



St Chad's
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



Autumn Second Half Newsletter

Dear Parents and Carers,

Autumn Second Half Term Newsletter

The second half of the Autumn Term is well underway and the seasons of Advent and Christmas are fast approaching. This newsletter contains lots of information about special events in school through Advent and up to Christmas. You will also find lots of important updates about our school which we hope you will find useful. As always, we are here to serve you and your children and if you need our help with any issues relating to the school or your child's learning, wellbeing, happiness or safety at school, never hesitate to get in touch as soon as possible.

Safeguarding: Keeping Children Safe

Our school is committed to safeguarding and safe practices and you can read our policy on our website. The designated safeguarding leads are Mr Hinton and Mrs Chapman, and Miss Polito, Mrs Smith and Miss Oakley are the deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads. In our breakfast and after school clubs, Mrs Newey, Mrs Stevenson and Miss Clarke are all trained deputy designated safeguarding leads. If you are concerned about your own child or any other child, please speak to one of our safeguarding leads straight away. We strictly follow all of the local safeguarding protocols of Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership – you can find these in our policy (on our website) and on the DSPP website: <https://safeguarding.dudley.gov.uk/safeguarding/child/>

Our Catholic Schools Pupil Profile Values this half term are Learned and Wise

Learned: Learning everything we can from Jesus' teachings – not just learning the stories, but learning the meanings and morals of what Jesus teaches, and applying them to our daily lives.

Wise: Using everything we learn from Jesus to make the right choices. Understanding that the right choice is often the hardest choice and knowing that Jesus' way is always the right way.

The Holy season of Advent starts on the First Sunday of Advent: Sunday 28th November

In the Catholic Church we spend the first weeks of Advent preparing not for Christmas – but preparing our lives for the time that Christ comes to the world again. In school, we are asking the children to make promises based on being more like Jesus and involving them in charitable activities. The last weeks of Advent focus on celebrating the first Christmas – and you can be assured the Nativity Gospel will be taught in detail to all of the children during Advent.



We are sorry that we are not having live audiences in school and we are really grateful for your understanding

With a heavy heart, we have taken the advice to provide recordings of our Nativity / Christmas assemblies and not to welcome live audiences into the school. We held off making this decision whilst we monitored virus rates and liaised with our public health colleagues. Regrettably, the virus rate does not seem to be reducing and indeed is currently high in our local area. The decision to not have audiences in the school has not been taken lightly and is based solely on keeping the children, parents, carers, grandparents, family members, friends and school staff as safe as possible. Welcoming large groups of people into the school over the course of several days inevitably comes with a risk and the last thing we would ever want to do is put anyone at risk of illness at Christmas time.

We can all be much more optimistic about next Christmas and we would certainly like to hope that we can start to welcome parents into school at some point in the Spring or Summer. We are disappointed that things cannot be back to normal for this Christmas but we hope you can understand our intention this year is purely to keep everyone as safe and healthy as possible.

We wrote to you separately with information about the Christmas plays. At the moment we are collecting everyone's consent forms – please let us know if you give permission for your child to be filmed. Details of how to access your child's password-protected assembly on Vimeo will be sent out once the assemblies have been recorded in the week leading up to the Christmas holidays.



Christmas Activities for the children in school

Friday 3rd December: Charity Christmas Jumper Day / Own Clothes / Christmas Clothes Day

All of the children are invited to donate 50p or £1 (or more if you choose) to our Christmas Charity fundraising. Donating is optional and is much appreciated, but not compulsory. The children in each class will choose a charity to donate the money they raise to. Charity is an important part of Advent and this is a fun way to raise funds and help the children to think deeply about the charity they would like to support with the money they raise.

Friday 10th December: School fund Christmas Jumper Day / own Clothes / Christmas Clothes Day

All of the children are invited to donate 50p or £1 (or more if you choose) towards our school fund. Donating is optional and is much appreciated but not compulsory. The school fund is used to pay for extras for the children that the school budget does not fund. With almost two years without Christmas fairs, raffles, summer fairs and sponsored events, our school fund is currently empty - your kind donations will help us to pay for nice extras for the children that we otherwise cannot afford.

