



St. Richard's RC Primary School Newsletter 2021

Thursday 14th January 2021

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

We wish all our pupils, parents, carers, staff and governors a very happy new year. The latest national lockdown which began on Wednesday 6th January creates significant challenges for us all, whilst the roll out of the national vaccination programme offers us hope for the not too distant future. We know that this January is not the new start that we are usually presented with or that we hoped for but, as a child-focused, cheerful and resilient community, I am certain that we can face and overcome these challenges together with the aim of keeping safe, keeping learning and meeting up again as soon as we can. Good luck everyone.

WE ARE CLOSED TO MOST PUPILS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

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 to. Parents of Vulnerable Children have been contacted and encouraged to send their child to school but, again, they do not have to. Full instructions for how key worker parents can make an application for a place at St Richard's are available at www.st-richards.manchester.sch.uk

STAYING IN TOUCH AND INFORMED

If you need any support from school, please let us know by phoning 0161 224 5552 or by emailing comments@st-richards.manchester.sch.uk. You are welcome to share any questions or concerns using the above email address and we will respond as soon as we can. During the closure period, all our families will receive a weekly phone call from Mr Neilson to check how things are going as well as to relay any important messages. First week calls are taking longer than anticipated but we hope to have contacted everyone by early next week...then we will start again.

Please also make a habit of visiting the home page and the home learning pages of the school website (www.st-richards.manchester.sch.uk) regularly for updates on the current situation as it impacts on our school community.

We will continue to use ParentMail texts as well as the weekly newsletter (available under the 'Key Information' tab on the home page of the school website every Thursday from 12 noon at the latest) in order to communicate important information while we are closed.

HOME LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

We know that home schooling is not ideal but we are eager to help all our pupils continue to make excellent progress whilst they are not in school. The Department for Education issued updated guidance to schools on Thursday 7th January about home learning (online, offline or a mixture of both). Pupils in Early Years and Key Stage One will now be expected to undertake 3 hours of home learning per day, Monday to Friday throughout lockdown. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are expected to undertake 4 hours of daily study, Monday to Friday.

HOME LEARNING – ONLINE

One of the particular challenges at St Richard's in providing home education is that we are aware that many of our pupils do not have access to an effective online device (desktop PC, laptop or tablet) for the times indicated above. Even when they do, we are aware that many families have more than one child and that devices have to be shared over the course of a school day. For this reason, we have made the decision not to have any live online teaching for the time being as we feel that it would disadvantage too many of our pupils in any one class. We are currently finalising ways to ensure that classteachers can provide individualized as well as whole class feedback and encouragement to all pupils who can learn online. This will be in place from Monday 25th January and full instructions about how to access this will be provided. We ask for your patience in the meantime. Please read the important guidance about keeping your child safe online which is available on our online home learning page.

HOME LEARNING – OFFLINE

Every child not currently attending school at the moment should receive CGP Workbooks through the post soon. These have been posted out but we know that the Royal Mail is also experiencing challenges at the moment, so please be patient. The envelope that you will receive through the post also contains log-in details and instructions for accessing online learning through Education City and Time Tables Rock Stars. The CGP booklets have instructions and a record sheet on the inside front cover which we would like all parents/carers to read and use. The CGP books must be brought back to school with the work complete after lockdown so that teachers can see how well pupils have done. House points and other prizes will be awarded for accuracy, effort and presentation.

LAPTOP UPDATE

Unfortunately, we will be unable to progress the 'lease to buy' laptop scheme which we hoped to be able to offer to parents. Our apologies to all who had pinned their hopes on this but the decision was out of our hands. Instead, we are currently finalising plans to lend school laptops to as many families as we can. We know that we will have more demand than devices and so our advice remains the same – if you are able to provide your child with a laptop, desktop or tablet device which enables them to access the online learning from school, please do so. Pupils currently unable to access online learning are advised to pour all their efforts into offline learning, through CGP books for example. Paper based learning is not a 'second best' option (as Ofsted have made clear very recently) but is the style of learning which most pupils are most familiar with. The CGP books mirror the content that pupils would be receiving in school.

APPLYING FOR A PLACE IN RECEPTION FOR SEPTEMBER 2021

The application round for Reception 2021 opened on 17th August 2020. The closing date for Reception 2021 school applications is **5pm TOMORROW (Friday 15th January 2021)**. The application portal is at:

https://ealive.manchester.gov.uk/CitizenPortal_LIVE/en. You can change your application up to the closing date, but not after. You must apply on time to be considered for your preferred schools. Parents of pupils currently in our Nursery must also make this application. Currently having a place in our Nursery does not automatically entitle a child to a place in our Reception class.

WEDNESDAY WORD ONLINE

The Wednesday Word team continues to support families with free online editions of the Wednesday Word. These are available every Wednesday by visiting www.wednesdayword.org, clicking "Schools please enter here for the Primary School version" and then following the link. This Wednesday's Word is **NEW START**.

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

You may have seen in the media this week that there has been some variability in the quality of food being provided to the homes of children who are eligible for free school meals and who are not currently attending school. At St Richard's, we will not be providing packed lunches or food hampers to homes. Instead, we are continuing to provide the £15 per week free school meals vouchers until further notice. If you are entitled to benefits-related free school meals and you are not currently receiving these vouchers, then please phone the school office on 0161 224 5552.

With every best wish,

Mr J Murray
Headteacher
St Richard's RC Primary School