



11 March 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Our Day for Ukraine

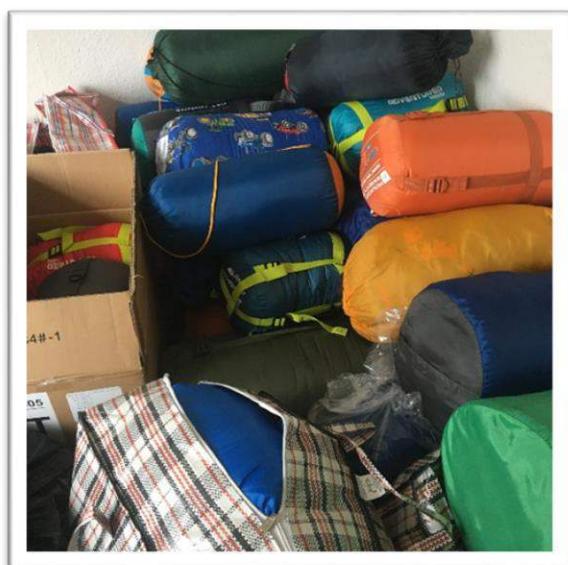
We have had a terrific response from across our community to provide humanitarian aid. Mrs Drinkwater led her textiles students to create hundreds of lapel ribbons and this has generated £2633 (so far). We do not know how much you have also given [via this British Red Cross Just Giving page](#), but know that it will be similarly generous.



A huge number of items were dropped off by parents and carers this morning, but most carried in by students who then dropped them off around the school in designated areas. The items have since been sorted and boxed, making them ready to be driven to Ukraine in the coming days.



Over two weeks into the invasion and the humanitarian crisis, it is plain that this topic remains a source of anxiety and confusion for us all, but most of all students - who have experienced or seen a great deal of unimaginable events in recent years. How they process those events, both now and in later years, cannot be left to chance. This is why we feel it is so important to apply our school values to the real world: This week's **compassion** followed a period of **curiosity** about Ukraine being encouraged and nurtured in dedicated time. The news is full of sadness, but also endless accounts of dignity and **courage**, plus a world that has responded with **creativity** by seeking non-violent means to discourage aggression and express revulsion.



Perhaps it is true that this conflict will put some of our prior disputes and squabbles into perspective and re-establish the things we have in common in our world, and not the things that divide us.



EVERYONE ACHIEVING EVERYONE BELONGING

Talking About Difficult Things

We all want to talk to our children about the real world, but in a way that does not frighten them and in fact encourage a hopeful sense of humanity and the future.

With this in mind, I wish to draw your attention to a free webinar being led by Dr Pooky Knightsmith, from Creative Education, on Monday 28 March at 4pm. The title of the webinar is "Talking About War and Conflict with Your Child" and hopes to help parents and carers, and those in education, to consider different ways to talk to their children about conflict, war and disasters. All you have to do is [click here to register your interest](#) and then a link for the event will be sent to you via email. Please forward the link to *anyone* you know who may be interested.

"A hopeful outlook for themselves, on humanity and the future" (CNS Curriculum Intent)

All of this reminds me of listening to my history teacher aged 14 or 15. Our RE teacher had recently shown us that dreadful film, *Threads*, and we were all pretty despondent. We asked that history teacher what he thought would happen in the world in our lifetime, and he expressed such a hopeful view of people, globalisation, technology, science, common sense and rationality that meant a great deal and countered the grim narrative of the day. His message was that peace would always prevail and that chaos was always a temporary aberration. He said all of this before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the cold war, the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, the release of Nelson Mandela, and the dismantling of South African Apartheid. He was not a blind optimist, nor a romantic, but he embodied the necessity of educators to exude hope and faith in self, others and society. Mind you, you never wanted to skip your homework with him.

EqualiTeach and Agents for Change

You may recall an earlier letter in which I wrote of our work with an external body to help us look at ways in which our school might become more and more equal, diverse and inclusive. So far, they have provided advice and guidance for key staff, advised on our policies and practices, and have now begun direct training for students. In particular, we have sought their support to explore all aspects of identity-based bullying, including that born of intentional unkindness *and* of ignorance.

Yesterday, thirty students across all year groups took part in special day with members of the EqualiTeach team and Ms Skill, Head of Character Education & PSHE. The day was called 'Agents for Change' and it was designed to equip young people with the knowledge and skills to become Equality Ambassadors, developing their own equality initiatives and to equip them with techniques to challenge prejudice and misinformation and to support targets of identity-based bullying.

All the students involved participated in a mature, sensible way, offering intelligent, thoughtful contributions. The two representatives from EqualiTeach spoke very positively about our students and said that they had thoroughly enjoyed working with them.

Well done to all those students, they have done a great service for our school already and will directly contribute towards healthier and more empathic cultures.

Have a wonderful weekend when it arrives and hopefully not quite as wet as it is right now!

Yours faithfully



Barry Doherty
Headteacher