



Believe Enjoy Strive Succeed

Principal Comments

As we start our final week of this term we can look back with pride and a strong sense of achievement. There have been so many wonderful learning opportunities for our pupils giving them a real sense of purpose. Just last week, the Year 5 pupils were working with children across the world to take part in Non Violence and Peace day. They formed a chain of pupils around the world through the use of the internet and passed a balloon from class to class. They worked with pupils from Morocco, Italy, Israel, Croatia and many more. Thank you Mrs. Cotton for organising this for our children. This reinforces us as a global school and one that ensures our pupils leave as global citizens. Year 4 pupils had a wonderful trip to Bedgebury and learned all about forestry and sustainable management of trees. They were in awe of the size of the trees and certainly came away with a sense of wonder. The centre phoned me later to compliment us on their behaviour too. What a great day! At the lower end of our school the Year 1 pupils visited Samphire Hoe and took part in lots of activities learning about prehistoric times. They came back with an amazing collaborative cave painting. Really stunning stuff. Don't panic, we have reminded them that their home walls and floors are not the same as cave walls!

School Development:

Following the meeting held after school last week regarding the forward thinking idea of forming a Multi Academy Trust, the Governing Body will soon be collating and analysing everyone's viewpoints on the direction of travel. Please, if you have any other thoughts or concerns about this, please do email the school office or speak to me directly before the end of this term.

We have recently been nominated for the Green Award for our Forest School and deservedly so too. Mr. Warner has worked hard with Mrs. Judd to develop this and it is truly magnificent. You can follow their success on our Facebook page. If you would like to come in and see the Forest School in action, please do get in touch. It is wonderful.

This week is Mr. Bird's final week here in paid employment. To mark this occasion, we are holding a special assembly for him on Thursday. He has given so much to us here at St. Mary's and other local schools that to say he will be missed is simply a huge understatement. Mr. Bird has played such a vital role in ensuring a successful transition between head teachers here at St. Mary's and the long term future of us as a successful school and has had a huge impact on so many families around the school community. People like Mr. Bird are rare to find in the world so we wouldn't let him slip away to rest in his slippers. He is of course always going to play a role in the school and will soon be taking on the role of a school governor continuing on our journey.

I would like to invite you all to join Mr. Bird for a cup of tea and a chance to say goodbye. He will be in the infant hall on Thursday afternoon from approximately 2.35 until 3.00pm, please feel free to come and see him to say goodbye.

Just to clarify!

I have had a very small number of concerned parents asking me about silent lunches and assemblies. I would like to clarify and close down any of these concerns here in the newsletter. At St. Mary's, we of course encourage reflection and as such develop pupils' spirituality. At the start of a lunch, we will always ask the pupils to stop, be still and spend a few moments in quiet before dinner. This enables us to lead a calm, considered and healthy eating environment. This is especially important between the transitions from lunch break and the dinner hall. There have been a few occasions where I have asked the children to eat without talking to ensure the expectations of eating in the hall are made clear. This does not mean that there is a policy of eating in silence. Lunch is a social time for children and we promote that but equally have a duty to ensure all children can enjoy their lunch. I know that you will be supportive with this but if you do have any further concerns, please come and speak with me directly. Rumours do have a habit of spreading quickly and can cause a lot of unnecessary worry.

Half term will soon be upon us and it is great to be able to report that our attendance has improved. We are now at 95% and I must say a huge thank you to those who have made the huge effort since meeting with me. It has made a massive difference. I will continue to support all families in maintaining excellent attendance.

Please remember that Friday is a staff development day, where we will be training staff on curriculum areas and ensuring even more purposeful and exciting opportunities are created for your children. Thank you again for all of your support and particularly those parents who were keen to come and talk to our visitors last week. It really showed what a wonderful parent community we have here at St. Mary's.

Mr. T.M. North, NPQH

A Word from Mr. Bird

As you know, this week is my last at St. Mary's before I formally retire on Friday 10th February. I am pleased to say that I will keep a link with you all as I am due to become an academy governor, representing the Church. If the plan for a multi academy trust goes ahead, I will become a trustee of the new organisation trying to ensure that schools with a Christian foundation play a key role in the locality.

Since 1977, I have worked at George Spurgen, Hythe C. of E. Primary, Mundella Primary, St. Eanswythe's Primary and since 1995, exclusively at St. Mary's, apart from a two year spell from 2011 when I worked across Morehall Primary, as well as St. Mary's. It has all been a pleasure and a privilege and I would like to thank you all for all your help and support.

As you know, I changed my role at St. Mary's in 2014 and more recently have only been working a day and a half a week as Mr. North has taken on full day to day responsibility for the academy. I am delighted with the progress the academy is making with Mr. North and I fully support the proposal for a multi academy trust with the other local church schools. I feel the future of our great school is assured and will continue to help take forward our local community.

I would also like to put on record my thanks to the Governors, who under the dedicated leadership of Janine Owen the Chairperson do so much vital work in the background and give up so much of their own time for no financial reward. They are an example to us all. St. Mary's undertook its Church based inspection last Thursday, so my last few days have been very busy, but thank you again to you all.

I will make sure I get to the gate at the end of this week as I did in the old days so I can say thank you in person to as many of you as possible.



FISH AND CHIPS DAY

As the children are not in school this coming Friday, fish and chips will be served to the children on Thursday 9th February. If your child wishes to take up this meal, you will need to send in £2.05 in a named envelope with your child as soon as possible.

Speaking to Teachers at the beginning and end of each day

If you need to speak to your child's class teacher, please do not go directly to your child's class. Please go to the school reception and ask the office staff to make contact with the teacher to check if it is convenient. If it is not convenient, an appointment will be made for you, or the teacher will be asked to call you. Please do not go through the junior playground in the morning when the children are playing, as this becomes a safeguard issue. Thank you for your support.