around Care facilities, and in order for the school to provide the correct ratio of staff to children, **attendance must be booked online at least 24hrs in advance**. Failure to book your child's place and keep your account up to date weekly, or in credit, may result in these services being withdrawn and a £5.00 admin fee applied to your account at the end of each month.

SAFER INTERNET DAY

The official date for this is Tuesday 6th February but activities will be taking place all week.

Ms Diemer will conduct a launch assembly on Monday 5th February for Years 3 – 6 and will then work alongside staff of our younger pupils. This year the key messages are:

- The key ingredients to being happy and good about yourself online
- How to be a good friend online

Teachers will be working with the children in lessons looking at various scenarios that will reinforce these points above.

We are also liaising with PC Denton (Beds Police Schools Liaison Officer) to set up a parent workshop after Easter where parents can learn more about how to support their child online and ensure their safety. All parents will be informed once the date is confirmed.



URGENT – PACK LUNCHES AND SNACKS - PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOUR CHILD DOES NOT BRING IN ANY FOOD PRODUCTS CONTAINING NUTS OR TRACES OF NUTS. THIS INCLUDES NUTELLA, FERRERO ROCHE, KINDER BUENO ETC. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION