

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

27th November 2020



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Dear Parents,

Advent and Christmas 2020 at St Joseph's

I hope you're safe and well and coping as best you can with the difficulties we're all experiencing at this time. If you, your family and friends have been suffering with the virus, please accept our thoughts and best wishes. I'd also like to pass on my most caring thoughts to those of you who have lost loved ones at this time. We regularly pray for all of the families in our community and you can be assured we are praying for you and your loved ones in our daily assemblies every week.

Things will be different in 2020

Christmas 2020 at St Joseph's was always going to be different. There were great plans for Nativity plays for many age groups, carol services, Christmas fairs, discos, parties and lots more. Very sadly most of these lovely activities will have to be put on hold until next Christmas due to the ongoing pandemic. That said, a lot of thought has been put into lovely things that we can safely do in the school during Advent and leading us up to Christmas. Rather than simply announcing all of the things we cannot do this year – I wanted to get in touch and explain everything to you carefully, explain why we can't do certain things and let you know the things we will be doing to make the holy season as special and important as we possibly can.

Sadly, there are some things that won't be able to happen but we have tried our best to put alternatives in place wherever possible.

Nativity Plays: not taking place in 2020 sadly

We cannot host traditional nativity plays in front of an audience because, sadly, we cannot have gatherings of parents and family in the hall. We also cannot combine children from other classes to put on Key Stage Nativity plays because we can't mix the bubbles due to the risk of spreading infection from one class to another. We have decided against organising a nativity play being performed by each class and being filmed or live streamed to parents for a number of reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, there is a security and safeguarding risk linked to live streaming images of children, once the video leaves our school we are not in control of what happens to it. Many parents do not give permission for images of their child to be published online and even for those of you who do give permission – there is a total lack of control of the live stream once it is

streamed – as a school we cannot control who sees the video or what is done with it. In addition, as the plays would only be a class at a time – it could be potentially easy for the wrong people to identify ages of children, class details and so on. Very sadly – all things considered – this alone is an important reason why we will not be live streaming nativity plays. Other schools may well decide they feel it is safe to do this and the decision rests with each school but I hope you understand the level of care and thought that has gone into reaching this decision. There is no doubt that it is extremely sad, disappointing and frankly unbelievable that anything could put a stop to a nativity play in a Catholic school – but Covid-19 has sadly caused us this temporary problem for 2020. We are really sorry.

BUT the Nativity Story: will DEFINITELY be widely shared, celebrated and rejoiced throughout the school

The birth of Jesus Christ changed the world and brought Christianity to the world. As you would expect, the nativity story in its fullest and truest sense will be covered in detail through R.E. lessons in class and a series of special assemblies for each class led by Mr Hinton and Mrs Chapman. We'll use a range of traditional and modern resources to bring the nativity story to life for the children.



Christmas Parties with singing, eating and drinking: not taking place in 2020 – sadly

We would have booked professional DJs and provided a lovely afternoon for all of the children. It's just not possible to facilitate a party like this in 2020 – there are issues surrounding singing, pass the parcel, party foods brought in from home and so on. With regret, the classic Christmas Party can't go ahead in 2020.

BUT Christmas Lunch, Jumper Day and Christmas Movie Afternoon will take place instead!

Our catering service is offering a 'boxed meal' Christmas lunch this year which is very child friendly and possibly even more appetising to many kids than a sit-down roast dinner! Full details have already been sent out. On the day of the Christmas lunch everyone is invited to wear their Christmas jumpers or own clothes and there will be a Christmas Movie to enjoy with the lights dimmed in every class on the day.



Carol Services, Concerts and opportunities for the community to get together in school – sadly not possible this year

Gathering the whole community together in the school hall is not going to be possible this year and it's a real shame. Schools in Dudley have also been recently advised against group singing – this is something we have avoided since September on the advice of the Archdiocese – but now all schools in Dudley are asked not to allow group singing because of the spread of saliva and aerosols it brings about. It's very disappointing but we have to make decisions that consider the big picture of everyone's health and safety.



BUT Class masses for the children, daily class assemblies, assemblies with Mr Hinton and Mrs Chapman will all go ahead to ensure the spirit of the Catholic community is maintained and upheld.

Every effort and care will be done to make sure we convey the sense of community and spirit of Christmas as much as we possibly can. In addition, as we understand things at the moment, Mass, with Fr Louis' approval, will be able to be celebrated for individual classes in the hall when lockdown finishes and this will further strengthen the sense of community and togetherness.

