



St. James' Church of England Primary Academy
Pokesdown Hill, Christchurch Road
BOURNEMOUTH
BH7 6DW
01202 426696
Email office@stjamescebourne-mouth.com

Newsletter

17th December 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

Staffing Changes and Updates at St. James'

Thank you for all your support in the year of 2021. It has certainly had its challenges, but it has also had its joys. We must be thankful and grateful for these. At St. James' we are so proud of our children, their unique wonder and their achievements. As teachers, we have the best job in the world, where we get to shape a new generation. It is not by chance that our Christian values run through our very soul. We Love, we Hope and we Forgive. Through this, every single member of the St. James' Community may feel valued, inspired and accepted.

Mr Payne

I would like to let you know that currently Mr Payne is unwell. I know some of you have asked where he is, and asked that we send your thoughts and prayers, we will continue to pass on your good wishes to him. Until his return, I will continue to deputise in his absence. He has asked me to say that he hopes you all have a wonderful Christmas and New Year with the people who you love.

Staffing Update

Yesterday, I sent a letter to Madrid and Turtle parents informing them that Mr Slattery would be changing his role from Madrid class teacher to whole school improvement in maths. As a result, we have asked Mrs Jacobs to become the Madrid class teacher and Mrs Hurley to become the full time Turtle class teacher.

Performances

Thank you to PSA, staff and parents for embracing a new and rather wonderful way of celebrating the joy of Christmas. We have thoroughly enjoyed all of our sparkling performances and, for the most part, been extremely grateful for the good weather and, as always, our fantastic, adaptable, talented children.

Car Parking at Tesco

I have been asked by the manager to politely remind members of our community to not use their car park, unless you are shopping with them. Thank you for your assistance with this.

We will reopen for our children in 2022 on **Wednesday 5th January**.

Reflection

In 2007, Joshua Bell busked on the metro in America for 45 minutes. Despite 1000's of people walking past, he raised the small sum of \$32. Three days earlier he had played to a packed Boston Symphony Hall, playing the violin on a \$3,000,000,000 Stradivarius with people paying \$100 a ticket. The lesson for us all in such busy roles is to try and take time; time to notice and reflect and where appropriate, take time to appreciate. This is easier said than done I know; however, Advent is a time for us to take time and notice Jesus and the fact he has come into the world to change us forever.

Dear Lord, Heavenly Father,
We look ahead to celebrate the birth of Jesus into our world. We look forward to taking time to be, time for most to celebrate and time for us all to rest and recharge. Help us to stay safe and well.
Amen

Luke 2:11

"Today in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you: he is the Messiah the Lord".

May you all have a peaceful and blessed Christmas and we look forward to seeing you all in 2022!

Alastair Brown
Deputy Headteacher

*The St. James' family is a welcoming, thriving, innovative community; loving and inspiring, forgiving and challenging. Together we can, and will, enrich the world.
Matthew 19:26 "with God all things are possible."*

The following update is from BCP council:

- Helping parents to understand what has been happening and how they can help in January
- Omicron and staff resilience
- Support not pressure over the holidays

BCP and Dorset schools have had a tough term. The bulk of rising cases have been in school age pupils and the staff who work with them and we have seen two distinct and difficult phases. In the first half term we saw high case rates in pupils at about 100 per week across schools all PCR confirmed. This was challenging for pupils and families and there were outbreaks that needed managing down and even a few cases of year group closures to create a firewall to protect others.

However, most schools managed with onsite isolation of outbreaks and the relatively few staff cases were manageable with support staff or cover. Since October half term, we have seen as many cases per day as we have had in a week. Although case rates remain high in pupils of most year groups, the educational workforce has suffered from Covid, Covid isolations and other illnesses which has left many schools stretched. Schools have seen 15-20% staff absence-some have seen far higher rates.

We know that some of you will have been very disappointed that we have needed to have virtual/outdoor nativities/postponed residential/ or to have switched to remote learning for a class; we do not take these decisions lightly.

These measures have always been taken in consultation and support from the BCP team dealing with Covid and Public Health Dorset. They are also made in light of extra guidance for BCP and Dorset only in England, where we can take more enhanced measures until the end of this term at least.

Despite the excellent work of parents, pupils and staff, cases continue to rise in schools and latterly in the community. Whilst we cannot go into specific details, as well as cases in pupils, we have also seen both Covid and other illnesses taking their toll on staffing. Staff absence in BCP and Dorset is four times the national average. There are many other schools facing these sorts of decision at the moment and we understand your disappointment if it happens here.

There is much that you can do to support us over Christmas and the New Year.

What you can do:

- Keep testing habits going in families over the holidays and awareness of hand washing etc after shopping trips
- Be vigilant for symptoms and do not send children in after the holidays with any Covid, fever or headache symptoms
- Seek PCR tests for family well-being if you get symptoms or are asked to do so
- Encourage adherence to changing guidelines
- Follow guidance from track and trace who are following up on Omicron and/or guidance on Day 2 testing and test for return if you are holidaying abroad-current guidance is you cannot return until negative tests are back
- Be aware that we often have to respond to cases and changes in policy very quickly

What we will try to do:

- Prioritise keeping children in school for learning as much and as safely possible
- Be aware of outbreaks and be transparent about when and why we need to change things
- Discuss alternatives with PH and BCP when staff numbers are down or cases are rising

We can assure you we explore all other avenues before we postpone an event or switch to remote learning. Please stay in touch about symptoms and we will access support for you at the start of term.

If you need to take time off in the holidays or in term times, there is support for families still available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme> with isolation periods.