



CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Executive Head Teacher: Gerida Montague MA
School Senior Lead: Eleanor Prince BA PGCE

7th December 2023

Dear Families

I do hope you are well. As we near the end of term I wanted to update you on school staffing. As you may be aware, before we joined together in the wider Partnership of schools, OLSJ had a school leader who job shared a class, teaching for three and a half days a week. This was not ideal and I deployed Mrs Prince to lead at OLSJ, without a class commitment, whilst also maintaining a lead across the partnership in phonics and reading. Unfortunately, Mrs Prince elected to move her role to full time reading and phonics specialist across the partnership and this meant that I had to review staffing and leadership.

I am committed to providing our children with very small classes and outstanding teaching and curriculum provision, working creatively to mitigate the financial challenges of leading a very small school. I do appreciate that Mrs Prince's 'absence' may have caused some families to feel unsettled, however the ongoing leadership of OLSJ, by myself and my Executive Board, remains unchanged. I continue to look for a suitable long-term Head of School. In the interim we continue with the arrangements I shared in September. We have the fabulous Miss Walker as our leading Senior Teacher. In addition to being a highly experienced Year 6 teacher Ms Walker has also worked in a leadership capacity within our partnership for many years. She specialises in pastoral care and day to day management. She has one day a week dedicated leadership time, in order to coach and mentor, carry out targeted pupil voice and monitor the impact of intervention work. Alongside Ms Walker is a very experienced, senior team of specialist partnership leaders, who offer particular expertise. This 'executive leadership' model is of huge benefit to our children, as celebrated by Ofsted. Miss Calton has a particular focus on personal development, enrichment and community links. She is on Maternity Leave, but has committed to a day a week at OLSJ. Miss Hendricks (Executive Headteacher of Holy Family and Our Lady and St Joseph) is at OLSJ two days a week, offering particular expertise in provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), safeguarding, Early Years Foundation Stage and Catholic identity. Mr Lodge (Head of School at Mansel Park) is in school two days a week, monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum and children's outcomes (both qualitative and quantitative). I am in school at least twice a week, typically, leading strategy and driving school improvement for all of the children within my care. There is always a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) on site. Mrs Knott continues as SENCO. I can assure you that, even when we are not physically in school, we are all centred on OLSJ and the children within our care. I can assure you that in times of recruitment and retention challenge, this is a strong team for our wonderful small school. We are in a unique and fortunate position to have so many skills to be able to draw upon in order to maintain the excellent provision our children deserve. Governors are in full support and agree that the leadership support package is comprehensive.

I am proud that this term we continue to work hard to enrich and develop the whole school provision for our children. Each and every member of our school community works hard to ensure our children receive the very best we can offer. I thought it might be interesting to list out the range of experiences that have been planned and delivered this term, in addition to the wonderful teaching... This term we have experienced the following highlights, as shared with Governors in my termly report:

We visit Priestlands, every Wednesday to compete in inter-school competitions and experiences for Y1-Y6. Proud highlights include our gymnastics success and amongst other things the Year 5 and 6 football team performed brilliantly - our Year 3 and 4 team secured 3rd place. The Year 5 and 6 girls achieved first. Most recently, both the Year 3 and 4 and Year 5 and 6 teams won the cross-country event – second year running (excuse the pun).

We have had lots of visitors to school, including HSBC who have visited and led workshops on money management.

Year 5 visited Calshot Activities centre during September to have a 'taster' of the activities available on the Year 6 residential trip. The children took part in: archery, low ropes, climbing and indoor skiing. The day was enjoyed by all and painted a clear picture of the residential week to come next year in Devon.

We have enjoyed celebrating God's creation and delighting in meeting each other at the church with our families and pets for the 'Blessing of the animals' service. Children have read in Mass. Advent assemblies have been led by Fr David and Linda we had our Christmas carols, as a whole school family with Father David and Linda in church recently.

Our Junior Road Safety Officers attended the Regional Mode Shift Travel Awards where OLSJ were proudly nominated as finalist at regional level. We also celebrated our Summer success of our Gold STARS Award and continue to strive to maintain this throughout the year by encouraging walking to school. We aim to reduce the traffic, cars and pollution in and around our school.

Our school choir were requested to celebrate Belmore Lodge's anniversary with the residents throughout their celebration week event! The children felt fortunate to be invited to this event and were pleased that we were able to perform for them. Our choir also returned to Belmore recently to sing carols and went on to perform at Waitrose too. Our children continue to be thoughtful members of our community and we are incredibly proud of them. The children are busy preparing homemade Christmas cards for our local hospice and retirement home. We do hope they enjoy them.

As part Christmas celebrations: Years 3,4,5,6 will be attending the Mayflower theatre for the second year running, this year the pantomime is 'Cinderella'! The children are already very excited for this end of term treat! KS1 will be treated to an in-school pantomime. Each phase of the school will be inviting their parents in to celebrate Christmas with carols, performances and nativities. Our PTA 'wrap room' commences, providing families with affordable Christmas options for children to 'give' to loved ones this year. Last but not least of our festive celebrations, we will be holding a Christmas disco.

We continue our focus to engage our wider school community by offering a coffee morning to parents. At OLSJ, coffee mornings will continue to run once a month, with our uniform swap shop running the first Thursday of every term. Although not busy, we welcome any parent for a coffee and chat. Years R, 1 & 2 are holding weekly phonics workshops based on our programme: Pip & Pap. Each week focuses on a different book and features a 'take home' art activity for the children. 'Red reading rockets' workshop was held in October supporting Year 2/KS2 parents with the expectations for reading fluency and comprehension after completion of our Pip & Pap phonics programme.

Eco/planting focus: The eco team allocated roles to each of our year groups including: grounds maintenance, weeding, clearing, bio diversity & composting. We are preparing the grounds for winter after our wonderful harvest at the end of this summer. Our harvest included: parsnips, pumpkins, sweetcorn, broad beans, courgettes, chard, tomatoes, potatoes and beetroot. We continue to work closely with CAFOD and 'Live Simply' by focusing on 9 key actions throughout the year to support living simply, sustainability and in solidarity.

Our Librarians had a conference: Partnership librarians took part in a 'summit' meeting and a visit to the Central Library.

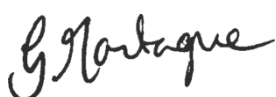
Year 6 took part in an immersive Macbeth workshop at Holy Family. This was a great opportunity to get to know the play and key characters ahead of a writing focus January including a monologue and narrative.

Our end of term 'Christmas jumper day' will be used as an opportunity to replenish our local food banks.

Although not exhaustive, I felt the list would share some of the diverse opportunities our children have experienced over the past 14 weeks of Autumn Term. I can assure you that, whilst not being traditional, our leaders are very much 'there' for OLSJ children and families. Our plans, thoughts and mission is to serve our community as well as we possibly can. I wish each and every one of you a peaceful and Happy Christmas when term finally ends.

Best Wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Montague', written in a cursive style.

Mrs Montague
Executive Headteacher