

17 January 2018

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope the New Year has started well for you and that you had a very happy Christmas. I have lots of information to share with you so apologies for the lengthy letter but it is important you have all the updates.

Our Lady's is about to have a Section 48 Inspection – on 6 and 7 February. This is a statutory inspection which all Church schools must have every five years. Our Diocese provides the inspectors; they are Mr Phil Mooney, Mr Richard Charnock and Fr. Michael Docherty. They will look at everything to do with the Catholic character of the school, including leadership, religious education, worship, moral and spiritual development and links with local Catholic community. Inspectors will observe lessons and acts of worship, talk to staff and students, analyse data and discuss emerging issues with senior managers. The inspection team will then prepare a report of their findings, which the Governors will share with you.

Parents' views are very important to us and we are fortunate that, as parents, you work alongside us to ensure we provide the best education possible for your children and continue to constantly improve. We shall be sharing with the inspectors any evidence we have of parents' views of the school. Inspectors would also like to hear directly from you. It would be very helpful if you could complete the attached questionnaire in confidence and return it to your child's Form Tutor by Friday 2 February, in a **sealed envelope** if possible. You are welcome to give any additional information that you wish. All replies will be given to the inspectors.

At the end of term we sadly said goodbye to Mrs Turner who has taken her well-deserved retirement. Mrs Carruthers will now replace her as Pastoral Support Officer for Key Stage 4. Mrs Wilkinson and Mrs Davis will be the Pastoral Support Officers for Key Stage 3. We welcome Mrs Julie Creer who is joining us as co-ordinator for Careers and PSHE. She has been in school this week and will be meeting year groups in the next few weeks. Father Andrew, our Chaplain, was moved to a parish in Blackpool at the beginning of the New Year and we are sad to see him go but delighted for the parishioners who will benefit from his ministry. We are fortunate that the Bishop has given us a replacement, as many schools do not have the services of a Priest Chaplain. Fr John-Paul Evans was in school last week and we know that Rachel and the GIFT team will keep him very busy in the coming months.

I would like to thank you all for your support for our fundraising last term. The two charities we supported were the Olive Branch and the Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service. We delivered a mountain of food and £600 to the Olive Branch and over £2000 to LDHAS. The students and staff worked so hard to raise this money but I know these charities have benefited from your kindness. I am proud that our young people are so committed to social justice and caring for others.

Another highlight of last term was that Rachel Cortes and Mrs Nicholls went to County Hall to be awarded and named as a Lancashire School of Sanctuary. There are only three schools with this award in the county and this is testament to work across the school community but especially the work of the Chaplaincy and Mrs Nicholls.

As you will be aware there will be major changes to traffic during the maintenance work on the Greyhound Bridge. One of these changes is that Morecambe Road will be two-way traffic. As a result we will have to insist that the Bus Bay is not used for dropping off or picking up students at the start and end of the school day. I would suggest the best place for this would be on Lune Street at the back of school. I know this will be an inconvenience but my prime concern must be pupil safety. I am also aware that we do sometimes cause hold ups on Morecambe Rd, which will already be slowed by the works, and this will alleviate congestion. I thank you in advance for your understanding.

This academic year we have been working on developing a growth mind-set in our students. This is ongoing work and I would ask for your support at home too. I have spoken in assemblies this week about the ‘iceberg illusion’. We discussed that success is not due to luck, it takes dedication, hard work, persistence, effort, discipline, disappointment, sacrifices, and many failures to be successful. This is true in their academic studies too. Please help your child develop this mind-set and help them towards success by ensuring they complete homework to the best of their ability. This is the time they practise what they have learned in class and if they make mistakes teachers can give them feedback of how to improve. Please also support them to prepare for tests and assessments by revising and learning their work so they can answer your questions about it or repeat it back to you. Getting into these habits early in their secondary school career will help them greatly in Key Stage 4 and in Sixth Form.

We are very fortunate in the partnership we enjoy with parents and are extremely thankful for that. We hope also that you recognise that the staff at Our Lady’s are a team dedicated to the present and future wellbeing of your sons and daughters and that communication between us should always reflect our mutual respect for each other. Sadly, very occasionally parents may communicate with us in a way that does not reflect that mutual respect but we will not tolerate any form of hostility towards our staff either verbal or otherwise. We understand that passions can run high with regard to your children’s wellbeing but communication on both sides must always remain calm, considered and professional.

This year’s Sixth Form Open Evening is on Wednesday 7 February at 7pm. Our Sixth Form is a strength of Our Lady’s. The results at A level and BTECs are excellent and it is a very supportive and friendly Sixth Form. I would encourage you to come along and invite anyone else from other schools who you know are considering their post-16 options to come along and find out what we have to offer. I promise you will not be disappointed.

We are always looking at more effective ways to manage our school and continue to improve the outcomes for our young people. We recently swapped software systems to help us with this. Although overall this has helped us to continue with our improvement plans it did mean that we lost one particular aspect of the functionality of the old software and so School Gateway is no longer available. If ever you have an urgent query that you would previously have addressed through Gateway – please do not hesitate to contact us through main@olcc.lancs.sch.uk and we will of course be pleased to help you.

I would like to finish by thanking you for all your support over the last year, which I know you will continue in the coming year, as we work together to produce young people who achieve well and grow into adults we can all be proud of. Please feel free to visit school or to contact me if there is anything you wish to discuss.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Seddon

Headteacher

