

**Diocese of Brentwood**  
**St Bede's Catholic Primary School and Nursery**  
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**Head teacher**

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Dear Parent/ Carer

I hope your week has been good.

**GoRead**

It is fantastic that so many of you are in a position where you feel able to support your child routinely at home with their learning. Such support is both seen and appreciated by all of the school staff. When you set about reading with your child five times a week, please ensure you are using the book that has been given to them by their teacher. We obviously want your child to have other 'things' they enjoy reading too: stories and information books that you or family have bought them; books borrowed from the library; comics; magazines and so on. Their school reading book will have been especially put together to help them learn to read better: it will introduce younger children to new sounds in a structured way and build every child's vocabulary in a measured way. But, at other times, they just need to kick off their shoes, curl up on the sofa, sprawl on the bed, sink down in a beanbag and have fun by reading adventures and mysteries – secrets and disasters – and, tales of horror and amusement.

When I was seven my parents took me away on holiday to Cornwall. In the accommodation where we were staying, there was what I considered at 7 to be a 'library'. In reality, it was probably a single bookcase, but on its shelves I discovered a book called **Secret Seven Adventure**, written by a certain Enid Blyton. As suggested by the title, the story involved seven friends. I could not put it down. Have you ever felt like that about a book? Has your child? Fifteen different Secret Seven Books were published and when I returned from that holiday, I worked my way through the entire set. I then read Enid Blyton's 'Famous Five' books, of which there were twenty-one, then her 'Mystery stories – of which there were 8 – after that the 'Adventure' ones, of which there were 6 – then the 'Secret' Stories – of which there were 5, and finally the 'Mr Galliano's Circus' stories (my absolute favourites!) – of which there were 3. During my junior school years, I re-read each book many times. Enid Blyton has long fallen out of fashion, but even at my age I still like nothing more than curling up with one of her stories from my childhood, and losing myself within its covers. As a head teacher, I know it is best when children like a range of authors, rather than just one, because they each have a different style; and it is always better to read books where the author routinely introduces the child to new words. Reading just Enid Blyton probably did not serve me as well as a more varied diet would have, but it did give me a love of reading

which has stayed with me through my life and which I have somehow managed to pass down to my children. Mrs Roberts likes to say, 'Those who read, succeed!' Every piece of research that has been done has supported this: children who read avidly for pleasure are more likely to go to college or university; to have a job they enjoy that is paid well; they are more likely to be healthier and because of all this, they are likely to be happier!

When children are younger, they need the support of their parents to help them learn the mechanics of reading. If they can't read, they can pick up a book for pleasure. As they become more fluent, they become more independent – reading to themselves on the bed, bus, beach, sofa, in the car and anywhere else that appeals.

Our new **GoRead** app is designed to help you support your child when you are teaching them to read. Please do make the most of it. There is a link to the GoRead website on the Learning tab of our website.

When your child is mature enough to articulate it, they will thank you for persevering.

Next half-term, we will revamp our reading corners in the each classroom. We will purchase lots of new books to stimulate the children's interest.

### **Nursery**

I would be grateful if you would bear in my mind that it would not be appropriate for me to ask staff to carry our youngest children into school. If your child will not walk into school then I am afraid they will have to return home. I cannot risk a child being dropped or a member of staff's back going into spasm.

If you are able to donate one for your child, a box of tissues would be very much appreciated.

### **Isle of Wight**

We are delighted that our Y6 residential trip returns next year. Mrs Roberts will be leading it. I know the children are very excited about it.

### **PE Lessons**

In future when the children have PE in the Hall, they will do so in bare feet. This is safer in my view. On PE days, children should continue to come to school in trainers – these should be fastened by Velcro if your child is not yet able to tie their laces.

### **Change of Clothing**

I would be grateful if parents of children in the Reception, Years 1 and 2 would ensure their children keep in have a very simple change of clothes in school (top and bottoms). This should be in a PE bag. It is not unknown for us to need one, from time to time when children are so young. Your support with this would be much appreciated.

### **After School Tutoring**

This will begin next month for those children who need additional school support in reading or maths. I would like to thank our teachers, who show their incredible commitment to our learners by providing an extended day. If your child would like to bring a health snack to eat before the session starts, please only send them with one. This will ensure the session starts promptly.

## **SATS**

Next year, SATS return in Y2 and Y6. This terms we will be running information sharing meetings for parents to help them understand what is expected of their children. I know you will find these helpful.

### **Father Martin**

Father leaves the parish this weekend. Yesterday, we invited him into school in order to thank him for all the love and care he has offered children, staff, governors and parents over the last 24 years. Martin and I have been good friends for thirty four years, having met for the first time in September 1986. I cannot begin to thank him for the friendship and compassion he has shown to the school community – young and old – and to me, personally, in that time.

It is not unusual for us to each want to win first place or receive a certificate when we have done something well. Last week's scriptures taught us a different way to think of being great. When we are kind and considerate of those around us, we are winners at **servicing** others.

Sometimes it is hard to put other people's needs ahead of what we want to do. Martin has spent his adult life striving to do that, every single day. To do this he has made many sacrifices. He is a thoroughly decent human, but knowing him as I do, he would simply refer to himself as a fortunate child of God. He will always be welcome in our school and my home. It has been a privilege for us to know him.

***Slán go fóill.***

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Scarlett, my daughter, likes to share jokes with me. I guess most eight year olds like to do that. Sometimes, I struggle to get the punchline but I laugh anyway. This week's offering was better than usual.

Did you know that if Agnetha and Frida had married Steve and Del, instead of Benny and Bjorn, they would have been known as ASDA, not ABBA!

*I hope you have a blessed weekend.*

Gary