

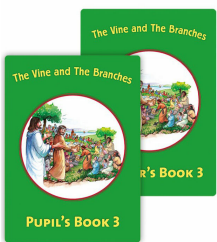


Head-lines

Welcome to our half termly newsletter, giving you a brief glimpse into some of the things that have taken place this half term. We started back in January with some very challenging conditions - with snow and ice and freezing temperatures! Happily the weather has picked up these last few weeks, and as we start to glimpse the first daffodils and snowdrops, we are reminded that Spring is just around the corner. The children return for the second half of our Spring term on Monday 24th February. I hope they, and you, have a lovely half term week. Mr Turner.

Focus area updates

As explained in an earlier newsletter, this year we have identified a few areas of focus for development. These then form part of our School Development Plan, with staff training, resources, monitoring etc. We wanted to just give you a brief update of how these areas are progressing.



The first area was the scheme we use to teach RE, as Bishop Mark has requested that all schools use 'The Vine and the

Branches' to teach RE from this academic year, starting with Years 1,2, 3 and 4, and then adding F2, Y5 and Y6 from next year. Staff are enjoying teaching using the materials, and children are getting lots from it. One of the big changes to the previous scheme, is that all year groups study the same topics, just at deepening levels as they go higher up the school, so our current topic has been 'Galilee to Jerusalem' and when we return after the half term, we move on to 'Desert to Garden' as we prepare for the most important time of the Church's year - Easter. Please can we also ask that you keep

our Year 3 children in your thoughts and prayers as they continue to prepare to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

The second area we have been focussing on is maths. As well as our daily lessons delivered through our maths scheme, 'Maths No Problem', we have also introduced daily fluency lessons, using a tool called 'Mastering Number'.



These additional sessions are brief, fast paced and lively and re-enforce children's knowledge and understanding of number. In order to continue to support your child at home, we suggest you encourage them to access Times Tables Rock Stars, and find as many opportunities during your interactions for 'incidental' maths eg "what time is it? What time will it be in 15 minutes? What shape is a smarties tube? How many faces does it have? If we've got £5 to spend, how many boxes of eggs could we buy?". These daily opportunities to explore maths in the real world will really help them in school.

Then the third area we are continuing to develop from last year is Communication, language and vocabulary. Research is showing that as a country, this is where gaps are widening, particularly in very young boys. We are working to ensure that our school environment is 'language rich' with Word Walls, Word of the Week, labels, and encouraging 'tier two and tier three' words - so stretching the children to be as specific and descriptive as possible with their word choice eg "bellowed...." rather than "said" or using subject specific language such as 'integer' or 'estuary'.



To support this further at home, highlight any interesting words that you come across in texts, or when out and about, keep a vocabulary diary or play games and challenge children to suggest three different words when describing something.



Welcome.....

A very warm welcome to Cloe who has joined us this half term. I hope you have settled in, made lots of friends and are enjoying life at St Joseph's.

Know yourself, Grow yourself

Last week, we took part in Children's Mental Health Week. The theme for this year was 'Know yourself, Grow yourself'. Children were encouraged to think about the things that matter to them, that make them happy and make them proud to be themselves. All week we had lots of activities to remind ourselves of how important it is to look after our own mental health, in the same way that we prioritise physical health. All of our lives are increasingly busy and full, so it was a very welcome opportunity to stop, and take time to be grateful, happy and recognise when we need to open up about any worries we have.



Let's Play Darts!

Wednesday saw the grand final of the 17th year of our annual darts tournament. In a close match up between Blake and JJ, JJ eventually emerged the winner 4-3. A huge congratulations to JJ, as well as to our worthy runner up, Blake. Well done to all of our competitors - the standard was very high!



Thank you to our scorers Jonty, Niamh, Erin and Maria and a special thank you to Mr Nayland for coordinating and running the tournament. Year 5's are already starting to practice, ready for the 2025-26 season!



Attendance

Our attendance for the year to date stands at 94.2% which is below our target of at least 96%. The percentage of children with Persistent Absence (above 10%) has also risen to 15%. We will write to you again after half term with more details about how we are working together to improve attendance.

Parking

We continue to receive complaints from residents on Fairview Road that parking is an issue, with cars blocking driveways and mounting the grass verges, destroying the grass. Please can we ask you to be considerate of neighbours when dropping off and collecting. As we have mentioned before, Fairview Road is particularly tight directly opposite school, but if you go a little further up the hill, towards Oxton Village, the road opens up and there is much more parking available. Please do consider parking a little further away and walking down - this will ease congestion, make parking simpler and keep the area outside school safer. Thank you for your support.

Pilgrims of Hope

On Christmas Eve, Pope Francis opened the Holy door at St Peter's Basilica to mark the beginning of the Jubilee year. These special occasions only take place every 25-50 years, and this Jubilee year has been given the theme 'Pilgrims of Hope.'

Prayer for the term

God, our loving father, in this Jubilee year, you remind us of our call to love creation. Help us to work together to replant, repair and renew.

Jesus, our light, in this Jubilee year, you remind us of our call to love our neighbours and to set free those who suffer. Help us to treat everyone with dignity; to be fair, forgiving and kind.

Holy Spirit, our inspiration, in this Jubilee year, you remind us of our call to grow in faith and love. Help us to hear you in scripture, to see Jesus in others and to be united as God's global family.

Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.

