

24.04.20

Dear All,

I am going to start by quoting one of our fabulous staff, Mrs Vicky James, who sent round an email to staff earlier this week. She wrote ...

I hope you all enjoyed a different kind of holiday over Easter time. As we start our Summer term, in a very strange way, it is lovely to welcome some sunshine and feel warmer temperatures. Just like the weather; our feelings can change, week to week, day to day, moment to moment. In the current situation we are surrounded by many events which can bring about a whole range of contrasting emotions in equal measure, relief and anxiety, positivity and hopelessness, stress and serenity. I read an article from a newspaper, which talked about giving ourselves 'permission to feel'; allowing ourselves time to identify and feel some of those normal unpleasant emotions as well as the more positive uplifting feelings. When we acknowledge the feeling we can describe it, learn how to cope with it and how to move on from it.

The article highlighted the importance of maintaining our emotional wellbeing during lockdown by using the 'Three A's' strategy.

Accept *there is nothing we can do to change what is happening. So we embrace it by talking to others about how we feel; practice positive self-talk such as 'I can cope'.*

Alter *by turning things around and looking at positives in our current situation. This can be done by managing our time better and creating a routine of things to do.*

Adapt *is to change your standards and expectations to be able to manage the changes and stresses arising from the current issue with COVID-19. Some ways of doing this are by asking ourselves what is important? Use some of this time to rest and recover from all that is happening around us. Keep reminding ourselves 'I can get through this', mentally repeating it a number of times helps to settle any negative feelings or thoughts arising.*

Over the past few weeks we have certainly embraced this Three A's method, it is truly amazing, awesome and admirable how we as a community have quickly adapted to the necessary changes in the way we work, learn and support each other. Definitely a 'Triple A Team!' These rapid changes can of course be overwhelming for us all. If you have any concerns about the wellbeing of a child or colleague please inform our school team. I'd like to reiterate my sincere thanks to all community members for your commitment, resilience and hard work during what has been a very challenging period.

What a beautiful few paragraphs, thank you Vicky.

Social Distancing Restrictions

This week marks the fifth week since the Government introduced social distancing measures. These measures have dramatically changed the way we live, work and socialise and in turn have helped slow the spread of Covid-19, protect the NHS and save lives. Last week, the Government announced that the current restrictions will remain in place for at least another three weeks. The three week extension means the temporary measures we have put in place across our school over the past few weeks, including staff working from home where possible and meetings taking place virtually, will continue until further notice. We remain open for children care and typically twenty five children

Update from Tom Hall, Director of Public Health, South Tyneside

As of 9am on 19th April, there are 120,067 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in the UK. As you will be aware, this figure is an underestimate as testing is only happening in certain settings, such as hospitals, and amongst some groups of key workers. Unfortunately 16,060 people who have tested positive for Covid-19 in UK hospitals have died. In South Tyneside, there are 345 confirmed cases of Covid-19. Sadly, to date, we are aware of 42 deaths amongst South Tyneside residents. All families affected by this dreadful disease are in our thoughts and prayers.

Care Homes

The very important issue of protecting people in Care Homes has been raised at a national level. Across the country they are reporting increasing numbers of residents displaying symptoms of Covid-19, as well as confirmed cases. Recently we have bought Protective Personal Equipment for two local Care Homes (Hawthorne and Windsor Court) who we have a very good relationship with. In more normal times, our children sing to the residents and we have invited them into school. They will be taking delivery of this equipment very soon.

Support for our community

Over the last few weeks every child in the school, all members of staff and many of our volunteers and parishioners have received a phone call from a member of the school team. We have been in contact with over 700 community members since Friday 20th March, for most of them on more than one occasion. As a result of these phone calls we are able to offer further assistance to a significant number of families: this has included finance to support the children, food for the families in the form of frozen, home cooked meals and food parcels; educational aid (iPads and stationary) and counselling. As we work through the impact of the Pandemic, we continue to refine what we can offer. We are working with volunteers to provide support in a safe and managed way. If you feel you require any support please do not hesitate to contact us.