Tuesday 14th December: DISCOS and Christmas Crafts / Afternoon: Own Clothes Day

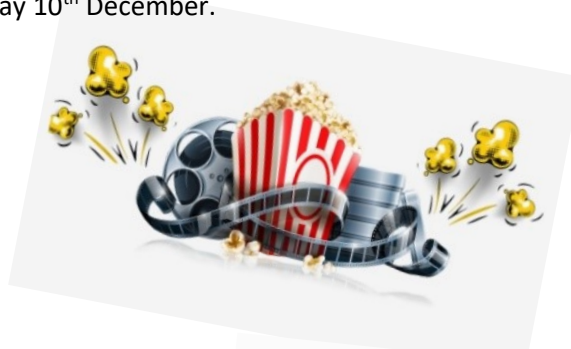
Please donate £1 towards the cost of the disco if you can. There will be separate discos for each pair of classes that normally have their lunch and playtime together. There will be a Nursery and Reception Disco, a Year 1 and 2 Disco, Year 3 and 4 and Year 5 and 6. Morning Nursery children are welcome to come back for the Disco and Miss Link / Mrs Smith / Mrs Westwood can give you the details!



Wednesday 15th December: Christmas Dinner Day and Movie afternoon

School dinners at St Chad's are of an exceptionally high standard since our new contractor, Miquill, took over in September. We have a lovely permanent cook, Sam, who does a really good job of providing the best quality food using fresh ingredients wherever possible.

Christmas Dinner costs £2.40. It must be booked in advance so Sam can order the food in good time. Please order via Schoolcomms no later than Friday 10th December.



Father Christmas will be calling at St Chad's!

Father Christmas will be popping in to the classrooms before the end of term to say hello and drop off a bag of treats for all of the classes!



Mr Hinton is moving to a new role within the Academy after Christmas

I will be leaving my role as Executive Headteacher at Christmas to become the Primary School Improvement Leader supporting all of the primary schools in our Catholic Multi Academy Company from January, (including St Chad's). When I came to St Chad's in January 2020 nothing could have prepared any of us for what lay ahead for the entire world a bit later that year. Despite the significant challenges we have all faced over the last two years I am really pleased with the significant improvements we have been able to make at St Chad's for the children. When the time comes to welcome you back into school you will see for yourselves our beautifully refurbished school and the many improved resources and approaches to teaching and learning, safety, Catholic Life and the happy school culture we have developed. It has been my great honour to serve you and the children at St Chad's and I am delighted that in my new role I will be involved in supporting the interim head and the new permanent head when they are appointed.

Thank you very much for your kind words of support throughout my time at St Chad's which have been very much appreciated and have meant such a lot to me. My great sadness is that I was unable to continue the weekly merit assemblies, Masses, parent workshops and so on that we started in early 2020. It was my firmest intention to build that weekly face-to-face relationship with parents and families, and to actively welcome you into our school. This was sadly only able to happen for about 8 weeks. Covid stopped that from continuing, but this period will eventually end - hopefully in the relatively near future - and I know the school will welcome you back with open arms at that time.

Mrs Bickley will be the Interim Headteacher through to Easter or September, depending on when a permanent headteacher can take up post

Mrs Bickley will be the interim headteacher at St Chad's until a permanent headteacher can take up the post. Mrs Bickley will be at the school until Easter or the summer depending on when the new, permanent head can start.

Mrs Bickley will be supported by our senior teachers, Miss Polito and Miss Oakley, who will be the teachers in charge on the days Mrs Bickley is not in school.

A permanent, full time Assistant Headteacher will be appointed to deputise for the headteacher in due course. Directors expect to confirm this before Christmas and we will let you know once the Assistant Head has been appointed.

