



CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Executive Head Teacher: Gerida Montague MA

Head of School: Sarah Hendricks

Tuesday 5th March 2024

Enrichment update

Dear Parents/Carers,

I do hope you are all well. I wanted to take a moment to update you on our plans going forwards. The Senior Team across the Partnership are currently planning a yearlong schedule of enrichment activities, parent-school opportunities and excursions for the year ahead.

Trips and Excursions

We are taking time to balance 'free access opportunities' with paid experiences. Our challenge is that since COVID, coach costs now add between £15 and £20 to any trip before workshops and entrance fees are added. Therefore, a key factor in our decision making around trips begins with the financial burden for our families. It is well publicised that the 'cost of living escalation' is bordering on becoming a national crisis. We do not want to add further stress and anxiety to our families with expensive trips throughout the school year.

As an example, we recently considered a trip to Hillier's Garden Centre for our Year 1 children. This trip – alongside travel costs – came in at around £26 per child. We did not believe this offered value for money for families and so have begun planning opportunities that enable our children to visit and enrich, without reducing the educational offer. We are now building our trips around this methodology to ensure there is a balance of cost for families throughout the year. These experiences, free of charge, will take an extended time to plan for outcomes and the trip itself as they are not an 'organised offer'. The final plan is being drafted on 19th March and will be shared to all parents, in a transparent manner, across all year groups once finalised.

Trips can take many forms and we wanted a balance of these. We wanted educational trips, experience trips and those which build long term memories of awe and wonder. The Mayflower Theatre pantomime trip is one such trip which takes place at Christmas and has proved extremely popular this year. Mr Lodge has worked hard to source very expensive tickets at a great value price.

Enrichment

All of our schools have a triple approach to their charitable works, this means we look at supporting across 3 levels; ourselves, local charities and at global charities. Fundraising for ourselves will increasingly look at supporting our local food bank, reducing the price of expensive trips, locally we support our local hospice and nursing home and globally we fund a 'sister' school in Africa. Over and above this, the school council nominates other charities that they wish to support on an annual basis. Our 'fiver challenge' is now in its



Smart Money
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second year at OLSJ, but has been fine-tuned over many years across our other schools. It is a delight to see the children growing their investment over the year and striving for the best charitable donation possible. Sanctuary work, eco gardening and prayer leaders are deepening further and I am pleased to say that our recent appointment of Mrs V Watt to YR as our Forest School Specialist will really serve to begin our expansion work into our Outdoor Woodland Learning (OWL). Please do take a moment to look at the blogs and pupil pages on our website detailing these wonderful experiences of both trips, enrichment and child led leadership in action.

Parent School Opportunities

Following our meeting on 19th March, I hope to share a finalised schedule of events and opportunities for our families. I was pleased that my vision for an 'Class Expo' worked so well last year and this is scheduled to remain with enhancements around a gallery event too. Eco gardening days continue as part of our tapestry of school life and I will set this in advance a year ahead as part of this scheduling. I now need the weather to support us in order to continue! We are set to increase parental invitations, extending these beyond Mass, work share and expo events, through to termly class work/ experience sharing assemblies. I anticipate all of these being shared in advance on an annual planner.

I wanted to reassure you all that trips and enrichment continue to be high on our agenda. This vision and focus on enriching our children's lives is a commitment that takes a large amount of time and I know that my senior team work tirelessly to achieve the very best experience for our children. I have received criticism from a minority of parents regarding senior leaders working strategically as a team for Our Lady

& St Joseph. In particular, that there were not extra reminders sent in addition to the newsletter dates for certain events. We will endeavour to add further reminders, in addition to the monthly calendar in the newsletter, going forwards. I am sure you know, from the news, that Headteacher recruitment is at crisis levels. I am therefore so very grateful to our team for their inspiration and care over the year so far. I have to thank Ms Calton especially for her commitment to OLSJ whilst on her Maternity Leave. I am expecting that we will have a full time leader in place for September. I will write with news of that once I have secured this formally.

Thank you once again for your continued support.

Yours Sincerely,



G.Montague
Executive Headteacher