



19<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Dear Parents and carers,

### Return to whole school

It really has been a joy to have most of our children back in school. We continue to work very hard to maintain the COVID-19 security around our whole school Risk Assessment to keep pupils, staff and parents safe as we continue to return to a more 'normal' life as the lockdown starts to ease. Please remember a central tenant of keeping everyone safe is that if your child or anyone in their family displays any COVID-19 symptoms please book a test and isolate until you get a negative result. Whilst I know that this continues to create difficulties for families, I and all my staff appreciate you all taking a precautionary approach to COVID-19.

### Spring Equinox

On Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March, the Spring Equinox happens, this is when the sun will be positioned directly over the Earth's equator at 09:37 Universal Time; 5:37 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time or 2:37 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time. At that particular moment, the sun will appear to shine directly overhead from a point 5 miles (8 kilometers) south of Meru, in Kenya; a city of approximately 241,000 residents.

From that moment, until the occurrence of the summer solstice on June 20<sup>th</sup>, the sun will appear to migrate northward and the length of daylight in the Northern Hemisphere will continue to increase. As the altitude of the midday sun gets progressively higher, the arc that it takes across the sky will also increase. On the date of the equinox, the sun will rise due east and will set due west. But during the coming days and weeks, as the sun's direct rays are concentrated more and more on the Northern Hemisphere, its rising and setting positions will become increasingly oriented more to the north of due east and north of due west.

This is a real marker that the seasons are moving and we hope that we will all be able to enjoy some optimism as we start to look forward.

### National Day of Reflection

Next week, on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March the country will pause for a minute's silence at midday, to reflect on this past year. It is an opportunity to remember and think about all that we have collectively been through, all of those we have lost, and all of those who have been deeply affected by the perpetual lockdowns.

You can read the statement from the presidency of the Bishop's Conference [here](#). St. Mary's Cathedral will be open all day with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Mass will be celebrated at 12.05pm. Bishop Robert will celebrate Mass at 7.00pm for all those who have suffered from COVID. Fr. Adrian Dixon has shared some Reading and Prayers for the Day, which you can read and download here; [A4](#) or [A5 booklet](#).

### **EEA and Swiss Citizens**

If you are an EEA or Swiss citizen living in the UK you have until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 to apply to the [EU Settlement Scheme](#) to protect your rights in the UK. Please make sure you apply before the national deadline.

### **School Bags**

Before pupils returned to school I asked parents not to send their child into school with large ruck sac style bags. I am really asking for parents to help us and as children do not need to carry lots into school and currently we do not have the space to store them. Government Guidance also suggests that they are a COVID-19 risk. Please could you use a small school book bag instead, which can be purchased for £6 from <https://totstoteams.com/> If you are struggling financially, then please contact the school office in confidence, we can support you with this purchase.

### **World Down Syndrome Day**

On Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March, people from across the world will come together to celebrate the unique joy of [diversity](#). We want celebrate that we are all unique and special in the eyes of God. This year an external manifestation of this day is to wear odd socks and share your images through social media using the hashtags #LotsOfSocks, #WorldDownSyndromeDay and #WDSD20. This year the global theme is “We Decide” inspired by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which supports effective and meaningful participation as a core human right.

### **Anti-Racism working group established in Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle**

Bishop Robert Byrne CO has commissioned a working group to raise awareness of racism, from micro-racial aggression to the fatal consequences of major racism. The group was established following the death of George Floyd and the rise of the Black Lives Matter protest, when a parishioner approached the Diocese with a request that some action be taken. At the request of Bishop Robert, the parishioner was put into contact with Fr. Adrian Tuckwell, the Episcopal Vicar for Caritas, who contacted members of the Pastoral Forum and, with the blessing of the Diocese, created the Anti-Racism Working Group.

On 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021, the Diocese held a launch anti-racism webinar titled “*Racism: A Challenge for our Diocese*” which aimed to raise awareness of racism and its consequences. More than 60 people attended the event. If you would like to read more about the background, the webinar and how you can get involved, please [click here](#).

### **Fr Martin Morris**

Father has very kindly agreed to share both staff and pupil prayers sessions with us over the coming months. He will be popping into school to share moments of peace and prayer with us so sometimes your child will be encouraged to share their thoughts and prayers which they have had with Fr with you at home. I am very grateful to Father for the time he is taking to come and be part of our Catholic School community. This week he spent time with each of the Year 6 classes, reflecting on this Lenten season and on Wednesday he spent a very peaceful time reflecting with staff on the Feast of St Patrick.

### **Feast Days**

On Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March it was the feast of St Patrick.

On Friday 19<sup>th</sup> March it was the feast of St Joseph

On Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March it will be the feast day of St Cuthbert

### Holy week

Over the course of Holy Week, all the pupils will take part in at least one socially distanced liturgy within the confines of COVID-19 rules and regulations. It is important to be able to take time together to refocus and energise ourselves. Father Martin has also agreed to come into school on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021 to bless every classroom and all the children in each classroom, we all appreciate him taking time to bless our children.

With all of our collective prayers we are hoping that the vaccine will bring some much longed for light at the end of the tunnel. Soon we can start meeting friends, families and reconnect with loved ones. I continue to keep you and all of your families in my thoughts and prayers during this challenging time, as we are not quite there yet.

Best wishes,

*A D Thorpe*

Mrs A. D. Thorpe  
Head teacher