



Mrs A D Thorpe
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Through following Jesus, we aim to be a caring, happy school, where everyone is valued and appreciated and can reach their true potential. We hope to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with our God.

8th December 2022

Dear Parents/carers,

Scripture of the week

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:5)

Strep A – DfE has issued the following Guidance

Scarlet Fever and Group Strep A Infections

The Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Keegan, is closely monitoring the increased cases of Group A streptococcus (Strep A) and scarlet fever. As a Department for Education, they are working closely with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), who are leading on the response. UKHSA is reporting an increased number of cases of Group A streptococcus (Strep A) compared to normal at this time of year. There is no evidence that a new strain is circulating and the increase is most likely related to high amounts of circulating bacteria and social mixing.

What are scarlet fever and Strep A?

Scarlet fever is caused by bacteria called Group A streptococci (Strep A). The bacteria usually cause a mild infection that can be easily treated with antibiotics.

In very rare occasions, the bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause an illness called invasive Group A strep (iGAS).

What are the symptoms of Strep A/scarlet fever?

Strep A infections can cause a range of symptoms that parents should be aware of, including:

- Sore throat
- Headache
- Fever
- A fine, pinkish or red body rash with a sandpapery feel
- On darker skin the rash can be more difficult to detect visually but will have a sandpapery feel

If a child becomes unwell with these symptoms, parents are advised to contact their GP practice or contact NHS 111 (which operates a 24/7 service) to seek advice. If a child has scarlet fever, they are



advised to stay at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection to others.

The Department for Education encourages all parents to trust their own judgement and if their child seems seriously unwell call 999 or go to A&E if:

- › a child is having difficulty breathing – you may notice grunting noises or their tummy sucking under their ribs
- › there are pauses when a child breathes
- › a child's [skin, tongue or lips are blue](#)
- › a child is floppy and will not wake up or stay awake.

If your child is diagnosed with Strep A then we ask that school is immediately informed, especially if your child is hospitalised for any period of time.

COVID

It has been brought to my attention that some parents believe other families are knowingly sending their children into school who have tested positive for COVID. Whilst testing is no longer mandatory and isolation is not enforceable, I would ask that if you have tested your child and they are positive to keep them off school for 3 days. I appreciate your support with this matter.

Advent Liturgies

We have now started our Christmas period of Advent with a wonderful set of musical nativities from Nursery. The children were amazing and I could see how proud the families were of their confident young super stars! So, thank you to Nursery for such a wonderful start, now handing over to the rest of the school next week, I look forward to watching all of their wonderful story telling and music.

We continue to invite all of our children's parents to attend their child's class liturgy, if you are working and unable to attend then we would be happy to see grandparents in your place, all we ask is that due to space every family choose to send no more than 4 adults to see your child. If every family adheres to that rule there will be a maximum of 120 adults watching every liturgy.

Class	Date	Time
Rainbows nativity	Tuesday 6 th December 2022	10:00am
Sunshine nativity	Thursday 8 th December 2022	10:00am
Reception Mrs Duffy nativity	Monday 12 th December 2022	10:00am
Reception Miss Rice nativity	Monday 12 th December 2022	2:00pm
Year One – Mrs O'Neil	Tuesday 13 th December 2022	10:00am
Year One Miss Young	Tuesday 13 th December 2022	2:00pm
Year Two Mrs Langford	Wednesday 14 th December 2022	10:00am
Year Two Miss Dean	Wednesday 14 th December 2022	2:00pm
Year Three Mrs Meldrum/Mrs McLean	Thursday 15 th December 2022	10:00am
Year Three Miss Cherry	Thursday 15 th December 2022	2:00pm
Year Four Mr Peacock	Friday 16 th December 2022	10:00am
Year Four Mr Bonnar	Friday 16 th December 2022	2:00pm
Year Five Miss Dolphin	Monday 19 th December 2022	10:00am
Year Five Miss McMaster	Monday 19 th December 2022	2:00pm
Year Six Mr Allen	Wednesday 21 st December 2022	10:00am
Year Six Mrs Spencer / Mrs Black	Wednesday 21 st December 2022	2:00pm

Obviously, times and dates may change and vary nearer the time, but we are hopeful that barring snowstorms or other contingencies we are as yet unaware of, that these dates will be secure.

Christmas Parties

We are inviting pupils to come and have some Christmas fun with their year groups dressed in any sort of party clothes that they are comfortable in.

