



# St Mary's and St John's CE School

*"With God, all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26)*

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*Wisdom Service Hope*

21<sup>st</sup> April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well.

As you are aware, reading is crucial for the educational performance of our young people. However, this is only one benefit of reading. During lockdown, it's important to keep our minds healthy and reading can be a great support. Here's a reminder of some of the benefits for our mental health:

- **Regular readers for pleasure report fewer feelings of stress and depression than non-readers, and stronger feelings of relaxation from reading than from watching television or engaging with technology intensive activities.**
- **Adults who read for just 30 minutes a week are 20% more likely to report greater life satisfaction.**

To celebrate reading and the positive effects it has, we want to celebrate, **World Book Night on Thursday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April**. We would like to welcome our students to stay connected to the SMSJ family by sharing a picture with the book they are reading with a caption of why they like the book (or just the picture of the book if you prefer). When you've done this, please send this to Ms Dale so she can upload this to Twitter and we can all share in the fun.

Please go the following website for more information on how the nation is celebrating through the link here: <https://worldbooknight.org/>:

I would also like to draw your attention to the following resources that you may find beneficial:

**Harry Potter at Home:** "Bringing Hogwarts to you," the new website offers stir-crazy children a mix of craft videos, puzzles and quizzes. Drawing a niffler, knitting a Weasley-inspired scarf and discovering your Hogwarts house are all on offer.

**Julia Donaldson and Friends:** Every Thursday from 16<sup>th</sup> April, the Gruffalo author will broadcast a show for families on her Facebook page

**BookTrust:** There's a plethora of activities at the reading charity's website. Children's laureate Cowell is reading a chapter a day from How to Train Your Dragon, illustrators including Rob Biddulph are showing us how to draw their characters, and Andy Stanton has tips on how to write a funny story. They have also kindly rounded up the wealth of activities out there for children.

**Authorfy:** The website is offering daily 10-minute creative challenges for children from writers including Abi Elphinstone, Anna James and Lucy Worsley.

**At Home With Penguin:** On Tuesdays at 5pm BST, authors including Marian Keyes, Richard Osman and Caroline Criado-Perez are streaming live from their homes, where they'll reveal how they're coping with life indoors, and what they're reading and watching to get through confinement.

Primary Phase, Neale House Campus, Prothero Gardens, Hendon, NW4 3SL  
Junior Phase, Bennett House Campus, Sunningfields Road, Hendon, NW4 4QR  
Senior Phase, Stamford Raffles Campus, Downage, Hendon, NW4 1AB



**Faber:** Over on Twitter, the publisher has launched an online programme, including poet laureate Simon Armitage reading and reflecting on his Marsden poems each Monday, picture-book readings on Friday afternoons and lunchtime short stories from writers including Sebastian Barry and Edna O’Brien.

**National Shelf Service:** UK librarians have launched a [live daily YouTube broadcast at 11am BST](#) featuring book recommendations for children and families, at a time when some library services are reporting increases in online book lending of up to 700%. Emily Haire, a school librarian from Belfast, was up first and plumped for Lisa Williamson’s Carnegie-longlisted young adult novel *Paper Avalanche*, about a teenager whose mother is a hoarder.

**Axel Scheffler’s free picture book:** The *Gruffalo* illustrator lays out the coronavirus and the measures being taken to control it in a way that is comprehensible to children. “I asked myself what I could do as an children’s illustrator to inform, as well as entertain, my readers here and abroad,” said Scheffler. “I think it is extremely important for children and families to have access to good and reliable information in this unprecedented crisis, and I hope that the popularity of the books I’ve done with Julia Donaldson will ensure that this digital book will reach many children who are now slightly older, but might still remember our picture books.”

**The Big Book Weekend:** Co-founded by authors Kit de Waal and Molly Flatt, this virtual festival is taking place from 8-10 May and will feature appearances from big names such as Robert Webb and Maggie O’Farrell, as well as the debut authors who might feel they have missed their moment in the sun during lockdown. With book festivals from Hay to Edinburgh to Harrogate now on ice, it will host events “sponsored” by the relevant festival, featuring the authors and other artists that would have appeared.

**Sydney writer’s festival:** The cancelled festival is now running a free digital program on its [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) accounts – starting on 27<sup>th</sup> April with an interview with former Australian prime minister Malcolm Turnbull.

**Hay literary festival:** With this year’s festival in May now postponed, Hay is planning the “first fully digital” version with webinars, workshops and live social media Q&As planned for the entire month of May. It’s also already launched a [Hay festival podcast](#), giving free access to past events including Stephen Fry with East West Street author Philippe Sands. Forthcoming guests include Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Hilary Mantel, Naomi Klein and Caitlin Moran.

**The Aitken Alexander Isolation Series:** Authors at the literary agency including [Mark Haddon](#) and [Diana Evans](#) have been responding creatively to the lockdown with essays and short fiction, which are free to read online.

**Puffin Storytime:** children’s publisher Puffin is offering regular readings and draw-alongs from its list of authors on [Mondays and Fridays at 3.30pm BST](#). It is also launching a [Puffin podcast](#) with comedian and children’s author Humza Arshad on 19<sup>th</sup> April, packed with “laugh-out-loud stories, games and jokes guaranteed to give you the giggles”.

Please be reminded that all audiobooks on audible are currently free of charge and there are over 7000 books available on this website: [www.renlearn.co.uk/keep-reading](http://www.renlearn.co.uk/keep-reading).

Please also see the Literacy tab on the website for further suggested reading material.

Yours faithfully,



Ms Gulderen  
Head of Literacy & KS3 Coordinator for English