

# ST MARY'S GOVERNORS' NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021

## DEAR PARENTS

We trust you are all keeping safe and well. This current period of lockdown continues to present challenges for all of us with new issues and new ways of working constantly needing to be explored. We hope the half term has provided some respite from these pressures.

As we write the Government has announced its roadmap for the relaxation of lockdown over coming months. Soon all our children will return to St Mary's and we can look forward to taking some steps towards normality for them. As you are aware some staff have been affected by Covid but we are pleased that they have been able to return to work. Some staff are in isolation and we wish them well. Staff are making ready for the return of children with safeguards in line with updated Government Guidance and are really looking forward to teaching our children face to face.

We would like to recognise the good work of Mr Marsh, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), teachers and all the staff at St Mary's during the pandemic. They have set out to make it possible for the children to continue to learn, flourish and remain focused whilst ensuring you as parents/carers are getting the support you may need too. The positive feedback regarding the Zoom meetings with teachers, the work received each week and the support given to parents is appreciated. We would also like to thank you for all you are doing to support the work being sent your child's way, we know it hasn't been easy but it really does help your child's transition back to school enormously.

## GOVERNING BODY

- **Jim Park (LEA Governor and Chair)**
- **Emma Dawson (Elected Teacher Governor)**
- **Mark O'Brien (Foundation Governor)**
- **Catalina. Giglio (Foundation Governor)**
- **Ania Mason (Foundation Governor),**
- **Clare Raffet (Parent Elected Governor)**
- **Farley Marsh (Ex Offio Governor)**
- **Simon Hogg (Parent Elected Governor)**
- **Mary Hooper (Foundation Governor)**
- **Maureen O'Donoghue (Foundation Governor)**
- **Mary Martin (Foundation Governor)**
- **Fr Nico Lobo Ratu (Foundation Governor)**

We have been progressing with the action plan that we prepared following the report of the External Governance Review. The revised Complaints Policy was published on the website prior to Christmas, and governor photos and bios have been updated. We have continued to raise awareness amongst prospective Reception parents, as mentioned in our previous letter (30 November 2020). This work was initiated because of the national fall in the birth rate, social changes and possibly Brexit - the days of having full classes and a waiting list have gone. This applies nationwide and specifically to schools across our, and neighbouring, Boroughs. We are therefore not resting on our laurels by expecting prospective parents to choose us ahead of other schools. All schools rely heavily on the numbers of children in our classes to provide funding which enables us to invest in the children's future.

Towards the end of last year some of you took part in virtual forums hosted by our consultants, Grebot Donnelly; they also hosted forums for Governors, the children and the staff at St Mary's. We would like to thank those of you who were involved, your views and opinions are important and are helping to progress this project; those forums have recently concluded. Our consultants have prepared a report summarising (<http://bit.ly/SMIGD>) the strengths of the school mentioned in each stakeholder group and also their ideas for the school vision; these will feed into preparation of the revised vision. We encourage you to read the report as it contains actual thoughts and opinions from participants. (The report can be found here) This is just the start of the journey and an exciting and positive one at that. We will keep you informed as the project moves forward to the next stage in the coming months.

In closing we would like to introduce you to our new governor – Mark O'Brien. Mark has recently been appointed as a Foundation Governor by the Diocese; he has a wealth of experience to bring to the Governing Board. Mark lives in Isleworth with his wife and three children; the oldest is in Year 1 at St Mary's. Mark currently works in a large SEND school in the Borough and is also a consultant through IBSL (Institute for Behavioural Sciences & the Law) for the Dfe and ESFA (The Education & Skills Funding Agency) as a school resource advisor supporting educational settings with organisational development and change management. We feel fortunate to have him on board and look forward to working with him during his term at St Mary's.

With every best wish

St Mary's Governors

## **St Mary's, Isleworth**

### **Engaging with Stakeholders**

#### **1 Introduction**

We would like to take the opportunity to share our thanks with the school community for recently participating in the stakeholder engagement process.

It has been the school's priority to engage with all stakeholders and provide a platform for each group to share their thoughts and contributions to ensure St Mary's school vision, values and key messages are up to date, aspirational and reflective of the school offer.

A range of focus groups and surveys have been conducted over the last two months to collect feedback from all stakeholders on the experience and current perceptions of St Mary's.

At this time, we would like to communicate the school's strengths that were highlighted as well as the contributions shared towards the new school vision.

#### **2.1 Pupils said...**

The School Council were tasked to collate responses to a range of questions from their classes about the school and provide feedback to represent the pupil body at St Mary's.

