



Tonwell St Mary's CE (VC) Primary School

Ware Road, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 0HN

Tel: 01920 462894 Fax: 01920 469606

E-mail: admin@tonwell.herts.sch.uk

Headteacher: Mrs Sarah Bridgman



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
DIOCESE OF
ST ALBANS

'Knowing each child, growing each child, in God's love'

Friday 15th November

Christian Value: Joy

Dear Parents,

Our preparations for Christmas are well under way. It brings me great joy to hear the children already busy practising their songs for our nativity 'Shine, star, shine' as I visit classrooms. Thank you again to volunteers from Holy Trinity Church who shared the story of Abraham as part of our 'Open the Book' project to help our children understand, enjoy and learn from Bible stories.



Thank you to those who joined me for our parent forum earlier this week. Our focus was on the school's therapeutic approach to behaviour. Please see the PowerPoint presentation and poems attached to the electronic version of the newsletter and below. Thank you for your support for 'odd sock' day to celebrate difference as part of our Anti-Bullying Week.



I am very sad to announce that Mrs Matthews, our midday supervisor, will be retiring at the end of this term. Mrs Matthews began 'helping out' at the school and ended up staying as a member of staff for 5 years. I am pleased to share that Mrs Williams and Ms Gooden, who are already at our school, will be covering her hours.

Mrs Bridgman

Dates

These are some key dates for this term. All dates will be available on our website.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Friday 22 nd November | Celebration Worship Time (parents invited) |
| Friday 29 th November | Christmas Bazaar from 3pm-5pm |
| Tuesday 3 rd December | 1.30pm Whole School Visit to Pantomime |
| Tuesday 10 th December | 1.30pm Whole School Nativity and Church Service @ Holy Trinity (letter to follow) |
| Thursday 12 th December | Flu vaccinations |
| Tuesday 17 th December | 11.45 Open the Book worship time for children with volunteers from Holy Trinity |
| Wednesday 18 th December | Christmas Lunch and wear a Christmas jumper |
| Friday 20 th December | School Closes 1.15pm |
| Tuesday 7 th January | Children return to school |



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Dear Parent:

I know. You're worried. Every day, your child comes home with a story about THAT kid. The one who is always hitting, shoving, pinching scratching maybe even biting other children. The one who always has to hold my hand in the hallway. The one who has a special spot at the carpet, and sometimes sits on a chair rather than the floor. The one who had to leave the block centre because blocks are not for throwing. The one who climbed over the playground fence right exactly as I was telling her to stop. The one who poured his neighbour's milk onto the floor in a fit of anger. On purpose. While I was watching. And then, when I asked him to clean it up, emptied the ENTIRE paper towel dispenser. On purpose. While I was watching. The one who dropped the REAL ACTUAL F-word in gym class.

You're worried that THAT child is detracting from your child's learning experience. You're worried that he takes up too much of my time and energy, and that your child won't get his fair share. You're worried that she is really going to hurt someone someday. You're worried that "someone" might be your child. You're worried that your child is going to start using aggression to get what she wants. You're worried your child is going to fall behind academically because I might not notice that he is struggling to hold a pencil. I know.

Your child, this year, in this classroom, at this age, is not THAT child. Your child is not perfect, but she generally follows rules. He is able to share toys peaceably. She does not throw furniture. He raises his hand to speak. She works when it is time to work, and plays when it is time to play. He can be trusted to go straight to the bathroom and straight back again with no shenanigans. She thinks that the S-word is "stupid" and the C-word is "crap." I know.

I know, and I am worried, too.

You see, I worry all the time. About ALL of them. I worry about your child's pencil grip, and another child's letter sounds, and that little tiny one's shyness, and that other one's chronically empty lunchbox. I worry that Gavin's coat is not warm enough, and that Talitha's dad yells at her for printing the letter B backwards. Most of my car rides and showers are consumed with the worrying.

But I know, you want to talk about THAT child. Because Talitha's backward Bs are not going to give your child a black eye. I want to talk about THAT child, too, but there are so many things I can't tell you. I can't tell you that she was adopted from an orphanage at 18 months. I can't tell you that he is on an elimination diet for possible food allergies, and that he is therefore hungry ALL THE TIME. I can't tell you that her parents are in the middle of a horrendous divorce, and she has been staying with her grandma. I can't tell you that I'm starting to worry that grandma drinks... I can't tell you that his asthma medication makes him agitated. I can't tell you that her mom is a single parent, and so she (the child) is at school from the moment before-care opens, until the moment after-care closes, and then the drive between home and school takes 40 minutes, and so she (the child) is getting less sleep than most adults. I can't tell you that he has been a witness to domestic violence. That's okay, you say. You understand I can't share personal or family information. You just want to know what I am DOING about That Child's behaviour.



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I would love to tell you. But I can't.

I can't tell you that she receives speech-language services, that an assessment showed a severe language delay, and that the therapist feels the aggression is linked to frustration about being unable to communicate. I can't tell you that I meet with his parents EVERY week, and that both of them usually cry at those meetings. I can't tell you that the child and I have a secret hand signal to tell me when she needs to sit by herself for a while. I can't tell you that he spends rest time curled in my lap because "it makes me feel better to hear your heart, Teacher." I can't tell you that I have been meticulously tracking her aggressive incidents for 3 months, and that she has dropped from 5 incidents a day, to 5 incidents a week. I can't tell you that the school secretary has agreed that I can send him to the office to "help" when I can tell he needs a change of scenery. I can't tell you that I have stood up in a staff meeting and, with tears in my eyes, BEGGED my colleagues to keep an extra close eye on her, to be kind to her even when they are frustrated that she just punched someone AGAIN, and this time, RIGHT IN FRONT OF A TEACHER.

The thing is, there are SO MANY THINGS I can't tell you about That Child. I can't even tell you the good stuff. I can't tell you that his classroom job is to water the plants, and that he cried with heartbreak when one of the plants died over winter break. I can't tell you that she kisses her baby sister goodbye every morning, and whispers "You are my sunshine" before mom pushes the stroller away. I can't tell you that he knows more about thunderstorms than most meteorologists. I can't tell you that she often asks to help sharpen the pencils during playtime. I can't tell you that she strokes her best friend's hair at rest time. I can't tell you that when a classmate is crying, he rushes over with his favourite stuffy from the story corner.

The thing is, dear parent, that I can only talk to you about YOUR child. So, what I can tell you is this:

If ever, at any point, YOUR child, or any of your children, becomes THAT child...

I will not share your personal family business with other parents in the classroom. I will communicate with you frequently, clearly, and kindly. I will make sure there are tissues nearby at all our meetings, and if you let me, I will hold your hand when you cry. I will advocate for your child and family to receive the highest quality of specialist services, and I will cooperate with those professionals to the fullest possible extent. I will make sure your child gets extra love and affection when she needs it most. I will be a voice for your child in our school community. I will, no matter what happens, continue to look for, and to find, the good, amazing, special, and wonderful things about your child. I will remind him and YOU of those good amazing special wonderful things, over and over again. And when another parent comes to me, with concerns about YOUR child...

I will tell them all of this, all over again.

With so much love;

Teacher.



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Children Learn What They Live

By Dorothy Law Nolte

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.

If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.

If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.

If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.

If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy.

If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy.

If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.

If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.

If children live with tolerance, they learn patience.

If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.

If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.

If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.

If children live with recognition, they learn it is good to have a goal.

If children live with sharing, they learn generosity.

If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.

If children live with fairness, they learn justice.

If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect.

If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves
and in those about them.

If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place
in which to live.