

St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School



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Dear Parents,

Thank you to all those who responded to our Google form regarding our online provision and queries for teachers. We appreciate your feedback and I am very grateful to the teachers for their efforts working with families to resolve any outstanding issues and offer support.

At the end of our third week of remote education, I remain incredibly appreciative of the mammoth efforts our children and their families are putting in. This week, we received a letter from the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, regarding the reopening of schools. Unfortunately, the government still do not feel they are able to confirm that pupils will return to school after the half term. However, the letter does state, "We will inform schools, colleges and parents ahead of the February half term. As this means that the uncertainty around how long children will be learning from home remains, I would urge you to be kind to yourselves and take time off for your well-being when it is necessary. This remains our priority as school so please don't hesitate to contact us if you need further support.

When considering the reopening of schools, I am sure the rates both locally and nationally will be considered, the capacity of the NHS and the progress that has been made with vaccination. I also believe that the impact of testing within schools will play a part and I am pleased to inform you that staff will be able to carry out home tests from Monday 25th January. This initiative is aimed at identifying asymptomatic carriers as a means of stopping the spread. It also contributes towards our understanding of the virus, as well offering us greater certainty in terms of the provision we are able to maintain both remotely and on site in the long term

I know you are aware that by participating in this testing our staff are, once again, contributing towards keeping our community safe and well. I am sure therefore that you will understand the importance of treating any information you receive or observe as a consequence of this process with the utmost respect and confidentiality.

As we are all spending more time online. I have attached an excellent presentation from Peter Cowley, the Lead Advisor for Online Services and Safety for Achieving for Children. It revisits lots of the ways you can keep your child safe online and provides useful links and resources. Safeguarding both online and in real life is more important than ever in these challenging times so please do contact the school if you have concerns regarding a pupil. You can always speak to myself or our designated safe-guarding lead, Mrs Burns, in confidence by ringing the school office and saying you have a safe-guarding concern. You do not need to give your name. You can also contact the single point of access directly by calling 0208 891 7969.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

SPARK Books Awards 2021

As the possibilities for our weekends are relatively limited at the moment, it is a great opportunity to enjoy a bit of escapism by settling down with a good book. Research has found that just six minutes of reading a day can reduced stress levels by 68% and so, with this in mind, we are very excited to be participating in the SPARK book awards alongside 79 other schools in Richmond and Kingston. A panel of local librarians, booksellers and staff from Achieving for Children have been hard at work selecting books for the awards and the shortlists have now finally been revealed for each age group. These can be found on the SPARK awards website <https://sparkbookaward.co.uk/> and the link is also available in your child's Google classroom stream.

Throughout the term, the teachers and children will be reading these books and voting for their favourites. We will be able to access virtual author visits, complete engaging activities around the texts and take part in smaller competitions, where prizes will be won by the Kingston and Richmond pupils who have given the most interesting and creative responses to the shortlisted books. When the competition ends in June, our school will attend a virtual awards ceremony where the winner will be announced.

We will be purchasing some copies of the books for our classroom libraries, but if you would like to purchase a personal copy for your child, The Regency Bookshop in Surbiton is also offering a time limited discount of 30% off copies of the books until **30th January 2021**. Your order must be made through the school via SCOPay and the books will be available to collect from our school site. More information about how to access this discount is in the accompanying letter. Kingston and Richmond library services are also ordering additional copies of the shortlisted books to make them available to as many children and families as possible.

You and your children remain in my thoughts and prayers.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Hughes,
Headteacher

