



Friday, 15 November 2019

Believe Enjoy Strive Succeed



Principal Comments

With a ribbon of red poppies showering over the East Cliff at the weekend, we have started this week reflecting on how we can bring peace to our own lives.

I am writing this after our two minutes' silence held at school in our worship garden. Each year group from YR to Year 4 made their own wreath and wrote a prayer which they shared on Monday at our cross. The children were incredibly respectful and reflective on the meaning of Remembrance Day and their prayers were thought provoking. The staff were in awe at the stillness and reflection that the children achieved. At St. Mary's, we have certainly remembered those that have been lost and those who continue to bring peace to our lives.

Survey Update

Following the survey completed by the parents at the very end of last year, we have collated and completed the analysis. We had over 100 responses to the survey, which is wonderful and we thank you all for your time in completing it. The survey is designed to enable us to get a perspective on things from all stakeholders. I would like to share with you a few highlights and key actions taken as a result.

Things you would like us to improve on:

Parents' Evenings There were several responses requesting the return of formal parent teacher consultations. Following a year of trialling and informal and open door policy, we have noticed that we too do not find that we are able to talk in detail about children to their parents. We have therefore brought back the formal consultations and will now have two formal meetings a year, with interim reports in between. We will also continue with open evenings to tour the school and view the pupils' wonderful learning.

Communication This is always a difficult one to get right. However, you have asked that we communicate further in advance for information and dates. This year, we have responded to this by sending out all of the key dates for the academic year. We have also ensured that the notice board by the main entrance has two weeks of events on display so that you can check your diaries with this. We do try very hard to ensure bookings are made in advance, but we also have inspired teachers who like to change plans for a more creative opportunity. This can't be planned for, but we do our best to ensure you know in good time and aim for at least a week!

Behaviour and Discipline At St. Mary's, we recognise that many children need a lot of support to succeed. We also know that children make mistakes and need to do so in order to grow and learn to interact with each other. We are proud of the support we offer and the constant solution focussed approach we take to ensure barriers to learning are removed. We also recognise that some children do not make good choices and need help to make better ones and also need us to forgive and show compassion so that they can move on. These poor choices which are made from time to time have a very negative impact on both other children and the staff teaching. This year, we have ensured that there is a very clear line of what will not be tolerated. Persistent disruption to other children's learning and disrespectful attitudes to others make that line. When a child may be making poor choices in the classroom, they are now supported in the Green Room away from other children until they are able to follow class rules and ensure their choices do not affect others in a negative way. We have seen a huge impact of this and all classrooms are now very settled with good provision in place for all children. I hope that your children are reporting this too, as the pupil survey showed that over 95% of the pupils felt behaviour in the school and their classrooms was very good. The school will follow the robust behaviour policy and sanction fixed term exclusions when all other avenues have been explored. It is reassuring to know that where we have used a fixed term exclusion, the child has returned and shown a significant improvement.

Our school is such a lovely school to be part of, the threshold of what will be tolerated is in place now to ensure all of our children continue to flourish and thrive as young learners.

Things you said we do well:

The survey showed us that the very large majority of you felt the school was doing an excellent job and that your child loves coming to school. In the survey, there was a space for writing down what you felt we did well. It was lovely reading your personal comments on the survey and, at times, brought a tear to my eyes. Hearing such kind words about the school makes the work of the school so much more rewarding. Thank you.

I have listed below some key phrases that came up from the survey responses. They made a lovely wordle!

- Engaging learning opportunities
- Forest School (who doesn't love being in the woods!)
- Transitions to new year groups

Principal comments continued over page

- Interesting topics for children
- A caring staff team, positive culture in the school
- Engages parents
- Listens to children
- Inspire my child
- Cater for different learning styles
- Enrichment

Attendance

Our attendance is getting better and better. Our school is now above average for attendance which is excellent. This a credit to all of the families and children. This time of year, it is difficult to avoid a cold but please be assured that if we felt your child was not well enough to be in school, we would send them home. Our teachers will be promoting good hand hygiene in school and keeping the children well hydrated (only water in water bottles please).

Uniform

Thank you to all of those parents who have responded to the school's request for correct uniform. Nearly all children are now in navy blue v-neck jumpers or cardigans and wearing black shoes. This is a huge improvement and has made a difference. If your child hasn't got the correct footwear in school, then we will need a note to say why. Please do contact our FLO team should you need any assistance in sourcing uniform. Please also do check our lost property too – there are lots of jumpers and loose bits and bobs that need a home.

Keeping Children Safe

This week is also Anti-Bullying week, where the children and teachers spend the week exploring the key themes of bullying and how we can all work together to eradicate it. The children will be learning what it is and how it is different from a falling out with someone, how it can present and what we can do about it. The children will be preparing some work to have on display at Parents' Evening. Some of this work will be showing how to communicate to others if someone we know is being bullied. Please do look out for it. The school works very hard to ensure bullying doesn't occur. If it does, we deal with it quickly and robustly.

We are continually striving for excellence in our school. Should you have any ideas that would make us an even better school for the community, please drop us an email at headteacher@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk

Once again, thank you for your support.