Christmas Cards must be quarantined in school before they are given out – so we need to introduce Christmas Card Mondays! BUT we are happy to say the children can still bring their cards in to school!



In order to ensure there is no additional risk of infection due to the passing round of cards we have consulted Dudley Public Health for advice on how the children can still send cards – and the good news is – they still can send cards to each other!

Please send your child's cards into school each Monday – starting from Monday 30th November then Mondays 7th and 14th December. The classroom staff will box away the cards until Friday of the same week and then distribute them to the children following the quarantine period. Staff will always sanitise their hands before handing out all of the cards so you can be assured the cards have been safely quarantined for an extended period and only passed round by staff with sanitised hands.



Please support us with this Covid-safe way of making the exchange of Christmas cards possible! Ask your child to write their cards over the weekend and send them into school on MONDAY. We'll keep them safely quarantined and give them out on FRIDAYS. (The last date cards can be accepted in school for safe quarantine will be Tuesday 15th December for distribution on Friday 18th December!)

We will try our best to make this time holy, magical and special

There are lots of other things we are doing to try to compensate for everything we are missing out on this year and to try to make being in school this Advent as magical and exciting as we can. We still have got our massive 14-foot Christmas tree, the lighting will be lit up outside of the school front and we have a lot of charity Christmas jumper days where the children can wear Christmas jumpers or their own clothes.

Father Christmas will be coming to see all of the children and he'll keep his social distance – but he is DEFINITELY coming to St Joseph's!

The children need to listen out for those sleigh bells because we have it on very good authority that Father Christmas will be dropping in as we get closer to Christmas! He'll take the time to chat to all of the classes from a very safe distance! He'll be giving out a small token gift to everyone – just a little something that we hope you'll enjoy putting on your Christmas Tree.



Charitable Giving during Advent

Fridays during Advent are Christmas jumper days or own clothes days. We invite you to make a small donation on two of these Fridays – if you can, if you are able to and if you are happy to – there is no pressure to donate and you must not feel obligated. At the same time, if you are able to help us – your support will help the needy and will also help the school fund.

Friday 4th December: Please donate a tin of food for the homeless and poor of the Good Shepherd Shelter in Wolverhampton

Friday 11th December: Please donate a few coins or as much as you would like to for our school fund which is used to pay for extras for all of the children

There is never any requirement, expectation or check on what is being donated so please don't feel under any pressure – we appreciate your kindness and generosity but please only ever donate if you are able to and happy to.

Are you experiencing genuine financial difficulty this Christmas?

If you are struggling to provide gifts for your child/ren this Christmas and can provide evidence of your genuine financial hardship – a local charity may be able to provide some support by giving a gift for your child/ren. In order to access this charity, the school or another charitable organisation needs to make a confidential referral. If you are in genuine need of help please call and speak to Mr Hinton, Mrs Chapman or the ladies in the office, Mrs Asrar and Mrs Lemm who will speak to you in

strict confidence about making a referral for help for you and your children. Please do not feel embarrassed or inhibited in any way – there is widespread hardship this year caused by the economic effects of Covid-19 and we have been asked by the charity to make referrals where people genuinely need help. Our discussion will be confidential and your dignity and privacy is our top priority. Get in touch as soon as you can and we will do all we can to help. Please note that the charity provides gifts for children and not cash or voucher payments.

An opportunity to take part in a Christmas Concert – from the safety and comfort of your living room!

Dudley Performing Arts – a part of Dudley Council - are organising a virtual Christmas Concert on Sunday 20th December – full details online at <https://www.dudley.gov.uk/things-to-do/dudley-performing-arts/dudley-music-education-hub-performance-groups/christmas-concert/> Please note that options to participate involve submitting video footage so participation is for parents and carers to supervise and organise – it is not suitable for unaccompanied or unsupervised children. Full details online.

Christmas Holidays

Children break up for Christmas on Friday 18th December at the normal finish time for their class. The children return to school on Wednesday 6th January 2021.

We hope that, despite the most challenging of circumstances, you and the children are able to enjoy the advent Season and Christmas beyond. We're so sorry that we cannot do all of the lovely things we would like to do and we look forward to the time when we can.

With every kind wish as always,

Mrs S Chapman
Executive Head of School



Kind hands, kind words...like Jesus

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