

# Our Lady & St Thomas Catholic Primary School, Willington



## **Newsletter - November 2021**

*You are unique, talented and loved by God*



Dear Parents,

School has a wonderful buzz of happy, productive learning and continues to be a wonderful place for children and staff alike.

### **Class News**

**Mrs Brown's class** have a tortoise called Harry in school this week and are having lots of fun finding out all about him. I am sure their writing about his adventures will be fantastic!

**Mrs Whitfield and Year 2** are focusing upon Remembrance Day and what it means. They have produced some very thought-provoking work.

**Mrs Pearson and Class 3** are busy finding out all about the Stone Age and should come home being able to tell you the difference between the three periods; the Palaeolithic (old Stone Age), Mesolithic (middle Stone Age) and the Neolithic (new Stone Age).

**Mrs Graham and Class 4** are working with Jack Drum making fantastic 'Owl' masks and headdresses which will form part of the Winter Light Parade, which give Fantastic Beasts a run for their money! The Parade is at Crook on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November from 4.30pm – 6pm - all welcome.

**Children in Class 5** are thinking of ways in which they as Mini Vinnies can help others in their community. They are beginning to work towards their Faith in Action Award with an event to be launched soon. They are also working with Jack Drum Arts and creating a movie/animation to go with the song that they composed and released last year.

All the children (and some staff) have thoroughly enjoyed being 'sorted' into the Hogwarts House Teams in order to play Quidditch against each other for the glory of being victorious. Lots of witches and magicians have been seen in and around the skies and grounds of OLST. Beware!

### **Covid Update:**

Autumn is well and truly upon us and the children and staff have been full of coughs and colds. We have also had the delights of a round of chicken pox! Special thanks for your vigilance when it comes to sending your child to school when they are unwell and ensuring we test to protect others. It is greatly appreciated in the fight against the spread of Covid 19. We send our warmest wishes and heartfelt prayers to those in our community suffering with this illness and we wish them a speedy recovery.

**We have received recommendations from Durham County Council's Public Health team and have decided to re-introduce the following measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in school:**

- The use of face coverings in communal areas for all adults

- Staggering start and finish times - *our staggered start times work well given the window for parents to drop off and various entry points into school. Please make sure we vacate the school site at the end of the day as soon as possible. Our times will remain the same if we all adhere to this.*
- Grouping of pupils in school by class or year group to reduce mixing – *we will reintroduce this if cases rise in school*
- To cancel or postpone educational visits and residential trips – *we are first for Swimming at Woodhouse Close so are not following any other schools and travel in our class bubble.*
- Open days or events to move to a virtual format.
- To cancel or postpone whole school events - *this will be reviewed on a weekly basis in light of most recent figures.*
- PCR testing for all adults and pupils if they are a close contact of a positive case in their household.
- Daily LFT testing at home for 7 days for any adult or pupil in key stage 2 (year 3) or above who is a household contact of a positive case and is exempt from isolation and continues to attend school. The testing of primary age pupils is at parental discretion. Testing should start from the day the household member has symptoms or if they don't have symptoms from when they tested positive
- Additional attention will be given to ventilation, cleaning and respiratory and hand hygiene - wearing layers for school is important so that we can wrap up and unwrap depending on activities and temperatures across the day. We are required as a safety measure to keep classrooms well ventilated so windows and doors are open regularly and we now have CO2 monitors to keep an eye on levels in classrooms.

### **Remembrance Sunday**

The traditional gathering at the Cenotaph in Willington is to take place this year at 3.00pm in the Village. OLST will be laying a wreath on behalf of our school community. Everyone welcome, although we do appreciate given the circumstances that you may choose not to. Our Head children Daisy and Joe will represent the children of OLST.

### **Parents Evenings and Parental Questionnaire**

November sees our first parents evening of this Academic year. We are offering both telephone and online consultations. Mrs Frame and Mrs Caton will be emailing you a letter with details of how you book your appointment electronically via SCOPAY.