Financial Support

Three weeks ago, our council launched a hardship fund. It provides direct financial support to residents affected by the pandemic. The scheme has made over 800 awards. Applicants should contact 0191 424 7444 or www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/35031/Crisis-support

Communication

We are working hard to ensure you are kept informed during this difficult and ever-changing period. We have focused on the following communication channels:

- School website/social media updated regularly (Facebook, Twitter and now YouTube).
- Weekly pupil and parent newsletters emailed out and posted on website/ social media
- A regular positive video to celebrate our wonderful community is available
- Weekly Home learning newsletters to guide your child's distance learning
- Whole school HOPE campaigns (music, art, writing and mosaic) to give positivity.

Over the coming weeks we will be giving further consideration to the recovery phase of this Pandemic and how we will need to work with our staff, parents, and pupils to ensure our community gets back onto a solid platform as our school starts to reopen.

Stories of recovery

I have enjoyed speaking with a few parents and grandparents this week via telephone. They informed me that they'd been through a tough time with bouts of the virus. I am glad they are now recovering well. The news at the moment is often grim so I love hearing some good news. A 101-year-old man who tested positive for coronavirus has returned home from hospital after making

a full recovery. Keith Watson, from Worcestershire, was initially admitted for surgery on his leg following a fall and was tested for Covid-19 after developing a high temperature.

"Having gone in for the operation is one thing and then when we learned he tested positive we were thinking the worst," said his daughter-in-law, Jo Watson. "He's amazing for his age."

A Facebook post from Worcestershire NHS Hospitals with Mr Watson has been shared 300,000 times. We are loving positive news stories, they are certainly keeping our spirits up!

Online safety

Northumbria Police have contacted us to let us know that they are concerned about children safety online. They have asked us to remind you of the steps you can take to ensure they stay safe. Most children are being educated at home during the outbreak. Remote education is a new experience for us all and our children spending more time than ever on-line. It is essential that we do our utmost to ensure that we have the right processes in place to safeguard children. Therefore, I ask you to check that you have set age-appropriate parental controls on all devices and use internet filters to block malicious websites. Any safeguarding concerns, contact us.

- [Thinkuknow](#) provides advice from the National Crime Agency on staying safe online
- [Parent info](#) provides support and guidance for parents from leading experts
- [Childnet](#) offers a toolkit to support about online life, to set boundaries around online behaviour and technology use, and to find out where to get more help and support

Admiration for the key workers

I have written on a few occasions of my admiration for our key workers. Those who are working on the frontline, or behind the scenes, are having to juggle enormous pressures and manage both professional and personal lives. It is vital that we continue to support people in any way we can, a warm message or a kind gesture. If you know of anyone who is working as a key worker and could do with a personal message, a gift from school or even a food hamper / one of our delicious home cooked meals, let us know and we'll send something on. It is important that they look after themselves and know the whole country is behind them.

Musicians thank medics for showing 'true colours'

A choir has created a fantastic tribute to thank medical staff. It is beautiful. Voices For New Cross was created to help raise money for medical staff battling rising numbers of coronavirus cases across Wolverhampton. The cover of Cyndi Lauper's 1986 single True Colors was recorded by a group of classically trained singers and a rapper. Their recordings were mixed and a video has been produced with dozens of images submitted by staff working at the city's New Cross hospital. www.youtube.com/watch?v=toD1ZwKtqpc

The song is amazing and so is the wonderful tribute to our community created by our Deputy Head, Teaching and Learning, Kathryn Fenwick. en-gb.facebook.com/stalloysius123/

Free School Meals Vouchers

The company that the Government has appointed to send Egift cards are struggling to keep up with the supply, mainly because the majority of schools across the country placed their orders at the same time. Of all of the school orders made, approximately half have been redeemed. There is no common reason why some people have received 1, 2 or no email at all. Once you redeem your code you have to wait at least 72 hours to receive your Egift. If you have received previous emails from the school then your email address is correct. If you think your email is not correct please email info@st-alloysius.co.uk to let us know. We apologise for the time you are having to wait but this is out of our control. Please remember to keep checking your spam/junk folders.

