

St Joseph's



News

Half termly Spring 1 edition

February 2026

Head-lines

As the half term draws to a close, we once again awe at the changing of the seasons. When we returned in January, the winter period was very much at a peak - with dark mornings, heavy skies and even a flurry of snow. As we finish for the half term, there is definitely a change in the air - the mornings are feeling lighter, daffodils are starting to appear and Spring seems to be emerging. During the half term, we enter the period of Lent, where the theme of 'new life' is very much at the forefront. When we return after the break, February then becomes March and Spring will be well underway, so we look forward to even brighter days. Wishing you all a lovely half term break. Mr Turner

Mobile Phones and Apps

Earlier this term, we wrote to you on the back of the Government announcing new measures in place for schools regarding pupils bringing/using mobile phones. As detailed in our letter, we are already a mobile phone free school, in that the children are not permitted to have or use a phone in school. The only reason phones are permitted are for the children who walk home and therefore may need to stay in communication. In these circumstances, phones are handed in to the class teacher in the morning and kept locked away, and then returned at the end of the day. This system has always worked and as always we are appreciative that our children know, understand and respect the rules. The new Government guidance therefore won't change things drastically - it is just a 'tightening' of our existing policy.

However, the second part to the challenge we definitely do face is the use of Social Media, including messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, outside of school. This resonates with the national picture, which is why the Government is further debating on wider bans for social media for young people below the age of 16. There are increasing concerns from mental health agencies, children's charities and others regarding the harm that unlimited access to devices and social media apps can do.

We would add our voice to that.

We are frequently finding that we are having to deal with issues which stem back to social media, particularly Whatsapp, as we are aware that lots of children have a device at home and have signed up to WhatsApp, and are then sending and receiving messages in various groups they have set up. Whatsapp already has an age restriction of 13 meaning that no child of primary age should have a WhatsApp account. Despite this, we know lots of children do use it regularly and then run into issues with inappropriate messages which in turn then get brought in to school. This then takes time away from our core purpose which is education as we are having to unpick exchanges, deal with the fall out and respond to parents who have alerted us. As part of our curriculum and e-safety teaching, we do teach about the dangers of online platforms, including why they are age restricted as children do not have the maturity needed to behave online as they would in the real world. We also teach and promote our overarching Mission and Vision of love and kindness.

We want to work in partnership with parents, which is why we also send out a monthly e-safety newsletter, along with letters detailing the various apps and their age restrictions and settings. However, we cannot deal with this issue alone; we cannot take the device away from the child, nor can we police what apps they have access to at home and how they are used. With the revised Government position, further debates about Social Media, and organisations like Smartphone Free Childhood - <https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/> we do hope a watershed moment is imminent, where devices and apps are more controlled, instances outside of school are reduced, and we can focus on our core purpose of education rather than dealing with fallout from children accessing social media and apps and using them inappropriately.



Welcome

We give a warm welcome to Antonia who has joined us this half term. I hope you have settled in and made lots of new friends.

This half term, we also welcome back Miss Langley who returns following her maternity leave. Miss Langley is working on a Thursday, teaching F2 and Y1 and then on a Friday teaching Y1, while the class teachers have their PPA/Management time. It's good to have Miss Langley back and I know she is enjoying being back with the children.

As we begin the second half of the Spring term, we will also keep the parents of children in Mrs Hancock's class updated as the date for her maternity leave approaches!

- Congratulations to our Year 3
- children who were enrolled this
- term as part of their preparation
- to receive First Holy Communion
- in May. Please keep the children
- in your prayers as they continue their spiritual journey.



Collection at the end of the day

Please can we politely remind you that the school day finishes at 3.30 for Y1-Y6 and 3.20 for F2. We are increasingly finding some parents are frequently late. We understand that there can be unforeseen delays, but some cases are regular. We have after school provision available if you know that you will regularly be late for collection. Thank you.

Lunch payment and ordering

Please can we ask you to ensure that you clear any lunch debts still owing. We currently have a substantial amount of lunch debt owed, with some of this dating back to last term. We will write to parents to let you know what is owed and ask that you make payments as soon as possible.

On the same note as paying for lunches, please can we ask that as much as possible, you use the Parent Pay site to pre order your child's lunch. The kitchen team need to know ahead of the lunch service how many of each meal are needed. This reduces waste and ensures that your child will always have their choice. However, we are finding that lunches are not getting pre ordered in advance at home. This means teachers are having to do it during the morning lessons, which in turn eats into teaching time. Please can lunches be pre ordered at home using the Parent Pay site. If you need support setting this up, please speak to the office team and they will be happy to help. If we are finding it is a continuing issue, we may implement a system where the meal of the day is chosen by default so that valuable lesson time is not used up. We will monitor the orders after half term and let you know if we are still having issues and need to consider this system.

Prayer for the term

During the half term, we celebrate Ash Wednesday. This marks the start of Lent, a time when traditionally we give something up as a way of showing we are sorry for the things we have done wrong and to prepare our hearts to follow Jesus examples. As much as it is traditional to give something up, sometimes it can be just as spiritually rewarding to 'take something up' for Lent; perhaps remembering to pray and thank God every day for what we have, or to do one act every day to show how we are following Jesus' footsteps by living the Gospel values of love and peace.



Attendance

Attendance for the year to date stands at 95.7% This is just under our target of at least 97% The rate of Persistent Absence (children with attendance less than 90%) is currently 11%, which again is not meeting our target

Please can you continue to ensure that your child has good attendance. We are also approaching the Summer term, where we often find that attendance drops further with term time holidays being taken. Please can we remind you that we cannot authorise term time holidays, even if they are cheaper/quieter. If holidays in term time are taken, we have to alert the local authority who may in turn issue a Penalty Notice.