Year Group	Date of Christmas Party – children can wear their own clothes
Nursery - Rainbows	Tuesday 20 th December
Nursery - Sunshine	Thursday 22 nd December
Reception	Wednesday 21 st December
Year One	Monday 19 th December
Year Two	Thursday 22 nd December
Year Three	Wednesday 21 st December
Year Four	Wednesday 21 st December
Year Five	Thursday 22 nd December
Year Six	Thursday 22 nd December

In response to EYFS parents asking to visit school more:

- **Christmas Crafts in Nursery**
 - Mrs Kingston has very kindly agreed to invite all parents or grandparents into school for a Festive stay and craft session with their children and enjoy a cup of coffee and a mince pie together on Wednesday 21st December 2022, Rainbows – 8:45am – 10:30am and Sunshine – 12:45pm – 2:30pm
- **Advance notice - Reception parents stay and cook**
 - In January, Mrs Duffy and Miss Rice will host a fun ‘Cooking with your child session.’ We hope that parent’s or grandparent’s will be able to come and share a fun morning with their child in school. As soon as the workshop leader confirms the date, we will let you know.

Annual Children’s nativity procession

Father Martin is encouraging all families to join with St John Vianney Parish and The Church of the Holy spirit at 4pm on Friday 23rd December to take part in celebrating as a Christian community. Everyone is encouraged to meet at the Church of the Holy Nativity.

Mini Vinnies

The Mini Vinnie children have made cards for some of the housebound members of the St John Vianney Parish, these were given to Father Martin to distribute and share out. The children really enjoyed taking part in an activity which help to spread some of the Christmas cheer and happiness.

Walk the World

Yesterday, our children took part in a Walk the World fund raising day for CAFOD. We were overwhelmed with the positivity and perseverance of our pupils as they considered ways to help those less fortunate than themselves. We are so proud of all our children, they all took part despite how cold and icy it was – so well done everyone.

Christmas gift tags

The school council has been working with Mrs O’Neil to make a large number of Christmas tags which children can purchase take home and write a message and then bring back to school and hang on our school Christmas Tree. Each tag will cost 50p.

Christmas Cards

Year 6 are working on a Faith in Action project and they will be collecting Christmas cards and selling them to children to send one per year group. The money collected will all be used to buy items for Newcastle's People's kitchen. We are called by the pope through Fratelli Tutti to look after our common good and our Year 6 pupils are being encouraged to reach out and support the vulnerable in Newcastle.

Travelling Nativity

We are delighted to once again, following a pause during COVID, to be sending home our travelling cribs. The Mini Vinnies have made the new packs to send home to families. We ask that you use it the evening you get it and send it straight back the following the following morning and so we can share the cribs with as many of our families as possible.

Sacrament of forgiveness

Reconciliation (also known as Confession or Penance) is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ in His love and mercy to offer sinners forgiveness for offenses committed against God. As such Father Martin has kindly agreed that during this time of Advent to come into school on Thursday 15th December and listed to pupils and staff who want to take part in this sacrament. This will be voluntary and offered to the UKS2 children and all staff.

Joining with St John Vianney Parish

Recently, the children from the children's liturgy group, who attend mass, have been making some Babushka dolls from salt dough - the pictures of their work are fabulous. We encourage all of our families to join in Sunday mass and facilitate their children attending the Sunday liturgy.

End of Term Whole School Mass

On Tuesday 20th December all the pupils will come together and celebrate mass with Father Martin leading us together in our spiritual preparation for Christmas.

Car parking

Residents on Ashdale Crescent are again raising concerns about parental behaviour at drop off and collection time. Parents have parked in front of drive ways and are reportedly being abusive to residents. Residents have been advised that they should contact the police directly reporting any incidents and giving registration numbers. I would urge all of our parents and carers to be understanding and supportive of our local community and consider where they park. Father Martin has again offered the church carpark free to anyone who wants to use it and walk over to school.

Water bottles

It has been brought to my attention that pupils, particularly in UKS2, but not exclusively, are trying to persuade parents to buy £30-£40 'Air-up' water bottles. These expensive bottles are not appropriate for school as if they get lost or broken they are too expensive to replace. Please make sure you only send your child into school with an inexpensive named water bottle to use for a drink of water during the school day.

Uniform

I really appreciate your help and support around uniform compliance and we have worked hard to reduce the cost of buying all branded goods. However, a number of the older children have started to wear trainers to school. When asked why, they have said that parents think that the new poverty proofing school uniform policy allows for this. To be clear that whilst it says plain black shoes/trainers that does not mean black and white 'Allstars', white trainers or multi coloured football trainers. If

there is an issue around financing black school shoes then please do not hesitate to contact school office and I will approach the church's SVP group to help out financially.