The pupils in school amaze me daily with their love for learning, hard work and enthusiasm. We look forward to sharing their achievements.

After Parents Evening we will send out a Google form to gauge your views. As Head teacher, this is a great opportunity for me to formally consult with our families to ensure we provide the very best education for your child. I would appreciate as many of you as possible taking part as this does indeed shape the direction of our school.

### **New Chair of Governors and Vice Chair**

I would like to formally introduce Miss Sarah Jackson, Chair and Mrs Joanne Norman, Vice Chair to parents. We intend to make our Local Area Board more visible to parents. We thank both ladies for stepping up to take on these important roles for the good of our school and we wish them every success.

## **TEA CLUB**

Miss Stephanie Mavin had a great first week with the children who have started our Tea Club after school. She spent the week getting to know the children and once again this will be shaped over time with our families and children's input. I am keen to understand the low uptake for this so far, as when families were first consulted, we had much higher numbers of those who said they would use this service. We have had it approved, based on those numbers so that it is financially viable. We are certainly keen to grow this as part of our Wrap Around Offer, which is priced at £4 per hour including a snack.

Our Tea Club is for childcare purposes for working parents and is therefore costed as such in line with other providers of this type of service in Willington and Crook. After School clubs continue to run as they always have and are subsidised or free. If this is something you wanted to use and have chosen not to, would you please let me know your reason so that we can continue to improve and build upon this new service. We may be able to apply for Grants to help subsidise this if cost is an issue. Many thanks!

My new email address is [Head@olst.bhcet.org](mailto:Head@olst.bhcet.org).

## **Formal Assessments 2022**

The Statutory tests will take place resume this academic year.

[KS2 SATs](#) week commencing **9th May 2022**, over four days for children in Year 6.

[KS1 SATs](#) at some point during **May 2022**. I would be grateful if parents of Year 2 pupils could avoid taking holidays during May, as these tests can be administered throughout the month

## **Parking**

We have been asked by the residents of Mill Street to ask parents to refrain from parking in their street. This is a very narrow dead-end street and is difficult enough for residents, without the additional hazard of parents parking whilst they drop off / collect their child from school. We would be grateful for your support with this matter.

## **Calling ALL New Starters – September 2022**

Please promote our wonderful school to anyone who you think maybe looking for a school place from September 2022. We will be holding open events and are keen to ensure our school can compete with schools that already have a nursery - a dream I would like to one day make a reality for our school.

## **Friends of OLST**

### **Project 2021-22: Improving the Outdoor Play facilities for the pupils of OLST**

We have had a productive couple of meetings with the new Friends of OLST. I would like to formally introduce Saskia Gordon, Amanda Flitter, Sarah Ashurst, Samantha Castell and Veronica Leddy. These ladies have made a great start and would very much welcome any new volunteers. They aim to meet each term in school and are full of fantastic ideas to support school. They have a fantastic plan for Christmas Fundraising which will be communicated soon.

OLST FEST and HALLOWEEN have kick-started our fundraising as well as the fabulous donation from Miss Bede Donkin for £1000!!

Good news – Thanks to our fundraising last year, a grant from the Charity Shop 4U, the school lottery and the Friends contributions we have reached our £6000 target. Mrs Graham has ordered the 'Running Track' for the children of OLST.

### **Charity Shop 4U**

Special thanks for a grant of £500 to put towards the outdoors and also gym equipment for the children. We are so lucky to have such support from this wonderful organisation.

### **Fund Raising**

Thank you for your donations recently, for Cafod Go Green and Macmillan cancer support.



Together we raised £140 for Cafod, £180.80 for Macmillan and for school funds - £94.40 from the Halloween non uniform day.

### **Dates for Diary**

**16.11.21.** Seed Collecting – KS1.

**19.11.21. Children in Need**

All pupils can wear Pudsey related items and we will collect donations on the day.

**25.11.21.** Bulb Planting for KS2 on Willington Town Green

Regards,

Mrs Veitch