Living History Book

We are going to ask each class to participate in a creative writing project to outline thoughts, feelings

Learning Newsletters

The class newsletters have been uploaded since Monday and will be released each week going forward. I hope they are supporting your child's distance learning. The longer children are away from school the more important it is that they engage to ensure that we minimise the impact on their learning. However, this has to be balanced with family life, the difficulties of access to devices/internet, along with the challenges presented by us all working from home. **As I've said before, home learning shouldn't become an additional stressor for parents at what we all know is an already difficult time - I am encouraging parents to do what they can.** This week saw the introduction of national online education programmes:

www.whiterosemaths.com/homelearning

www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize

www.thenational.academy

You are welcome to use these sites. In preparation for next week's newsletter, staff have been looking at them and will incorporate some of the activities into the children's weekly work. Miss Fenwick is going to write about them in the weekly email to pupils on Tuesday.

Keeping in touch

Our school staff love catching up with you all and hearing what you and the children have been getting up to since school has been closed. They will continue to call you regularly. We understand many families are juggling parenting and work commitments so please don't think we are checking up on you. We know you are all doing what you can to support your children in these unprecedented times. We are in this together so please be assured that our teachers are there for you – if you need anything at all just reach out!

Art Project of Hope

Our Art Project of Hope is called 'Draw your HOPE!' It is based around the hopes and dreams we have for ourselves, our friends and our families once this challenging lockdown time is over. We are working with an award winning artist, Greg McGee. He is a very talented friend who runs his own art gallery. Greg is guiding us to create a comic book style illustration. We need as many people to send in drawings as possible so that we are all represented. Parents and grandparents can join in too and send an entry. www.st-alloysius.co.uk/draw-your-hopes-art-project

And finally...

Try to remain as positive as possible and have faith that we will rise from this crisis. We are here for you all. If you are concerned about anything or anyone, please contact us immediately. Until then take care, keep talking, keep caring, keep safe. Don't forget to let us know if there is someone who requires any practical support (financial, food parcel, advice) or if you or someone you know (an isolated friend or grandparent) needs a card or a call which might help to cheer them up. Please continue to **reach out to myself, the school and each other.** We are one community and together we will emerge from this stronger!

Reflection of an elder (a post war childhood)

My father and I are very close and he imparts his reflections of the past to help guide me through the present. Over Easter, we were discussing via Facetime things we can learn from this current crisis. As you read my dad's reflection below, I am sure you too will draw many parallels with life then and now.

'I was born in 1947. I remember food being rationed. I recall queuing in shops. What was available was basic, wholesome produce. I remember having to help my mother prepare the vegetables and I became proficient at preparing the Yorkshire pudding mix! My mother also taught me how to sew my shirt buttons on and I also learned to iron

The NHS was created in 1948 and from then onwards treatment for sickness has been free. I am very grateful for the treatment I have received since. Because of the shortages during the war people developed a positive community spirit. I knew all my neighbours in the street very well. You would think nothing of asking to borrow basic commodities like flour or milk from someone nearby if you had run out.

We amused ourselves a lot within the home. Most people did not have TVs until the early 1960's. We played a lot of card games with our parents and brothers and sisters. Knockout Whist was my favourite. We played dominoes and games like Ludo and Snakes and Ladders. Table tennis on the dining room table was eagerly looked forward to. Head tennis with a balloon was good fun. Football along the passageway with my brother was always another great activity but not popular with the grown-ups!

We were encouraged to read. I preferred comics like Dandy, The Beano, Roy of the Rovers.

These are indeed extraordinary times but when it has passed, I look forward to enjoying meeting my friends again in the pub, hugging my grandchildren and welcoming a new positive, kind and loving way of living.'

Frank Conway aged 73 years April 14th 2020

As the national press has rightly reflected on Captain Tom's inspirational acts and life we all need to keep reaching out to 'elders' in our community with renewed appreciation and respect. Strength and courage all,

Nick Conway

***“PLEASE, THANK YOU and I'M SORRY
are the best words in any family.” Pope Francis***

