

Friday 3rd April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

End of Term Easter Holiday Newsletter

The two very unusual weeks since the national school closure have now ended and we hope that you have been able to successfully manage arrangements at home while the children are off. The first wave of our teachers making calls home to parents and children in their classes took place earlier this week and it sounds like everyone has got into a rhythm at home, making use of the various different resources we have prepared. The **recorded video lessons on Google Classroom** that we introduced on Monday appear to be helping with home learning which is great to hear, while many parents said that the photocopied activities and worksheets were keeping their children busy as well. At the same time, **My Maths and Education City** are proving popular with some parents and children – the advantage of these sites being that they are able to teach the skill and then mark the work afterwards too!

The experience of overseeing home learning will of course be very different from one parent to another. We know that a household with three children for example is different to another with only one, while a household with one computer would be more stretched than another with three. We also appreciate that households where there is a very young child, perhaps even a toddler or a baby, will be a handful at this time, and households where the parent has to juggle both working from home *and* keeping the children engaged will similarly be a challenge. It is because of this **diversity** at home that we have tried to be diverse in the activities and resources we are using and promoting - parents can pick and choose the approach that works best for them according to their own particular circumstances.

At this difficult time, we want to remain as connected as we possibly can be, maintaining a sense of community so that the children still have a sense of belonging within the school, even if it is from a distance in most cases. With this in mind, the next wave of teachers will be making **home phone calls** in the first two weeks of the new term, after the Easter holidays. Hopefully, too, children have noticed the weekly class comments from their class teachers on the stream page of Google Classroom. Meanwhile we have also continued to post details of **competitions and activities** that the children can engage with on Google Classroom – one is Easter connected so do keep an eye out for that one. We hope that with your child you have been able to view **Reverend Vanessa and Adam's Easter-focussed assemblies** on Google Classroom; these video 'assemblies' further re-assure the children and give some kind of normality to their lives, seeing familiar faces even if only viewed on a small screen. We have experimented recently with **setting assignments** on Google Classroom that the children can respond to and then get feedback on from a teacher, just like they would at school; this is something that we will tell you a lot more about very soon. We hope that this new addition to our home learning offer will further strengthen the bond between the children and school, and keep them motivated to learn.

The **staff at St Mary's** are in good spirits and really appreciate the support we have been getting from our parent community. We stand fully behind the magnificent efforts of the NHS and key workers of all different hues, and are proud to have been able to keep the Key Worker School at St Mary's open for the last fortnight and for the next fortnight too, including

the bank holidays. The children attending have been terrific and have been very good at observing the necessary social distancing rules.

Not a day has gone by in the last fortnight without parents telling us about the lengths they are going to to make sure that their children **stay fit and healthy** in the home. The links on Google Classroom to the physical activity videos appear to be being well used – Joe Wicks is certainly a favourite at the moment amongst the St Mary's community!

With the Easter break upon us, do keep an eye out on Google Classroom for the **Easter Baking Challenge** which it would be fantastic for children to take part in over the break; they can take photos of their creations and then send these in through the various Google Classrooms. We will be on the lookout for the most eye-catching creations!

Of course not as much travelling as would normally occur over Easter will be taking place this April, but nevertheless we hope that the Easter holiday and the story of the resurrection brings our families some joy, comfort and inspiration. We look forward to seeing *some* of you after Easter, and *hearing* from a lot more of you in various digital formats. **In the meantime, stay safe and best wishes to all.**

Yours faithfully,

Mr O'Brien
HT