Almost new uniforms

There are still a large number of spare uniforms in school, please let us know if you would like any bagged up and sent home with your child. It would be a shame for them to be sat here if they could be of any use – we would be delighted to give them all away. You can send a confidential email to the office or speak in confidence to Mrs McDine, Mrs Thorpe or Mrs Meldrum at any time.

Reception Starters

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/schools-learning-and-childcare/apply-school-place/applying-reception-places>

Please be aware that the closing date for school starter applications is 15th January 2023. It is always best to use the above link and then you will have a secure log of your application process.

Advance warning of school closure

Due to the government announcing that Monday 8th May 2023 will be a bank holiday, school will be closed that day for all staff and pupils.

Diocesan consultation on admissions

There is a link to the diocese a consultation around Catholic Schools admission on the top of the school website page.

The History of Advent

Advent traditions will vary by country, but the heart behind Advent is mostly the same across cultures and denominations. Derived from the Latin word "adventus", the word advent means "arrival" or "coming". In this instance, it is used to indicate a set time(s) during the month of December to commemorate the coming of the Messiah in Jesus Christ. Advent, like Christmas, is a season of expectation, celebration, and hope, connected to the birth of the prophesied Messiah and the promise of Christ's subsequent ministry.

Advent Candles Meaning

Advent candles have meaning and symbolism for the Christian holiday season. The most common tradition typically uses four candles. Each advent candle is lit on one of the four Sundays leading up to Christmas.

The colour of these candles can vary, but it is common for the first, second, and fourth candles to be purple, while the third is rose-coloured, red, or a pinkish hue. The Catholic tradition states that the four candles, representing the four weeks of Advent, each stand for 1,000 years to total the 4,000 years from Adam to the birth of the Messiah.

First Advent Candle: The first purple candle symbolises hope. Also known as the "Prophecy Candle" in memory of the prophets, particularly Isaiah, who prophesied the birth of Christ. It symbolises the anticipation felt in awaiting the coming Messiah.

Second Advent Candle: The second purple candle symbolises faith. Also known as the "Bethlehem Candle," signifies Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem.

Third Advent Candle: The third candle is ordinarily pink and represents joy. This candle is pink because the rose colour represents joy, also known as the "Shepherd's Candle." The third Sunday of Advent is

meant to remind us of the world's joy at the birth of Jesus and that the faithful have arrived at the midpoint of Advent.

Fourth Advent Candle: The final purple candle marks the last week of Advent as we anticipate the birth of our Saviour. This final candle, also known as the "Angel's Candle," signifies peace. It reminds us of the angels' message: "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men" (Luke 2:14).

The Advent Wreath

Advent wreaths are usually fashioned out of evergreens, twisted together in a circle to symbolize continuous life across the seasons, from the death of winter to the new life of spring. Naturally, this earthly symbolism also points to the spiritual symbolism of newness and the promise of eternal life and salvation offered through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (John 3:16). The circular nature of the Advent wreath, similar to a wedding ring or band, is further meant to reflect the unending love of Christ and eternal life offered through salvation.

Holly leaves, berries, and seeds are also added to the Advent wreath. Holly leaves can be prickly and therefore used to represent the crown of thorns placed on Jesus's head during his crucifixion. Berries, which are typically red, also point to Christ's sacrifice and the bloodshed for sins. Pinecones, seeds, and nuts are also placed within the wreath as a symbol and promise of new life. Together, the elements of the Advent wreath reflect the new life and eternal salvation offered through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who we now celebrate.

The Advent Candles

In almost all Advent traditions, lighting candles is also a prominent feature of each week's commemorative celebration. Some candles are placed within or near the Advent wreath itself. Other times, they are lit separately on each Sunday beginning four weeks before Christmas. Candles and the light they produce reflect the light that came into the world with the arrival of Jesus Christ.



In most traditions, the lighting of the four candles is meant to be done as a family and will often be used to reflect on the hope, faith, joy, peace, light, and purity that came into the world with the gift of the Messiah. Families will typically light the candle together, often encouraging children to participate in the celebration. Many modern churches light an Advent candle during Sunday services to prepare for Christmas as a church family.

Regardless of specific Advent traditions and differences in how it is celebrated across cultures and countries, Advent is a time for all believers and families to commemorate the arrival of the Messiah, prepare for his second coming, and celebrate the joy of Christmas together.

We continue to keep all of our families in our thoughts and prayers during this time of Advent.

Best wishes,

A D Thorpe

Mrs A D Thorpe
Headteacher