



# St. Richard's RC Primary School Newsletter 2020

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020

## **FIFTH WEEK OF LENT**

Today is the feast day of Saint Francis of Paola. Appropriately, given our current challenges, Francis was an Italian hermit. He was born in Calabria in 1416 and died in France in 1507. He founded a congregation of hermits which later became the Order of Minims. He was named after St Francis of Assisi. Francis of Paola and his first small band of followers lived originally in caves and sought to live humble lives of prayer and self-denial (they ate no meat and used no animal products). They sought to be alone from - and to be unknown by - the rest of the world. We can ask for the prayers of Saint Francis Paola to strengthen us as God strengthened him in order to live a new kind of lifestyle, no matter how temporary and imposed our current version of it is. St Francis of Paola's favourite phrase was, 'Out of Love' meaning that all we do and all we bear should be out of love for each other and love for God.

**Let us pray:** Dear God our Father, who raised Saint Francis of Paola to the glory of your saints, grant we pray, that by his merits and example we may happily attain the rewards promised to the humble. Amen.

## **PAUSE FOR THOUGHT**

The prose poem below, written recently by Kitty O'Meara, a retired teacher from Wisconsin, USA, offers a fundamentally optimistic vision of how things can be during (as well as might be after) coronavirus. We reproduce it here in the hope that it will bring comfort:

"And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently. And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal. And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed."

## **SCHOOL REMAINS CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

As you are all very aware, St Richard's closed on Friday 20th March 2020. Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be. There is no requirement - even for parents who are key workers in critical sectors - to send their child(ren) to school if they do not need or want to. A downloadable application form (which must be printed off, filled in, signed and brought back to school) for parents who are key workers in critical sectors is still available at [www.st-richards.manchester.sch.uk](http://www.st-richards.manchester.sch.uk)

## **STAYING IN TOUCH AND INFORMED WHILE WE ARE CLOSED**

Please make a habit of visiting the home page of the school website ([www.st-richards.manchester.sch.uk](http://www.st-richards.manchester.sch.uk)) regularly for updates on the coronavirus situation as it impacts on our school community. We will also use ParentMail texts as well as this weekly newsletter in order to communicate important information while we are closed. The weekly newsletter will be available every Thursday afternoon at: [www.st-richards.manchester.sch.uk/key-information/letters-reports/](http://www.st-richards.manchester.sch.uk/key-information/letters-reports/) Please feel free to email [comments@st-richards.manchester.sch.uk](mailto:comments@st-richards.manchester.sch.uk) in order to stay in touch with school during the closure period. You are welcome to share any questions or concerns and we will endeavour to respond. During the closure period, some families will also receive phone calls from school staff to have a chat about how things are going.

## **FURTHER ADVICE**

One Education are inviting parents or carers who require any further advice or support relating to the Coronavirus situation from an educational psychologist to contact the following help line: 0161 276 0115 - Monday to Friday 09:00-12:00

## **MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL (MCC) WELFARE SCHEME**

For families who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals and who are in need of additional financial support, please continue to visit:

[https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/200008/benefits\\_and\\_support/6302/apply\\_for\\_a\\_cash\\_grant\\_if\\_you\\_are\\_in\\_financial\\_crisis](https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/200008/benefits_and_support/6302/apply_for_a_cash_grant_if_you_are_in_financial_crisis)

This is a temporary local authority-run scheme. MCC has asked us to pass on the message that their benefits team are working hard to process all the applications for the welfare fund as quickly as possible. There has been a massive spike with initial applications and the team are hoping to have payments to families within the next 7 days. Funding will be backdated to Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March.

For parents of pupils at St Richard's, this MCC scheme will continue until **Friday 17th April**. From **Monday 20th April**, we will have transferred to the national voucher scheme (see below). From this date, the MCC Scheme will not be available to parents and carers of children who are normally entitled to benefits-related free school meals. After Monday 20th April the MCC scheme will still be available but only to families who are **not** currently eligible for FSM but who are experiencing hardship as a result of COVID-19.

## **VOUCHERS FOR PARENTS OF PUPILS ELIGIBLE FOR BENEFITS-RELATED FREE SCHOOL MEALS**

The MCC Welfare Provision Scheme was designed to be temporary until a national scheme could be put in place. The Department for Education (DfE) has now developed a national voucher scheme to support schools to provide parents of pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals with supermarket vouchers in term time whilst school is closed to them. Vouchers will be made available only to the adult with main caring responsibility for that child.

From Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April, St Richard's will be able to provide eligible families with a weekly supermarket shopping voucher worth £15 per child, while schools are closed due to coronavirus. We will be providing vouchers electronically (which can then be redeemed online via a code). We can only do this if we have up to date and useable email addresses.

Over the next few days, school will be phoning those eligible parents for whom we do not have an email address to ask for one. If these parents do not have an email account, we will allow them to provide an alternative email address (eg - of a trusted friend) to which they are happy for the voucher to be sent. If neither of these options is available, parents will have to come to school to pick up a paper voucher.

To easily check your free school meal eligibility online, all you need is your personal details and your National Insurance Number/National Asylum Seekers number. Go to: <https://www.cloudforedu.org.uk/ofsm/sims/>

## **UPDATED HOME LEARNING ON THE SCHOOL WEBSITE**

We appreciate the challenges faced by parents and carers as a result of the enforced and prolonged national school closure. We are very keen to assist the children of St Richard's in continuing to learn from home. At a distance, this presents challenges in itself. We are also very keen that parents do not incur additional costs (eg - printer ink and paper) at a time when lots of our families are experiencing financially challenging circumstances. We have updated the Home Learning pages of our school website with new activities for children in every year group. This content should be used from Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April. It is designed to last for a fortnight (until Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April). It will then be updated again for Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April with a further two weeks' worth of work ... and so on whilst it is required.

With every best wish,

Mr J Murray  
Headteacher  
St Richard's RC Primary School