

St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School



Headteacher: Mrs Catherine Hughes MA (Cantab), PGCE

Worple Street, Mortlake

London SW14 8HE

Telephone: 020 8876 6679

Email: admin@st-marymagdalens.richmond.sch.uk

Website: www.st-marymagdalens.richmond.sch.uk

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Dear Parents,

Thank you for your help and support with the slight changes we have made to the timings of the day this week. It is great to be able to add a little more learning time to the school day. I know that we had lots of tired children (and staff!) at the end of last week but it has been wonderful to see the enthusiasm with which the children have approached their work this week as well as the warm welcome they have shown to our new pupils. Their behaviour is a real testament to their resilience and kindness.

I would like to say a huge thank you to the teachers for their hard work preparing this week's information meetings and the termly overviews that have been sent to you today. I am afraid we have faced some technical difficulties so that thank you for your understanding. I hope you found them informative. I feel very lucky to have such hard working and enthusiastic staff who have worked tirelessly to support your children as they make their transition back to school.

Many of you asked about what we are doing in terms of "catching up" on the learning that that some children have missed due to Covid19. Since lockdown, we have been focussed on creating a tailored curriculum to address the needs of all the children. We are aware that many children have found this long period out of school challenging but also that many families have thrived. It is with this diversity of experience in mind that we are approaching teaching and learning across the school, whilst also being mindful that it is vital for our children not to feel anxious or pressured.

Prior to the summer break, your child's previous class teacher completed assessments based on their knowledge of your child and also identified areas of the curriculum and key skills that their class had not yet covered, or which might require further reinforcement. This has informed our planning over the past two weeks. We are also in the process of assessing the children to ascertain where they are now, after giving them some time to settle back into the school routine. However, in order for these assessments to be accurate, children must feel comfortable and confident so we are approaching any assessments in a relaxed manner, making the children aware that these are simply for us to help identify how we can best support and challenge them going forward.

When we have completed the assessments, we will look at the common areas for development and address these within our lessons or by altering timetables to allow for additional teaching and learning to take place in areas which require additional support. For example, children in Year 1 will have had less opportunity to practise composing and writing sentences in school and many will need additional support with handwriting and spelling.

There are also some general adaptations we have made in order to support all the children emotionally as they return to school. We have bought an excellent PSHE scheme of work which we will be using throughout the year. This is rooted in a mindful approach to personal, social and emotional wellbeing and includes lessons about the transition back to school with opportunities for pupils to talk about and manage their feelings and experiences. Lessons look at belonging and feeling safe, reconnecting with friends, looking forward and being positive, managing fears and worries and celebrating what we are grateful for. They work alongside our Religion lessons and the rich Catholic life of our school which always aims to give our children strength and reassurance in the knowledge of God and His love. We are very blessed that Father Adrian continues to visit our classes to help maintain our strong Parish links. Whilst this is not the same as the whole school masses we usually enjoy as a community, it offers a very unique opportunity to nurture our children's Faith.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

We are also utilising the new Emotional Health Service Online Resource Hub which has a wealth of information and resources to support well-being. Its focus is very much on thriving and prevention through initiatives which support mental wellness, emotional well-being and resilience. It also includes some useful online workshops about issues you may be concerned about <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7440417> . I would also like to reiterate that whilst catching up at the end of the school day face to face is not ideal in the current circumstances, we are still keen to work closely with parents in order to help your children make the best possible progress. Please do speak to your child's teacher or contact the school office if you wish to talk at greater length. We are currently looking at how to arrange parents' evening for the week commencing 19th October and we will keep you informed regarding arrangements for this.

When all assessments are completed, we will look again at our provision and there will be focussed support for children who have significant gaps in their learning and those who are working far beyond age related expectations. This may involve additional small group work on key skills or knowledge, work to support social and emotional development or opportunities to be challenged. Finally, there will targeted support for those with the greatest need which may involve 1:1 tuition or the involvement of outside agencies in order meet their needs.

We are also looking at ways that we can continue to offer the children rich and varied experiences. I am delighted to say that we will be participating in the Spark Book Awards <https://sparkbookaward.co.uk/> . This is a new initiative in Kingston and Richmond focussed on developing a love of reading, sharing a range of new high-quality children's fiction and inspiring children to write. We have a long tradition of excellence in reading at our school and this is a wonderful opportunity for us to continue this and encourage in our pupils a lifelong love of reading.

We are always keen to find purposeful and enjoyable reasons for our children to write, and we are excited to be able to offer the children the opportunity to have a Polish pen pal. One of our parents, Anna Podolak, has kindly put us in touch with a school in Warsaw and as we have been forced, in many ways, to make our world relatively small, it is a great opportunity for children to find out about others' experiences and have the joy and excitement of receiving a letter from a friend. If your child is interested in participating, please email admin@st-marymagdalens.richmond.sch.uk

Whilst we all find ourselves in slightly altered circumstances, it is wonderful to see children continuing to thrive in our school. This week, I have been fortunate see some insightful work in Religion from Sophia Norton in year 6 and to be treated to some imaginative animal poetry from Alessio, Amelia, Antonio, Emilia, Lucia and Sienna in year 2.

I am also delighted to announce our pupils of the week. It is such a joy to see the wide range of reasons that these children have been awarded their certificates, from their exemplary attitude towards learning to their kind and compassionate friendship. It is a weekly reminder of what a privilege it is to work with all our pupils and their families. Well done to:

Seahorses (Rec) – Joe Lynch
Turtles (Y1) – Patrick Dolan-Bent
Starfish (Y2D) – Kairo Nguyen
Angel Fish (Y2T) – Sienna Campbell
Seals (Y3) - Mia Turner and Zoe Mangion
Dolphins (Y4) – Angus Aitchison
Manta Rays (Y5) – Kidus Gebre
Blue Whales (6D) – Alexia Boghossian and Jena Carlton
Orcas (Y6F) – Rafael Newbold

Thank you again for your continued support.

I hope you have a wonderful weekend with your children.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Hughes
Headteacher