Mrs Bickley is an exceptional Catholic headteacher with years of experience. She led her last school to Outstanding in 2019 before she left to take up advisory, consultancy and interim support work. I know Mrs Bickley professionally and I cannot think of a better headteacher to take care of St Chad's and move it forward. Mrs Bickley will take good care of the children and she will continue to improve the school. I know you will make her welcome.

The Directors of our Catholic Multi Academy Company are now also in the process of recruiting a permanent headteacher. The new appointment will be head of St Chad's (not an Executive Head of two schools) – meaning they can devote all of their time and energy to the school and build on the work we have already done.

Great care is being taken to ensure the next term or so is a smooth and happy one for the school where standards are maintained and continue to improve. I am more than confident that St Chad's is in very safe hands and I will be personally involved, in my new role, in supporting the school to continue improving.

Mrs Chapman will be returning to St Joseph's full-time

For the vast majority of parents and carers Mrs Chapman has been the invisible support to Mr Hinton as Executive Head of School. This is because she has been based at St Joseph's whilst Mr Hinton came to St Chad's. That said, Mrs Chapman gladly doubled up on all of her duties and has worked closely with teachers at St Chad's to improve teaching and learning, radically improve the quality of R.E., Collective Worship and Catholic Life and has supported Mr Hinton to monitor teaching and train staff. Whilst most of you have never met Mrs Chapman due to school being closed to parents for much of the past two years, her contribution to the rapid improvement of St Chad's has been very significant and we would really like to thank her for all of the additional duties she took on to support our school, whilst also taking care of St Joseph's. Mrs Chapman returns solely to St Joseph's after Christmas.

Happy Retirement!



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Mrs Hunt (Year 4 Teacher) will be retiring at Christmas. Miss Wood will be replacing her.

Mrs Hunt will be retiring at Christmas after twenty years of dedicated service at St Chad's. Mrs Hunt stands out as a teacher who has always gone the extra mile and tried to do her absolute best for the children. She will be very much missed but will hopefully be staying with us to do some supply and support teacher work in the future.

We would all like to wish Mrs Hunt a long and happy retirement and thank her most sincerely for her generous service to the community at St Chad's.



Miss Wood will be the new Year 4 teacher from January

We are delighted to welcome Miss Wood as our new Year 4 teacher. Miss Wood is an experienced Catholic teacher with several years' experience teaching in Catholic schools in Sandwell. Miss Wood is a permanent appointment and she will be coming in to meet the Year 4 children before Christmas.

Our new office manager and Operations Manager is Mrs Toddington

Mrs Toddington has joined us as the Operations Manager across St Chad's and St Joseph's. Mrs Toddington will manage the offices in both schools and will split her full-time week between St Chad's and St Joseph's. Mrs Cox is here full time as the school administrator but you will certainly be seeing Mrs Toddington in the office and speaking to her on the phone and she is very much looking forward to serving you.



Children should be entering school via the playground entrances (except afternoon Nursery) NOT the office

Doors open at 8.45am and school starts at 9am. Children who arrive after 9am receive a late mark. (In cases of persistent lateness, we reserve the right to make a referral to the Education Investigation Service)

Some parents and carers are using the main front entrance (office entrance) to drop off children who are on-time or early for school. Please can we politely ask you to use the main entrances on the playground. The office entrance to the school is only to be used for children who are late for school (after 9am) – otherwise please use the playground entrances.

If you bring your child to the office and they are not late you will be asked to take them round to the playground. Obviously, there is flexibility in a genuine emergency but otherwise please use the official entrances for each year group. Thank you as always for your support.

School Fund Donations

St Chad's does not benefit from a generous school budget. Our finances are extremely tight and we have to work very hard indeed to stretch our budget to do the best we possibly can for the children.

As well as inviting you to make a small donation for Christmas Jumper Day, we would like to ask you to consider donating to our school fund, if you are able to and if you would like to. Donating is not required or expected but it would be very much appreciated. Whatever you feel happy to donate would be very much appreciated and 100% of all donations goes towards providing extras for the children that the school budget does not provide for. Please don't feel obligated – but if you would like to help and can afford to do so – your donation to the school fund is very important and much appreciated.

