

Dear Parents and Carers,

Despite the cold and dreary weather with many ‘wet playtimes’, the last half term has flown by, and the atmosphere in school has been busy, lively and full of enthusiasm. Already we can see the first signs of Spring around the school. The bulbs which children have planted with our Environmental Tutor, Miss Sophia, are already starting to pop up shoots, and birds are beginning to sing in the trees around school. Watch this space for our very own SSAS Springwatch when new bird-boxes are installed next half-term!

Staffing News Miss Gibson, our Nursery Teaching Assistant, has started her maternity leave, and Mrs Rose, Cherry Class Teacher, will soon begin hers. We can’t wait to hear their exciting news and meet the new additions to the SSAS family! Mrs McMenamain, our Nursery Teaching Assistant and Mrs LePratti, Year 2 Teaching Assistant, are both leaving us due to family commitments. We will miss them, and wish them every blessing for the future. This term, we have welcomed Mr Isaacs as our Assistant Premises Manager. He has already been hard at work with Mr Phillips, keeping our school safe, clean and tidy! Finally, we are delighted to have a new Crossing Patrol on Camp Road. Miss Rozz is really enjoying meeting pupils and parents and we are looking forward to learning more about her when she makes her guest appearance in assemblies after half-term.

Curriculum, Trips and Extra-Curricular Activities You will have seen from our weekly blog posts on the website the rich curriculum and huge variety of activities the children have enjoyed this term. Key Stage 2 Children are honing their maths skills with our new Magical Maths After School Club. A group of Year 3 children have helped to set up lunch-time board games club and are greatly enjoying beating me at a range of games like Dobble and Uno! It’s lovely to see the children developing their collaborative and turn-taking skills and learning to win and lose gracefully.



The whole school enjoyed celebrating maths on NSPCC Number Day. This was a great opportunity to make Maths (even more!) fun, and the children loved playing number games, solving puzzles, and listening to stories featuring numbers. We also raised money for the NSPCC. Thank you to parents for your donations and for the effort you put into your children’s colourful and creative number-themed attire.

Year 2 took part in a workshop led by Vista, and learnt all about how we can identify, explore and manage our own feelings. Years 4 and 6 also developed their life-skills by taking part in First Aid workshops. Reception and Key Stage 1 have now started their Drumba lessons in P.E. and have done brilliantly at keeping up with the rhythm and drumming while exercising!



Catholic Life

We have continued to focus on our Racial Justice, Equality and Diversity theme. Key Stage 2 children attended some powerful anti-racism workshops, funded by the PTA. We learned what racism means and can look like, and how we can be not just 'non-racist', but 'anti-racist' by speaking up when someone is unfairly treated because of their race. In a special assembly linked to Racial Justice Sunday, children enjoyed sharing their learning about saints from different countries and diverse backgrounds, including St Andrew Dung-Lack, St Ephrem the Syrian and St Martha Wang Luo Mande. Our continuing work on finding strength and unity through our diversity has linked well to our Catholic Social Teaching theme this half term, 'Solidarity and Peace' and our focus Scripture:

'Blessed are the Peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.' (Matthew 5:9)



The Eco-Warriors have been living out their mission to care for God's creation by tackling idling near our school. Idling is when a car leaves its engine running while stationary, creating harmful pollution which we then breathe in. During a survey of the streets around the school, the Eco-Warriors found at least five cars idling. They are hoping to produce a campaign to let parents know about the dangers of idling, so that the air near our school is cleaner and healthier.

In January, we launched our Year of Jubilee. The Pope has declared that 2025 is a special Jubilee Year which will be celebrated by Catholics across the school. A Jubilee Year is a special year of forgiveness and reconciliation, in which people are invited to come back into right relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation. Throughout the year, our school will be taking part in special events linked to the Jubilee theme, 'Pilgrims of Hope'. We invite all of our families to journey with us to deepen our faith and engage in prayer and acts of service and charity. Some of the special events planned at St Alban & St Stephen are:

- * **February:** World day of Prayer for Hope– creative prayer activities
- * **March:** Pilgrimage of Hope: – a symbolic pilgrimage visiting prayer stations around our school
- * **April:** Jubilee of Artists– creating art on the theme of 'Hope'
- * **May:** Jubilee Pledge Day– adding our pledges and prayers to a Wall of Hope
- * **June:** Great Big Green Week– Hope for our Creation
Refugee Awareness Week– All are Welcome Here
School Community Family Celebration– Strength in our Diversity
The Torch of Hope arrives– pilgrimage to our Parish Church of St Alban & St Stephen
- * **September–** Hope in Scripture
Hope in Action community projects
- * **October–** Jubilee of Poets– creating a school poetry book on the theme of 'Hope'
- * **November–** Diocese School Jubilee Celebration Day



School Development Plan– half termly update

AREA	KEY PRIORITY	PROGRESS
1. CATHOLIC LIFE & R.E.	Prayer & Liturgy	The teachers received training in Christian meditation and this has been introduced in all classes. The Year of Jubilee was launched with the theme 'Pilgrims of Hope'.
2. QUALITY OF EDUCATION	Evidence- based principles to improve teaching	Teachers received training on the modelling of writing. Lesson observations have taken place in all classes. Our Link Governor for Maths toured the school to look at challenge in Maths.
3. BEHAVIOUR & ATTITUDES	Developing positive attitudes	Children are being awarded certificates for achievement in behaviour. All classes have focussed on practising everyday classroom routines.
4. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	Promoting justice, equality & diversity	In Mental Health and Wellbeing Week, children took part in special activities and dressed up in favourite clothes to express their feelings and to show that we are all different. Parents attended a coffee morning about wellbeing. KS2 attended anti-racism workshops. Children learnt about diverse saints for Racial Justice Sunday.
5. LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT	Empowering effective leadership at all levels	Phase leaders now receive regular coaching sessions. Governors and leaders are continuing to explore the academisation agenda for all Catholic schools.
6. EARLY YEARS	Personal, Social and Emotional Development.	New resources have been purchased to enhance the outdoor environment in Early Years. Nursery attended their first assembly in the hall.

Online Safety

This month, we held our school e-safety day. Children learnt about how to stay safe online and created posters as reminders. We work hard to teach children about responsible online use in school and want to work with you to make sure that children are safe online at home too. Many issues in school are caused by online viewing, gaming and use of social media at home. Children should not be using social media when under-age. No primary school child should be on WhatsApp as you must be at least 13 years old to register. Parents should also ensure that their child does not access age-inappropriate games and online material. For example, younger Key Stage 1 children should not play 'Among Us' as it has a PEGI rating of 7+. Useful resources for parents and carers: <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers>



Please remember that we are also a smartphone-free school. Year 5 children must only bring 'brick phones' to school. Year 4 children downwards are not allowed to bring phones to school. No smartphones are to be used on school grounds. In line with other St Albans schools, we recommend that children in primary school should not have smartphones.

Sign up here for the parent pact to give your child a smartphone-free childhood: <https://parentpact.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/>

Reminders

As we approach the half-term break, I hope that all families are able to take time to rest and recharge. We look forward to seeing everyone back in school on **Monday 24th February at 8.45**. Classroom doors open at 8.45 and close at 8.55 a.m.

Thank you for your continued support, and for everything you do to make our school community so special.

With best wishes,

T. Hackett

Ms T. Hackett, Head of School

