



Mrs A D Thorpe  
Head Teacher

## St John Vianney Catholic Primary School

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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.*

### **READY, RESPECTFUL, SAFE**

15<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Dear Parents/carers,

The half term holidays are almost upon us, they have come around really quickly. Despite the cold and wet weather this week, I hope you all have some fabulous things planned for next week, trips to the beach, walks in the park, play dates with friends.

#### **Valentine's Disco**

This week our pupils have so enjoyed coming back to school, dressed in very swish outfits, ready to party and dance the night away at the Valentines Discos! It has proved a great success, a huge thank you to every member of staff who stayed behind at school to facilitate the event, most especially Mrs O'Neil who persuaded me it was a such a great idea! She was right too, the smiles and laughter that shone through on Tuesday night and I'm sure will again tonight have made it all worthwhile.

#### **MP Catherine McKinnell**

We were delighted to welcome Catherine into school this week. She spent time in both KS1 and KS2 assemblies answering children's questions about what her role as a MP involves. She gave us lots of amazing facts, there are 650 MP's who work in London.

Whilst she was here, she also walked around school and saw how fantastically our children and staff have adapted to the props in place to support all of the RAAC which is in situ. She thought everyone was amazing!

#### **RAAC Update**

As some of you will have heard in the national news that on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024, St John Vianney was named in parliament as one of the schools on the newly announced 'School Rebuilding Programme.' What this means exactly for our school, we are as yet unsure, however, to be on the list is a very positive step. Once I know more, I will let you know, as always, I want to keep you as informed as possible.

#### **Attendance**

As you all know, school continues to focus in on attendance. If your child is not in school, they cannot learn. It is normal to expect all children to have an average attendance of at least 96%. Whilst I am aware of measles, chicken pox and S&D some children are regularly absent or late. This may take different forms:

- Daily Late – School starts at 8:45am and your child should be in school ready to learn by then. The school gates open at 8:30am to support you in this. Any pupils who are persistently late will start having phone calls to parents from Jan Gurkin the attendance office from Clennell. Persistent Lateness is disruptive to the class and upsetting for your child.
- Authorised absence – When a parent rings up or emails to say their child is off sick. We are having a number of children who are regularly off sick at least once a fortnight, this will have a negative impact on their education. Those parents will have received warning letters from school, but now Jan Gurkin



will start contacting you with the view that parental contracts may need to be given out. If your child is regularly absent with illness, we may ask you for medical evidence or ask to refer your child to the school Nurse for support.

- Unauthorised absence – This is an absence which is not agreed to. For example, when you keep your child off school and do not inform school or you do inform but it is for a holiday etc. These absences will be followed up by Jan Gurkin.

If you have issues with your child not being able to attend school then please contact us as we are here to help. We need your children in school all day everyday to ensure they have the best chance to progress their learning. We of course understand when children need to be absent, some of the illnesses currently in school are outlined below. A copy of the updated Attendance Policy is available on the school website. If you would like a paper copy please contact the school office.

### **Uniform Policy**

Please remember we have a uniform policy in place (A copy of which is on the school website) to support all children and parents. We have actively sought to poverty proof the uniform. This term, I have seen a large number of children coming into school with expensive designer trainers. Please do not send your child in with these, inexpensive black shoes are required. Hair styles are also starting to move away from the uniform policy, children are coming in with shaved lines, highlighted hairstyles, long hair not tied up. Please do not send your child in with tracks cut into the hair, also beads and hair accessories should all follow the uniform policy of dark blue or black, hair bands and bobbles can be red. I would appreciate your support and help in this matter. After half term parents will start to receive phone calls from school asking why their child is not in the correct uniform. It cannot be financial as the trainers are significantly more expensive than black school shoes.

### **Year 6 Booster Sessions**

Our staff continue to support Year 6 intervention and booster sessions twice a week, after school. This is a great opportunity for children to be given small group and bespoke intervention as so many staff have volunteered to support the children in this. A huge thank you goes out to all the staff for their dedication.