You can make your donation on Schoolcomms and the facility to donate has been set up on there for you.



Church Car Park

The Church Car Park is not part of the school's jurisdiction as you know, but we have been working closely with Fr Paul to try to make it a safer environment in the mornings and afternoons, whilst allowing Church users to use the parking facility during the day.

You may have noticed our site staff are now putting the bollard up every morning and afternoon to block access to the car park during the children's arrival and departure times.

Sadly, even this has not fully solved the problem because at least one driver was recently seen managing to carefully navigate around the bollard in order to get onto the car park.

An additional bollard will be installed in order to physically prevent cars from getting on the car park. This will take a short while to sort out while we obtain funding and appoint a contractor to install it but you can be assured we are working on it.

Regardless of the safety measures in place – please continue to supervise your children really, really carefully on the Church car park. An additional bollard is on the way!

Pupil Premium – you can help us access precious extra funding – very easily!

Please apply for free school meals if you are on a low income and / or receive benefits. As well as receiving a free school meal or sandwich every day (if you choose to take it), you will generate significant funding for our school for many years to come – funding that is all spent on better provision for the children.

Please visit <https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/benefits/free-school-meals/> for full details and to apply instantly online.

Free school meals for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2

If you are eligible for income-based free school meals, please apply so we can access the pupil premium funding. Please remember that **ALL** children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to a free school lunch every day.

Our new catering company, Miquill, and our new school cook, Sam, really do offer excellent quality fresh food. There is a choice of hot meals, sandwiches and jacket potatoes together with a salad bar.

Meals are provided FREE for all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 – please take advantage of your entitlement. There IS such a thing as a free lunch if you're In Reception, Year 1 or Year 2!



Food and drink in school

Cakes and sweets for children's birthdays – food allergies

We have a number of children in school with food allergies. When parents and carers generously send in birthday cakes or sweets not all children can accept the gifts because of food allergies. This means that the school is finding alternatives – sometimes involving staff having to go off site to the shops to find suitable replacements. Sadly, this isn't always practical so it is safest that we ask you **not to send in cakes or sweets for children's birthdays** because of the difficulties we experience in ensuring everyone's food allergies are met. We're really sorry to have to make this restriction but we hope you'll appreciate that ensuring everyone is kept safe has to be our priority.

Choking Hazards – grapes, tomatoes and similar small fruit – please chop into pieces before sending to school.

Small fruits such as grapes and cherry tomatoes present a serious choking hazard if they are swallowed whole. If you are sending your child to school with small fruits like this, please make sure they have been chopped into small pieces. All small fruit that is served at school is chopped so that it presents less of a choking hazard.



Nut Free School

Children may have nut allergies without parents yet being aware. In order to maintain as safe an environment as possible, St Chad's is a nut-free school. **Please can we ask that you don't send your child to school with nuts to eat or with any nut-rich products such as Nutella or peanut butter.** Chocolate spread without nuts is a safer alternative.

Healthy Playtime Snacks and healthy lunchboxes

Please can we ask you to only send healthy snacks for playtimes and lunchtimes. For playtime a piece of fruit is ideal, though a biscuit, very small chocolate bar or small bag of low-fat crisps is also acceptable. Big bags of crisps, high sugar snacks or big chocolate bars are not healthy snacks and are not suitable for playtimes. **We don't want to 'ban' any foods in moderation** but we do need to ask you to keep a close eye on playtime snacks and help us to make sure all snacks are as healthy as possible.

Similarly, at lunchtimes, please can we ask you to ensure lunchboxes don't contain big bags of crisps, big chocolate bars or any other high-fat or high-sugar products. A small bag of low-fat crisps, a biscuit or a very small chocolate are acceptable – but please try to keep high-fat or high-sugar foods to healthy levels.

