



# Our Lady & St Thomas Primary School

*You are unique, talented and loved by God*



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## ***Newsletter - November & December 2020***

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Dear Parents,

We are now almost through our second National Lockdown and have closed our first bubble due to a positive Covid case. I am so proud of the way our pupils in Class 4 have dealt with their class bubble closure. A credit to their families and to our school. We also have some isolating children who have been amazing in their efforts in completing remote learning alongside their class.

Our OLST family are doing everything possible to ensure we keep any cases to a minimum and **I wish to thank parents for their diligence in ensuring pupils remain at home if a family member displays symptoms.** This is essential to stop the spread of the virus. We have had four pupils who have tested positive in total to date and have only needed to close one bubble which is testament to the sensible attitudes of our families and adherence to the rules. I wish parents to be aware that in all our confirmed cases the children were asymptomatic and have remained well showing no indicating symptoms. The children have been tested due to family members being symptomatic or testing positive. This makes it all the more important to be vigilant in households. Please remind your KS2 child to bring their mask each day.

- **Reminder – OLST is closed to all on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November as a PD Day.**

As you will see below we have a packed programme of Christmas plans to ensure our children have a joyous festive month in school. We would like to provide treats for all the children including hot chocolate on their forest day, popcorn for movies, party food etc. We are asking parents for a **£3 contribution** per child to enable school to provide these extra treats. Collection pots will be in each class for your child to drop in their £3 between Thursday **26<sup>th</sup> November and Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December.** The office will then collect from classes to organise the treats.

### **School Crossing Patrol**

A reminder to parents that unfortunately, Mrs Walker continues to be absent from her duties and despite Durham County Council advertising for relief positions there were no suitable applicants. Therefore, there will be no school Crossing Patrol before the New Year. With the darker mornings and evenings, it may be best for you to cross your child over the road if you don't already do this.

### **Admissions 2021**

We are busy revamping our school brochure and marketing our wonderful school as we want to ensure that it always remains viable, especially moving into the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust. Small schools are extremely vulnerable in this current climate. I was delighted to hear that St. Thomas More's in Belmont (my old primary school) have won their fight to keep their school open as it was due to close this academic year.

Word of mouth is by far the best recommendation. You will enjoy seeing the children talk about their school on social media and on our website in the coming weeks explaining in their own unique way why OLST is such a special place. I am conducting Virtual Meetings this week with prospective new families but am happy to fit in as many as possible before the 15<sup>th</sup> January admissions deadline. I am sure I can rely on you to pass on this information to anyone who you may feel it relevant to.

## Remote Learning during Isolation

Every school in the country must provide a Remote Learning Policy and Plan. It is our responsibility as a school to ensure all children have access to this provision. If your child is self-isolating and you are struggling to access the Google Classroom, please contact the school office for support. It is a requirement that all children who are well and are at home **must** complete work set by teachers and therefore be able to access the school curriculum. There will be an expectation to hand work into the class teacher via Google Classroom, or bring the completed home learning pack back to school upon the child's return.

## Technology at OLST

I have been delighted to hear so many positive comments about the education provision by OLST during lockdown for all our children and families. We now have a fully operational system for the whole school to deliver Remote Learning to any child or class isolating at home. Our Google Classroom learning platform is integral to this and so is technology.

Over the summer we upgraded the Wi-Fi infrastructure throughout school to ensure that it was capable of providing the increased technology demand. We also invested in new Chromebooks as we wanted children to become experts in school at using Google Classroom so they can all be upskilled should they need to use it at home when isolating. We have come a long way!

We wish to order a further 25 Chromebooks which will be paid for mostly with funds raised from the schools Lottery. Prior to this, we only had a class set to share on a timetabled basis (not ideal with Covid!). The dream is to have one Chromebook per KS2 child so they will be able to use their own device both in and out of school if needed.

## School Lottery

Since we launched 'Your School Lottery' in spring 2019, parents, relatives and staff and have been quietly raising money in the background for school. Many thanks to Mrs Frame for setting this up for school – together we have raised a grand total of **£2,534** through the scheme and many children will benefit from our first spend! Please consider joining the lottery if you have not already or spreading the word to get friends and family to join. It's easy to register and costs £1 per week. We have 57 supporters who together purchase a total of 90 tickets weekly. It would be lovely if you could join in to increase support. Currently, winners at OLST receive an average of £22.20 for a weekly win. Tickets are also entered into a weekly £25,000 national draw.



## Friends of OLST



Whilst Mrs Arrowsmith is isolating with Class 4, she working remotely with pupils and also organising a Christmas raffle, as our usual fundraising Christmas events cannot go ahead this year.

We would be grateful for donations of new items which could be used as raffle prizes to add to our list.

The cost of our desired 25 Chromebooks is £3,900 which we hope to pay for from the proceeds of the Lottery together with any additional funds raised through the Friends of OLST raffles etc.

Please do help us to aspire to this challenge and reach our target goal !

## **Fare Share and Foodbank**

Both continue to operate in Willington and have seen an increase in the number of people who need to use them as the Covid Pandemic effects more and more families. If you are struggling and want to use either of the above, please contact the school or look on the Willington Open Door Methodist Church Facebook Page for further details of how they operate.

