

REFLECTIONS FROM THE EDUCATION TEAM

May 2020

'Building Communities' Edition

Please circulate as appropriate

Over recent weeks there have been inspiring stories of communities coming together to support each other and to protect those most in need. From [#clapforourcarers](#) to every individual call, letter or food bank donation, we are reminded of what we mean to each other. Thank you for all you've done and are doing. *The Education Team*

Pause for thought: What is 'community'?

Community grows where a group of two or more people who, regardless of the diversity of their backgrounds, have come together for the common good. They are able to communicate openly and effectively; and work together toward shared goals. It echoes the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:20 that, '***where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.***' We can belong to many different communities that constantly evolve and change. Yet they don't just happen. Communities are reflections of hard work, of relationships, of struggle and of hopeful travel in a changing world. They are rarely easy all of the time! This has been true in our schools too over these weeks as we have sought to be community in different ways. In considering how we will come back together as new and changed communities, may we do so with love and patience and remember God's presence whenever we gather.

How do we (re)build community?

Community and Living Well Together is one of the cornerstones of the SIAMS evaluation schedule and offers useful reminders for the days ahead. It speaks to us of:

- Relationships between all members of the school community being supportive.
- Opportunities to seek forgiveness and reconciliation.
- Planning opportunities to explore different points of view and disagreeing well.
- Everyone being confident to express their views and feelings.

It is inevitable that after so many different experiences for staff and pupils during the lockdown, time will be needed for healing, prioritising mental health and wellbeing and coming back together positively. Professor Barry Carpenter talks about feeling a sense of loss, the most common cited being loss of routine, structure, friendship, opportunity and freedom. He argues the case for a 'recovery curriculum' as increasing numbers of pupils and staff return to school. Planning quality time to keep these principles at the forefront and prioritising relationships at all levels – just being together with patience and care - will be invaluable.

Here are some other questions and research that may support you further in the coming days:

1: How can we harness the positive experiences from having been a dispersed community?

We often find the 'law of unexpected consequences' in difficult times. Take time to share together what you've discovered matters most, the positives of the

recent weeks and those things that you now want to integrate into your lives and communities going forward.

2: How might we encourage each other to find new and better ways of coming back together again?

'[The Foundation for Community Encouragement](#)' draws on M Scott Peck's books and work on the four stages of building community.

Do you recognise these stages in your setting?

1. **Pseudocommunity:** we can pretend everything's ok and avoid being honest with each other.
2. **Chaos:** we are easily irritated by each other, we can forget our differences can be creative.
3. **Emptiness:** we have to work through our own challenges and griefs, so we can take risks and be courageous together.
4. **True Community:** there is authenticity and peace. Scott Peck suggests that there is less being said, but more of it is worthwhile. Some even say when in community, they feel the presence of God in the room.

Digging Deeper:

- [Dr Barry Carpenter – The Recovery Curriculum](#)
- [Some Spiritual Assets for Community Building](#)
- [The Forgiveness Project Educational Resources](#)
(resources are for age 14+)

Our full day course '[New to the SIAMS Schedule](#)' will be held on 9th November 2020 and '[Digging Deeper into SIAMS](#)' on 23rd February 2021. Further details and booking through [Eventbrite](#).