We want the children to be able to enjoy a balanced diet and we feel that 'banning' any foods is at odds with making healthy choices. We would much rather help the children understand how to enjoy 'everything in moderation' and encourage them to make healthy choices wherever possible, enjoying treats in moderation. Thank you for supporting us.

Water bottles and drinks

ALL children from Nursery to Year 6 are encouraged to bring in a bottle of water from home each day. **The bottle is taken home at the end of the day to be washed** and returned to school the following day. Staff will refill bottles during the day if required, adhering to hygiene procedures.

We encourage your child to be drinking water, but we will allow them to have NO ADDED SUGAR, WELL DILUTED SQUASH OR WELL DILUTED JUICE in their bottle as an alternative.

Fizzy drinks, undiluted juice and any forms of energy drinks are **strictly not allowed**. Thank you for your support.

Uniform Reminders

Thank you so much for upholding the high standards of uniform that St Chad's is so well known and highly regarded for. Please can you help us to ensure:

- **Long hair** is tied back at all times
- **Hair bows, hair bands and ribbons are small and not excessive in size.** School colours are preferred.
- **No jewellery is allowed** – no earrings, bracelets, necklaces etc. **Nail varnish is not allowed.**
- **Safe, smart and sensible school shoes are worn**, no trainers or fashion shoes.
- Boys wear **plain grey socks all year**, girls wear **red tights or knee length socks in KS1** and **bottle green knee length socks/ tights in KS2** (winter uniform) **white ankle / knee socks** (summer uniform)

Our NEW breakfast and After School clubs are open and we have spaces available!

- We've been receiving very positive feedback about our new breakfast and after school clubs, both of which are managed by our own Level 3 qualified staff and supported by our own teaching assistants. Breakfast club runs from 7.30am to the start of school, and costs £5 including a breakfast snack. After school club runs from 3.15pm to 5.45pm and costs £6 up to 4.30pm, or £10 up to 5.45pm. A snack is served after school for all children. Our staff lead play, sports, chat, provide games and the children have access to the computers, all of which offer safe, filtered internet access. Please contact the office to register and book a place for your child. There are deputy designated safeguarding leads on duty in all of our clubs.



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Our NEW nursery class is open – and it's really nice!

We're delighted with our new nursery. Our three and four-year olds, and their parents and carers really like it too!

We were late in marketing the nursery due to delays in getting the go ahead from the government caused by the pandemic. That means we have spaces available for mornings, afternoons and all-day children. Nursery children can start with us in the term after their 3rd birthday.

A place in the Nursery doesn't guarantee admission to the main school. This is the same for all school nurseries.

We'd be really grateful if you could tell others about our Nursery so that we can welcome more little people to St Chad's! Thank you for your support!

We are working to open a NEW entrance to the playgrounds and to Nursery and Reception from Catholic Lane

We are currently having some work done to fence off the old mobile unit and other currently derelict areas. Very soon, we will be able to open the gate which was the old entrance to Sedgley Kids Club as an additional entrance to the playground and to Nursery and Reception Class. This will also be the nursery entrance and exit meaning children don't have to use the main office entrance in the middle of the day. This will provide everyone with an alternative to walking through the Church car park, help facilitate social distancing and be much more convenient for our nursery children and their families. We'll let you know when everything is ready to open!

After School Clubs

We know how popular our After School clubs are with our children, and we are sorry that we have been unable to run these during recent months, due to Covid restrictions. However, we are hoping to have a number of various After School clubs up and running from early next term, and we will be in touch with more details as soon as they are organised.

Keep in touch

Your satisfaction with our school and the happiness, safety and academic progress of your child are the reasons we are all here.



If you have any concerns or worries, no matter how small, please let us know so we can do everything we can to make things better and resolve your concerns.

There is always a senior teacher on duty at the school during school hours and there is always someone who can help.

Never hesitate to get in touch.

I will be in touch again before Christmas to say a proper Goodbye and to wish you and your family the best.

Until then, every kind wish as always

Mr M Hinton
Executive Principal