VC With Santa Fact Sheet

V.C with Santa is an annual event hosted by E2BN and presented by Father and Mrs Christmas aka Steve and Jo Parish from Past Alive.

Aided by the technical wizardry and magic of the E2BN elves, Father Christmas is ‘beamed’ into individual classrooms to chat to pupils. Pupils have 15 minutes to talk to Father Christmas and pose questions.

How does it work?

A teacher registers for one or more sessions, indicating which day they would prefer to use.

We will set up the VC session on Zoom.

We will also schedule a test session to check the technology works.

The teacher will need:

A PC or laptop connected to a projector or display board so everyone can see Father Christmas.

In order for Father Christmas to see and react pupils, a webcam can be attached to the PC or the inbuilt webcam in the laptop can be activated.

Good audio is important too.

Most display boards and interactive screens have an inbuilt sound system which provides good quality sound output.

Where this is not the case a set of portable speakers needs to be attached to the laptop/PC. The internal speaker in the device is not generally powerful enough ensure that all the children can hear Father Christmas clearly.

Whilst the inbuilt microphone in a laptop is adequate for one-to-one audio it is often not sensitive enough to pick up the voices of quietly spoken children some distance from the device. A radio mic or long lead microphone is helpful if children are going to directly ask Father Christmas questions.
How do we know it will work?

E2BN has run hundreds of VC session over many years. If the school has a reasonable broadband connection there’s no reason why it shouldn’t work. But just to be sure E2BN carries out test sessions with each school prior to the event.

The Test Session
The teacher and an E2BN ‘elf’ carry out a test session. This allows teachers new to VC to familiarise themselves with the process and provides an opportunity to check that equipment at the school end is suitable and working. The test should be carried out on the equipment (Laptop/device, projector/board) that will be used on the day.

The test should check both sound and vision! Please ensure that the school microphone and speakers work and are suitable for use with a group.

The teacher will receive a second email from E2BN containing a link to their VC with Santa session.

At the scheduled time, the teacher clicks the link and the video conference starts. Sessions are scheduled for 20 minutes. This allows 5 minutes for getting set up/techie glitches and 15 minutes ‘Santa time’.

Father Christmas will appear live from his living room to speak to and listen to the children.

What happens during the session?

Father Christmas chats to the children.

Prior to the session the teacher will provide a some information to help Father Christmas personalise each session e.g. details of the school Christmas performance or if a pupil needs a special mention.

If the teacher has forwarded children’s letters, pictures or questions to Father Christmas he responds to those. If we could receive your messages/letters/pictures by email before Thursday 2nd December 2021.

Live Q & A with Father Christmas is possible. How well that works depends on how the teacher has managed the audio. Ideally, the class will have access to a radio mic or other microphone that can be passed between the children. Having children come up to the laptop/device to use the inbuilt microphone will work but clearly requires more management of the children and isn’t time efficient.

Some teachers relay the children’s questions to Father Christmas.
Who is it for?

Age is not a bar to enjoying the idea of Father Christmas but the sessions are primarily aimed at children from Reception /Year 1 to Year 3 or 4. E2BN is happy for nursery children to take part but they are often overwhelmed or more interested in playing in the sand. There have been some sessions with Year 6 children who seemed to enjoy the experience.

Is it educational or just a bit of fun?

VC with Santa is first and foremost a fun activity and an opportunity for us all to celebrate the joy and wonder of children at Christmas. However, there are lots of opportunities for learning.

Prior to the session pupils could:

- Write a traditional letter to Father Christmas assuring him of their good behaviour and listing their preferred Christmas gifts.
- Ask Father Christmas questions about the reindeer, how he visits so many houses in one night, how he gets into houses without a chimney or what is his favourite brand of mince pies. Father Christmas loves a tricky question!
- Make a Christmas card or Christmas picture for Father Christmas.

After the session:

- Write or email Father Christmas to thank him for visiting
- Write a report on what they found out about Father Christmas using the responses to their questions
- Track Father Christmas via NORAD’s Santa Tracking site [https://www.noradsanta.org/](https://www.noradsanta.org/). Opens 1st December – archive of previous Santa sightings, real time Santa tracking on Christmas Eve
- Explain what ‘video conferencing’ is and how it works

Letters, questions and pictures should be sent to Father Christmas c/o E2BN, Unit 1, Saltmore Farm, New Inn Road, Hinxworth, Hertfordshire, SG7 5EZ – If we could receive your messages/letters/pictures by email before Thursday 2nd December 2021.

Please note: This service is only for pupils of teacher that have signed up to VC with Santa. It is a busy time of year for Father Christmas and he cannot respond in writing.
Safeguarding

E2BN
All E2BN/E2BN Protex Ltd staff hold enhanced DBS certification.
E2BN staff monitor every VC with Santa in real time
E2BN does not record VC with Santa

School staff
School staff must adhere to their schools/academy’s Safeguarding/ Online learning/Videoing policies
Staff must not invite other persons to their VC with Santa session or share the video link with anyone not authorised by the school to take part in the session.

Be prepared:
Many young children view Father Christmas as a ‘trusted adult’ and believe him capable of many things. There have been occasions where a child has requested that he “Bring Mummy back for Christmas” or something similar. Steve is very skilled at handling these sensitive moments. He will reply appropriately (without raising expectations) and move the conversation on to another topic. Individual school staff will know whether they need to follow up or intervene with the specific child.

Should a child ask a question or make a request that is indicative of a more serious concern Steve will as above move the conversation on. School staff will follow their own school’s safeguarding policy and reporting mechanisms.

Who are Jo and Steve Parish?

Steve and Jo Parish are professional, highly skilled specialist historical interpreters with 35 years experimental archaeology experience across many disciplines. They have worked with E2BN to create on a number of online history projects.

Most of the year they work in schools to bring the past vividly to life with their hands on experiential learning. Find out more about Steve and Jo at Pastalive.co.uk

Next year’s sessions will be advertised on www.e2bn.org in the autumn term.