Mr. T.M. North, NPQH
Principal

TERM DATES FOR 2019 / 2020

TERM 2

Thursday 19th December

End of Term 2

TERM 3

Monday 6th January 2020

Start of Term 3

Thursday 13th February

End of Term 3

Friday 14th February

Staff Training Day

TERM 4

Monday 24th February

Start of Term 4

Friday 3rd April

End of Term 4

TERM 5

Tuesday 14th April

Start of Term 5

Friday 8th May

Bank Holiday

Friday 22nd May

End of Term 5

TERM 6

Monday 8th June

Start of Term 6

Friday 17th July

End of Term 6

Monday 20th, Tuesday 21st & Wednesday 22nd July

Staff Training Days

School Library

The school library is open on Tuesday afternoons between 3.10 and 3.40 pm. Parents and children are welcome to come along and choose books to read at home. We have a wide choice of books from Nursery age to Year 6.



The School Council

The School Council is made up of children that have been voted in by their class mates to represent their views and give the children a voice. It also includes the Head Boy and Head Girl, who are voted in each year by the whole school. The process helps the children begin to understand the process of democracy, which is one of the important British Values. The School Council has been meeting regularly on a Monday for a breakfast meeting, where they enjoy a healthy breakfast provided for them by Mrs. Milton and her breakfast team.

Already this school year, the School Council has been tackling some big issues in the school. They have completed a survey on the amount of children wearing cycle helmets when coming to school by bicycle or scooter and were concerned at how many children were not wearing helmets. After listening to the advice and stories from Neil, our Community Warden, it prompted them to request that teachers carried out a lesson on the need for cycle helmets. This will be done over the next few weeks in Citizenship lessons.

Miss Longley asked for views on making reading fun and getting more children to read at home and school. The children suggested a Buddy read scheme, which will now run alongside the parent reading sessions.

Finally, the children have been working on raising awareness of the amount of sugar in squashes and juices and how this can impact on their teeth. They want to try and show the children how important it is to save juice and squash until meal times and just have water in their water bottles. They have done some research on this and will feed this back at an assembly.

The School Council message to you this year is when cycling or scooting, please wear a cycle helmet and have water in your water bottles instead of squash.



Key Events

PTA Christmas Fayre on Friday 6th December from 3.15 pm onwards

Nursery Nativity on Wednesday 11th December 2019 morning and afternoon

YR Nativity on Thursday 12th December 2019 (details to follow)

YR Xmas Disco on Wednesday 11th December 2019 at 3.30 pm

KS2 Xmas Disco on Wednesday 11th December 2019 at 4.30 pm

Y1 & Y2 Xmas Disco on Thursday 12th December 2019 at 3.30 pm

Xmas Jumper Day on Friday 13th December 2019

Y1 Xmas Market Exhibition on Monday 16th December 2019

KS2 Carol Service at St. Mary & St. Eanswythe Church on Tuesday 17th December 2019 at 2.00 pm

End of Term 2 on Thursday 19th December 2019

Christmas Dinner for Children

The Christmas Dinner for the children will take place on Wednesday 18th December this year. If your child would like a dinner and does not normally have one on Wednesdays, please complete the slip sent home recently and return to school by end of school on Friday 22nd November. If your child is in KS1, no payment is necessary, just the slip, but if your child is in KS2, payment of £2.20 should be returned with the slip. Thank you.



Parents' Evenings

Your child should by now have brought home a class parents' evening slip for you to complete and return. The parents' evenings will take place on Tuesday 19th and Wednesday 20th November from 3.30 to 6.30pm. (For Reception classes, the times are 3.15 to 6.15 pm).

International Work

Our Global Councillors for this year have been finding out about the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, our crisp packet recycling scheme in aid of the Kent Air Ambulance and our ongoing work with Zero Waste, for which the school has been awarded the National Quality Label and recently received the coveted European Quality Label for this global project with 30 countries.

St. Mary's were one of just eight UK schools to be awarded recognition as an e-Twinning School, due to the many successful, world collaborative projects we do each year. 18th to 22nd November is International Education Week and the Nursery, Year 1 and others are taking part in the World Weather Watch project and recording the weather daily at 12 noon, along with 60 schools in 32 countries, with a Skype meeting on Thursday.

The Global Councillors have been using the remote controlled Besos to locate many of our partner schools from across the world. They've also had Skype meetings with schools in Hungary, Greece and Germany.

Last year, we participated in a Christmas Card project with 30+ countries and have been awarded a National Quality Label for this work. Year 1 and our Global Councillors have already started this project again, with pictures in from our partner schools in Malaysia and Jordan.

Year 4 children have been learning about Fair Trade and presented their work in Folkestone Town Centre, giving out leaflets they had made to shoppers, who were very complimentary about their behaviour and work, whilst Year 2 have sent Diwali cards and letters to DAV BRS School Ludhiana India that we visited early in 2018.



The Academy Reward System

Introducing our new display for our house tokens. A special thanks to Mrs. Judd for spending her free time making this for us. (See photos below of Mrs. Judd making the display, plus the final display).

House tokens are given when pupils' names are moved onto the Recognition Board for displaying one of the school values. The aim of the Recognition Board is to model the Christian values of friendship, service, forgiveness and compassion. Last term, 5489 tokens were handed out across the school. Well done everyone!

The winning house for term 1 will be shared during Celebration Assembly on Friday - watch this space.

Pupils can also move their names onto the Ethic of Excellence, which promotes outstanding work and behaviour. Each pupil is working towards filling their bronze, silver and gold Ethic of Excellence certificate which is celebrated in assembly.

We are really proud of the behaviour being modelled by our pupils and the praise and encouragement they are giving each other when they move their names on the Recognition Board. Keep it up everyone!