## **Salvation Army Toy Appeal**

My cupboard is bursting with toys for our Toy Appeal organised by Class 5. Many thanks for your generosity. The deadline for this is **Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November**. OLST will be making a delivery which I know will be gratefully received by many local families. If you wish to nominate a family for this support, please contact the office confidentially.

Christmas is a time for family and for spoiling our children, however this year, it is more important than ever to teach our children the gift of being grateful for the small things. This is something we will be teaching in school, as many families in our community have been furloughed, lost jobs and are struggling to pay bills. The gift of kindness is something our children have in abundance – please know that no matter what your situation you are still an amazing parent and your children know that.

## **Jack Drum – Light Fantastic Activities and Events**

Light Fantastic is a Winter-Time Project for Crook, Willington and the surrounding villages to help the community celebrate the festive season.

Please take a look at their fantastic and varied programme <https://www.jackdrum.co.uk> as there are some exciting activities and events coming up in December for all the family.

## **Trailblazer Project 2020**

We are pleased to share that we are now part of a Mental Health Support Team (MHST) which is attached to our Education Setting. The MHST offer early help to children and young people who are struggling with mild to moderate mental health difficulties such as anxiety and/or low mood. We have attached a leaflet that explains the role of the Education Mental Health Practitioner (EMHP) within the team and the support they can offer.

As well as working directly with children and young people the team offer advice and guidance to staff members, parents and other professionals.

If you feel your child would benefit from support from the MHST or you would like additional information about the team please contact myself or your child's class teacher to discuss further.

## **NSPCC – Speak out. Stay safe.**

We would usually have assemblies at this time of year to educate children about how to keep themselves safe in an age appropriate way.

Class 5 have received such an assembly in their class bubble. It will be delivered to all classes with a little help from Ant and Dec, who are supporting the campaign, given the many safeguarding issues that have emerged during lockdown across the country. Parents to be aware that this work is happening in school. If would like further information on this, please visit <https://www.nspcc.org.uk>

## Christmas Dates for Parents December 2020



OLST will not let a global pandemic stand in the way of our preparations in Advent or our Christmas festivities! We have been busy planning an exciting few weeks in school for the children. Please see the below list for information.



Event	Details	Date / Deadline	Bubbles
<b>Salvation Army Toy Appeal</b>	Mini Vinnies project to support families in difficulties in the area with new toys for Christmas.	<b>27<sup>th</sup> November</b>	All classes involved
<b>Christmas Cards for Care Village</b>	All pupils to create a card or a heart for the Care Home to spread joy in our community.	<b>Send 4<sup>th</sup> December</b>	All classes involved
<b>Snow man and the Snow Dog Kindness Advent Calendar</b>	Daily kindness challenge for children as part of their Advent preparations.	<b>Throughout December</b>	All classes involved
<b>Travelling Advent Wreath</b>	Each class sees the Advent Wreath in their class and shares reflections on Hope, Love, Joy and Peace.	<b>Daily throughout Advent</b>	All classes involved
<b>CHRISTMAS LUNCH and Movie treat</b>	Children may wear Christmas jumpers or their own clothes this day and may have a traditional Christmas Lunch or bring their own festive packed lunch.	<b>Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup></b>	All classes involved
<b>Key Stage 2 Christmas Party</b>	In class bubbles with their bubble staff. School will prepare and provide a party snack for all children. Party clothes can be worn.	<b>Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup></b>	Class 3, 4 and 5.
<b>Carols Around the Tree</b>	Socially distanced in our class bubbles adhering to guidelines regarding singing. Photos will be posted on our website and Facebook for parents.	<b>Thursday 10<sup>th</sup></b>	All classes involved
<b>Key Stage 1 Christmas Party</b>	In class bubbles with their bubble staff. School will prepare and provide a party snack for all children. Party clothes can be worn.	<b>Friday 11<sup>th</sup></b>	Class 1 and Class 2
<b>Enchanted Wood and Santa's Grotto</b>	Forest School Adventure in the last week of term – class teachers will send details of which day your child will need old clothes while they make stables for the baby Jesus and woodland Christmas decorations. There may even be a special delivery in Santa's Grotto!	<b>Last week of term</b>	All classes involved
<b>Christmas Productions</b>	We are busy preparing some surprises for you all for our virtual Christmas celebrations which will be posted online for you. We will have a filming day in school so watch this space!	<b>Will be shared the last week.</b>	All classes involved
<b>Elf- Esteem Afternoon of Relax Kids</b>	All pupils will have an afternoon in their class bubbles of craft and activities with a focus on improving our <i>elf</i> -esteem.	<b>Last week of term</b>	All classes involved
<b>Puppet Show</b>	A Covid safe Christmas show in class bubbles. The witch tries to ruin Christmas by stealing Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer but Santa Claus saves the day!	<b>Thursday 17<sup>th</sup></b>	Class 1 and Class 2
<b>The Emperor's New Clothes</b>	Northern Stage Virtual production of this fun festive fiasco! All children will get to view this in class and enjoy the delights of live theatre – the show must go on!	<b>tbc</b>	Class 3, 4 and 5