### **Lunchtime Sports Clubs**

The lunchtime sports clubs are certainly proving popular, every year group accesses a club once a week at lunchtime, run by specialist PE coaches. It has certainly been embraced by the pupils and they are reporting that it is great fun!

### **Safer Internet Day**

On Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 2024 it was Safer Internet Day, all of your children worked on age appropriate ways to keep themselves safe online, using a wide variety of devices and Apps. Please remember to talk to your children about staying safe online. There is a great deal of useful information and weblinks on our school website.

<https://www.stjohnvianneynewcastle.org/web/e-safety /307677>

Can I also draw parent's attention to the fact that they should be checking their children's phones and talking about appropriate social media use? Some of our children are accessing social media sites and gaming sites that are not appropriate for their age group. Unfortunately, we have had some incidents over the last fortnight of highly inappropriate online abuse. Where children are seen to be being abusive online (Screen shots, voice recordings, tick toc video clips etc) then sanctions will be issued, such as internal or external suspensions/exclusions. It is essential that we all work together as a community to keep our children safe online, both the person who is sending messages and the person receiving them.

### **Mobile Phones**

Any child who brings a mobile phone into school, MUST switch it off and hand it into the class teacher phone box. Phones are not allowed under any circumstances to be used in school, either during the school day or during after school activities. If pupils are found to be using them, then parent's will be told that the children will have to leave their phones at home.

### Lunches

Please do not swap and change from school meals to packed lunch every other day. Pupils cannot be accommodated on the school meals system if they chop and change on a daily basis as ordering cannot be planned for this.

### School Money

As you know we are a totally cashless school, please ensure that you have an account to pay for school meals, school trips and various other activities. School cannot accept cash, if there is an issue with that then please contact the office for support.

### Ash Wednesday

Yesterday was Ash Wednesday and Y6, Y5, Y4 and Y2 went to church to receive their ashes from Fr Damian and Fr Paul. Then Mrs Meldrum and Mrs Thorpe brought ashes back to school for Y3, Y1 and EYFS pupils to receive in school. It was a poignant day for our pupils who were thinking about ways to help others and Love Jesus more, through prayer. A wonderful way to start our Lenten season.

### Parking

Once again, it has been brought to my attention that families are parking in unsafe ways both in West Denton Carpark and outside the houses of our neighbours. It is so sad to constantly have phone calls from our neighbours reporting abusive parents from our school who have sworn and shouted in front of their child in a St John Vianney Uniform, despite blocking their driveways and houses. In West Denton Carpark this week, a child was almost knocked down by another car reversing, and when the grandparent tapped the car to stop it, the parent made a rude gesture with their hand. I have had phone calls this week from staff at West Denton Primary, reporting that our parents are parking on pavements and shouting at their parents to move out of the way. I am simply shocked and disappointed by this level of behaviour from some, not all, of our parents/carers. In school, we encourage our children on a daily basis to be safe and respectful. Every member of staff tries to install a level of respectful behaviour by encouraging children to take responsibility for their own behaviour choices; this is difficult if children then go out and see and hear family members swearing, shouting and being abusive. Both myself and the Deputy Head at West Denton have told families to report the incidents to the police. It is a sad point to ask parents to report each other to the police, but I am constantly fearful of one of our children getting knocked over by a car.

### Advance Notice of World Book Day

World Book Day is on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March this year. All pupils can come dressed in their own clothes, or dressed up as a character from a book. There will be a large number of activities taking place in classrooms to support and promote the love of learning and reading books.

### Golden Book Assembly

This continues to be a wonderful way to celebrate all of your children's achievements both in and out of school. Please remember to encourage your child to bring in certificates and trophies from any outside activities they have taken part in. It is always a real pleasure to celebrate and publicly acknowledge the wonderful things your children are achieving.

### Reminder - Inset Day

Please remember that tomorrow, Friday 16<sup>th</sup> Feb is an Inset training day for staff, so school will be closed to all pupils.

Our school community will continue to keep all of school and parish families in our prayers.

Kind regards,

*A D Thorpe*

Mrs A D Thorpe  
Head teacher