#### **Strengths of St Mary's:**

- All teachers and classmates are friendly
- Everyone loves coming to school every day – even the teachers!
- Everyone is inquisitive and wants to learn
- No one is left alone, there is always help on hand
- School is a safe environment
- Everyone is supportive of each other
- St Mary's gives every child confidence and independence
- Lessons are fun – you don't even know you are learning
- Facilities are great e.g. football pitch and playground
- Every year you get a fantastic teacher.

#### **2.2 Parents said...**

##### **St Mary's Strengths:**

- Children are very happy going to school each day
- The school's biggest strength is its community
- Strong network of parents who are supportive of each other
- Everyone knows each other – parents are emotionally invested in the school and their children's education
- Teachers are passionate about their jobs and the children
- Mental wellbeing of the children is important to the school
- Open environment where children feel free to speak up, ask for help, are independent
- The school puts a strong focus on building character, life skills and confidence through strong teacher / pupil relationships
- Holistic approach and focus on the whole child
- Staff at St Mary's are exceptional at understanding the children, supporting and nurturing them
- Beautiful school site.

##### **Our vision for St Mary's:**

- St Mary's should be ambitious for its whole community
- Every child to be ready for secondary school and modern life

- Unlocking the potential of each individual
- Providing opportunities for every child to be successful (and success means something different for every child)
- To be academically brilliant
- To make sure no child is left behind
- To make sure every child progresses
- For individuals to build resilience and be able to face challenges in future life – both personal and professional
- Building skills and character from Early Years
- For the school to discover each child's talents early on and to nurture these throughout their time through a range of opportunities and experiences.

### **2.3 Governors said...**

#### **Strengths of St Mary's:**

- Staff are passionate about their roles at school
- A strong school community
- Creative school curriculum that is always developing
- A holistic approach to learning
- Pupil and staff wellbeing is a priority
- Not driven by results – the whole child is nurtured
- Pupils are happy coming to school.

#### **Our vision for St Mary's:**

- To provide the best opportunities for pupils to flourish and reach their full potential
- Each child to have the resilience and confidence to succeed
- Develop each child's relationship with God and therefore with others
- Ready for secondary school
- Excellence for each child; academically, socially and spiritually
- Providing the foundation for development and lifelong learning
- An innovative and forward thinking school that provides a holistic approach to learning
- Unlimited opportunities and real life learning experiences for pupils to be ready for the modern world
- To be known as the best and first choice school in the area.

### **2.4 Staff said...**

#### **Strengths of St Mary's:**

- Strong school community
- Good work life balance for staff
- Pupil and staff wellbeing is a priority
- Staff are dedicated, passionate and enthusiastic
- The school curriculum is creative and innovative
- A strong focus on nurturing the whole child
- The school have a strong and approachable leadership team
- High expectations of pupils and staff
- Personalised approach – staff know every child which makes learning bespoke
- Building each child's independence and resilience
- Strong catholic ethos.

#### **Our vision for St Mary's:**

- Ensuring children are prepared for the future / real world / secondary school
- Nurturing the whole child
- Working in partnership with parents, Governors, staff, parish, local community

- Helping children achieve their full potential / their God given potential
- Every child will succeed no matter what
- To be the best we can be
- A place where passions and talents are always celebrated
- Creative approach to learning
- Encouraging a passion for lifelong learning
- Nurturing key life skills and values – resilience, confidence and respect
- Catholic ethos underpinning the pupil experience.

**2.5 Words to describe St Mary's...** the bigger the word, the more often it was used.

#### Pupils Wordle



#### Governors, Parents and Staff Wordle



### 3 Immediate Actions

The parent focus groups highlighted that the school needs to take immediate action to strengthen the communication channel between the school and parents, and provide opportunities for positive and constructive feedback on a regular basis.

A new Parent Ambassador Group will soon be launched. This platform will be the first step in ensuring parents have a direct and easily accessible way to communicate with the school and contribute ideas and improvements to shape its future. This group will meet once every half term with an agenda to be sent in advance. These sessions will initially be facilitated by ourselves (the external team) and a member of staff at St Mary's.

Further details on this role and how to register will be available soon.

### 4 What's next?

It was clear from all stakeholder groups that the current school vision and key messages are no longer fit for purpose and are not visionary enough or reflective of the school now. Below are the definitions for school visions and values:

*A **vision** defines the desired or intended future of your school in terms of its overriding strategic direction.*

***Values** are the qualities that are important to the school. If, as a school, you are living and breathing your values then you will achieve your vision.*

The feedback highlighted that the community are ambitious for the school and similar themes emerged across each group with common values and goals. We look forward to launching the new Parent Ambassador Group soon with the first item on the agenda: *Final thoughts and contributions to the school's new vision and values*. This work will then be unveiled to the community alongside the new school website!

Thank you again for your time and contributions during this process.

Anna & Kim  
Grebot Donnelly Associates