

The Priory Catholic Voluntary Academy



Newsletter December 2021

IMPORTANT DATES: Pupils break up for Christmas on Tuesday 21st December. An Inset Day takes place on Wednesday 22nd December 2021. Pupils return to school on Monday 10th January 2022.

Catholic Life

End of term Christmas Mass at church: Our final Mass takes place at church at 9.30am. Unfortunately, only pupils and staff from Years 1 to Year 6 will be attending – not parents or parishioners due to the pandemic.

Advent: Our Advent services have taken place each day since Monday 29th November – and culminate at Mass on Tuesday 21st December. On this day, we move from the Old Testament and into the New Testament where we celebrate the story of the nativity during the homily at Mass.

Times of Christmas Masses:

- Christmas Eve beginning at 5.15pm with carols and blessing of outside crib followed by First Mass for Christmas in church at 5.30pm.
- Christmas Eve beginning at 7.15pm with carols and blessing of outside crib followed by Mass in church at 7.30pm
- Christmas Day beginning at 10am with blessing of outside crib followed by Mass in church at 10.15am. (Weather permitting!)

Please come and join us for the great celebration of Jesus' birth. There will be no 5.30pm Vigil Mass on Saturday 25th December.

Weekend Mass Times in our parish: Our Lady of Good Counsel Eastwood – Saturday 5.30pm and Sunday 10.15am.

Outside crib – in the parish garden: An outside crib will be in the parish garden from next Sunday (4th Sunday of Advent). Please bring family and friends along to say a prayer before the crib and collect a little gift to take home. Year 6 from The Priory School have made some beautiful stars for this this year's crib. The special message on the stars has one of the key themes for Advent; Hope, Love, Peace or Joy and the children tell us they 'shine bright and follow the light'. What a wonderful witness our children are to the Christmas message. Offerings for this year's crib will go to the Mayor's Christmas Appeal.

Mayor's Christmas Appeal: With the parish church, we have joined with other Christian Churches in Eastwood, to support the Mayor's Christmas Appeal which is collecting food items for those in need. For the Christmas period we have been paired with 'Eastwood People's Initiative'. At the end of the Christmas period the Council will collect our items. Please support this charitable cause. A box is available at the back of church and in the school foyer for non-perishable items.

Dear Parents, this end of year message is written with all stakeholders in mind – parents, pupils, staff, governors and our colleagues in the trust – wherever and however you play a part in making a difference to the lives of the pupils here at The Priory. From those visibly seen each day: teachers, teaching assistants, kitchen staff and cleaners, to those working behind the scenes in critically important support services (including, but not exhaustively, finance, personnel, property) or in unpaid roles such as our many school volunteers, including our school governors. My rationale in writing a single message is that it is clearer than ever before, that we are better and make the greatest difference when we are pulling and working together. Thank you one and all for your earnest support.

It is hard to comprehend that in a matter of a few weeks we will reach the second anniversaries of the Prime Minister's announcements that all schools would close, for most pupils from March 20th 2020 and the wider lockdown on 23rd March. It means that within a few weeks we will enter the third year of living and working in extraordinary and uncertain times. What is also extraordinary, but certain, is that all stakeholders have been there throughout this period for the good of the children and families of The Priory, and for each other, as colleagues of the school – living out the school mission daily, no matter what challenges arise. Thank you.

I would never have imagined that in December 2021 we would still be holding meetings virtually, albeit not always; but we are remaining optimistic despite the unwelcome arrival of the Omicron variant of Covid. These times have proved how resilient and strong we are remaining, still coming through this together despite the significant challenges we have all faced this term. Challenges that have seen numerous amounts of pupils be absent for periods of time – if not with Coronavirus, then with normal winter bugs and illnesses. Many pupils also absent whilst they and family members await the results of tests.

Members of staff have also been affected by both winter bugs and colds, and from catching Coronavirus. This has added to the significant challenges we faced as we returned after September – hoping to simply help pupils catch up after what we had all been through to that point. Instead, pupil and staff absences have led to greater challenges – and these are compounded when there is simply no supply teachers or Teaching Assistants to cover. Our agencies are also experiencing significant staffing issues – which leads to threadbare staffing of classes in school. Essentially, on the ground, this has meant a term of staffing classes through taking teaching assistants away from their planned, support work in order to cover for absence. This may well be the case as we move into the new year – despite the government advertising for retired teachers to return to undertaking supply work.

However, our spirits remain good, as I have seen and heard of countless acts of kindness, courage, and determination from and between pupils, staff and colleagues. This can-do approach will hold us in good stead for our return to school in the New Year. Already, staff are busy planning fun activities and an exciting, broad and balanced curriculum that pupils at The Priory enjoy and as a result achieve well and make good progress.

