

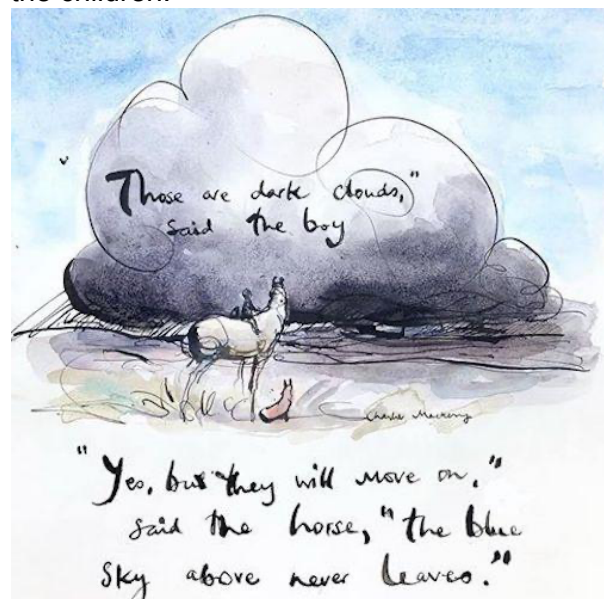
## Head-lines

So, we end this half term in a very different way to how we began it! Coming back and preparing for opening after the Christmas holiday, we were suddenly once again faced with an announcement from the Government that schools will close to the majority of pupils, initiate remote learning, and remain open for the children of Key workers with no other childcare options and vulnerable children. This is no simple task, but thanks to the efforts of all staff we have had a successful half term and implemented all of the various systems. However, this success has also come as a result of support from other key people - you, the parents and carers. Once again, you find yourselves having to juggle supporting your children at home, while at the same time undertaking your own work. I am also aware that we sadly continue to suffer bereavement in our lives, and for those, we keep you in our thoughts and prayers. We know the last five weeks have not been easy, but from me, and all the staff, we thank you for your support, cooperation and working with us. Despite the challenges and difficult times, the partnership and relationships of our school community have never felt stronger. Here's to a good half term and a hopeful future to come. Best wishes, Mr Turner

## Looking after ourselves....

Now, more than ever, it is so important that we address the areas of mental health and wellbeing. The last 12 months have been full of worry, stress, anxiety and loss. It is completely understandable, and natural, that we all react to these things in our own way. I want you to know that we are all here for each other and if there is anything you are struggling with, please do let us know and we will support in whatever way we can. We, as adults, will no doubt be going through a whole range of emotions, so it is really important that we support the children as they go through the same experiences. This past week has been Children's Mental Health Week, and in school and on Google Classroom, we have set lots of tasks and activities to do with how to stay healthy mentally as well as physically. But looking after ourselves and our well being is more than just a week; it should be rooted in our every day lives. In just the same way we brush our teeth every day, and know to turn to a dentist if things go wrong - it should be the same with understanding and controlling our emotions and looking after mental health and well being. These are areas covered in our PSHE curriculum and we will ensure that we continue to teach and support the children

with recognising the importance of good mental health as well as physical health, and what they can do if they are struggling. As with everything, this will all be in an age appropriate and sensitive manner. We will continue to build this into our curriculum. We will build up a bank of resources on our website that you can also use at home with the children.



## **Safer Internet Day**

Linked with our learning about looking after ourselves, we celebrate Safer Internet Day this week. The online world is being used more than ever; Google Classroom, Remote learning, Zoom etc. The technology is amazing and allows us all to connect on a global scale. However, it makes it all the more important that the children know how to stay safe online. Just like with Mental Health Week, this is a year round endeavour and is built into our curriculum. To support you as parents to navigate this tricky world, our website has lots of useful information and links on our safeguarding resources page <http://www.stjosephscatholicprimarybirkenhead.co.uk/safeguarding-information-and-resources>

### **Sacramental Preparation**

Unfortunately, last year the wonderful celebrations of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion in Year 3 were not able to take place owing to the first Lockdown. Plans had been drawn up to make sure that the current Year 4, as well as the current Year 3 prepared for and made these Sacraments this year. However, that was before this current period, which has once again created a problem as the guidance for Church's would not enable these celebrations to take place as a large group. Bishop Mark has now stated that any plans for the Sacraments should go on hold until after Easter. Please be assured that the class teachers will continue with the education about the Sacraments, as this is part of the Scheme of Work for Year 3, so that when we do get the go ahead, the children will have had all of the required learning. We will continue to liaise with Fr Chris, so that as soon as we can, we can get planning and give you as much notice as possible so that these joyous celebrations can be something you, the children and your families can look forward to.

## **Relationships (and sex) Education - RSE**

**As detailed in a previous letter, Relationships and Sex education (RSE) is statutory in primary schools from the Summer term. For primary, the statutory element is Relationships, not Sex and as a school and community we have made the decision to not include this aspect. We will be delivering this curriculum area - Relationships Education, using a Diocesan and DfE approved Scheme - 'Life to the Full' from Ten:ten.**

**We opened a consultation period and shared lots of information on our website <http://www.stjosephscatholicprimarybirkenhead.co.uk/new-page-3>**

**Thank you for your comments and feedback. We have taken the feedback and a draft policy to our Governing Body, who have in turn ratified and accepted our policy. This will shortly be published on our website, and this new Curriculum area will be taught from the Summer Term.**

### **After Half term....**

At the time of writing this newsletter, we do not have confirmation as to what will happen after half term. It has been confirmed that schools will not open until at least the 8th March. But at the moment it is not clear if the 8th March will bring a full opening, partial opening, or a review point to make a decision from there. We possess the same information as you, and do not get any advance notice of Government plans! However, this time round, the Minister for Education has stated that there will be two weeks notice before changes. So as soon as we receive any further information (which will still probably be via a public press conference) we will let you know what will be happening.

### *Thought for the term*

*“Do not be disheartened in the face of difficulties that the educational challenge presents! Educating is not a profession but an attitude, a way of being: in order to educate it is necessary to step out of ourselves and be among young people to accompany them in the stages of their growth. Give them hope and optimism for their journey in the world. Teach them to see the beauty and goodness of creation”*

Pope Francis quoted in Educating Today and Tomorrow