In readiness for the upcoming challenges that the next term may bring, teachers and teaching assistants are re-capping on their on-line learning skills should classes have to access the curriculum from home. This may be because of national or local lock-downs, or due to in-school staffing issues caused by illness. We will of course inform you as soon as possible if this is the case.

We will continually review parents coming into school during next term – based on the numbers of people being infected with Covid19. We wish to allow parents in for specific events. We will keep you informed and hopefully this will be achieved as we journey through into the New Year. Hopefully, the Lent term will bring some green shoots of hope.

At this point I want to recap on my message at the beginning of this newsletter – as I want to say a massive thank you to parents, pupils, staff, governors and our volunteers. You have and are playing a hugely important role in the school's and the community's response to this prolonged emergency, and you should take great pride in that. What you have been doing over the last years and months, are doing now and will over the next months is contributing to improving our pupils' lives.

Safeguarding our Children: Please note that in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy, from time to time we may need to make a referral to Children & Young People Services at Nottinghamshire County Council. The school's Designated Safeguarding Leads are: Mrs Smith (Family Liaison Lead) Mr Harrison (Headteacher) Mrs Grimes (Deputy Head teacher) and Mrs Symonds (SENCO).

Staffing: After four years of unstinting love and support for the pupils and school community here at The Priory, Miss Butkevicius is leaving school at the end of this term. My sincere thanks go to "Miss B." for her hard work and commitment in this time. We wish her all the very best and every success in her next venture. That said, Miss B. has kindly volunteered to help support in the breakfast club each morning in January 2022 – which will give the school extra time to cover this important aspect of school life. My thanks and appreciation to Miss B – as ever!

School Office: As you may be aware, Miss Cottrell is having a baby. After advertising for her maternity cover, I am pleased to inform you that Mrs. Emma Bailey will be starting with us in January to take up this role. We welcome Mrs. Bailey to our team and wish her great happiness in her time with us, as she embarks on working with such wonderful and wondrous children and staff.

Teaching Assistant Job: As Miss Butkevicius is leaving her post as Teaching Assistant, the school will advertise this role in January on the academy trust website. Effectively, this is what the post will be:

Hours: 28 hours per week.

Contract: Permanent

Location: The Priory, Raglan Street, Hill Top, Eastwood, Notts NG16 3GT

Start Date: 01.03.2022

Closing date: Wednesday 9th February 2022 (at Midday)

Interviews: Wednesday 16th February 2022

The Saint Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust supports the Governors of The Priory Catholic Academy in appointing a Teaching Assistant for 28 hours per week to join our friendly, talented and enthusiastic team of staff.

Are you passionate about supporting SEN children? Do you have the ability to build positive relationships with pupils and staff? Then the governors are looking to appoint a Teaching Assistant to work on a 1:1 basis with two children who have special educational needs. The role is due to start from March 2022.

The main duties within the role will be:

- Supporting a child with complex medical needs 1:1 support (Year 6 at set points in the mornings)
- Supporting children with a range of disabilities; predominantly with Autistic Spectrum Difficulties each afternoon as part of our nurture team
- Helping the children progress academically through targeted support in class
- Following the children's individual targets in line with their Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- Delivering bespoke intervention programmes around Speech, Language and Communication, Structured teaching approaches, phonics, numeracy and social skills.
- Assisting the class teachers with the delivery of all curriculum subject sessions as and when required

The school are only looking to accept applications from people with:

- A teaching assistant qualification or relevant degree (Desirable)
- At least one years' experience working with children
- An understanding of working with pupils with additional needs
- Reliability, excellent attendance and punctuality records
- The ability to act as a positive role model to pupils across the school
- An understanding of the primary school curriculum

The successful candidate will be enthusiastic, committed to making a difference with experience of working with primary age children and have a very good understanding of English and Maths (GCSE Grade C or above is desirable).

When this advert goes live on the Academy Trust website, if you experience any difficulties in downloading the documents, then Miss Cottrell or Mrs. Bailey (in the school office) will be only too glad to help and advise you accordingly. They can be contacted by phoning or emailing: office@priory-pri.notts.sch.uk

Christmas activities: My thanks to all the people who have helped in making Christmas as special as possible for our pupils. As a school and PTA, with the help of the pupils themselves (especially Year 6) we have undertaken:

- a Christmas fair
- the Nativity in Years 1 and 2
- our Reception Class Nativity
- Christmas activity days
- Christmas Parties
- our annual Sing for Santa event
- our Christmas themed Mass at church
- Christmas crafts and artwork
- Carol singing in each class

Well done to all involved. I am extremely proud of the pupils and team that we have here in our school.

Food for Thought: "Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childish days; that can recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth; that can transport the sailor and the traveller, thousands of miles away, back to his own fire-side and his quiet home!" ~ Charles Dickens, The Pickwick Papers, 1836."

Wishing you a Happy, Holy and Peaceful Christmas
Anthony Harrison