



Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back to a new year at St Mary's and a very warm welcome to the families and staff who have joined us this term. This newsletter aims to introduce you to the Governing Body.

For those who are new to the school, please follow the link to find out about the type of activities that take place at St Mary's. <http://www.stmarys916.herts.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/15-07-24-review-of-the-year-2014-15.pdf>

What is a Governing Body?

We are a group of volunteers, who work collectively, as a corporate body, forming part of the school leadership. Our main roles are to;

- Set the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Hold the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils;
- Oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure its money is well spent.

What do we do?

Some of the ways in which we fulfil our three main roles include:

- Establishing the school's ethos and values
- Setting an ambitious vision for the school and creating a culture of high expectations, aspirations and academic achievement
- Agreeing targets for the achievement of the school's aims and objectives through the school development plan
- Monitoring progress towards the agreed objectives
- Approving policies for the achievement of our objectives
- Monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding
- Providing a balance of support and challenge to school leaders, understanding the strengths and areas needing improvement
- Ensuring that we receive sufficient and accurate assessment information from school leaders to allow us to ask probing questions about outcomes for pupils
- Agreeing and monitoring the school budget
- Holding the school to account for the use of the pupil and sports premium and the impact that it has on outcomes for pupils
- Appointing the headteacher and assisting with teacher recruitment
- Performance managing the headteacher and ensuring that staff pay and appraisal processes in the school are rigorously managed
- Being accountable to all key stakeholders for the school's performance
- Looking outward to form effective partnerships and engaging stakeholders, to support all pupils

- As a Voluntary aided (VA) school, we are the employer of staff, the admissions authority and have responsibility for funding any capital spend, including new building or external repairs (supported by a grant from the Department for Education of up to 90%).

Committees, panels and linked roles

We work in committees, who report back to the full governing body, comprising:

- Academic Standards and Achievement
- Resources
- Ethos
- Staff Pay
- Pupil Admissions
- Steering Group

We appoint governors to serve on panels to look after particular areas of responsibility e.g. headteacher performance management, exclusions and complaints.

We can also appoint governors to a working party, to review a particular aspect of the school's development e.g. when we were undertaking the building work to enable us to become a primary school.

We appoint governors to become linked to a subject area or a particular aspect of the school's operation (e.g. Special Educational Needs or Pupil Premium). These governors gain detailed knowledge of their linked area, supporting and challenging the subject leaders to drive progress and attainment.

Who are the Governors?

We are made up of representatives from groups who have an interest, or stake, in the effective delivery of education and care of the pupils at our school. These groups are represented by the different categories of governors.

As a voluntary aided, church school, the majority of our governors have to be foundation governors (representing St Mary's Church or the Diocese of St Albans).

Governors are elected or appointed for a term of office of four years, with a Chair and Vice Chair being elected annually. Alan Kemp has recently been elected as Chair and Louise Moorby as Vice Chair.

We are delighted to welcome Louisa Osmond as a foundation governor this term, representing St Mary's Parochial Church Council.

Parent Governor	Jana Toon Vacancy
Staff	Vanessa Hunt Tom Potter
Co-opted	Jon Clarke (representing Northchurch Parish Council)
Ex-Officio	Jonathan Gordon (on sabbatical until August 2016)
St Mary's PCC	Peach Berry Hannah Horton Alan Kemp (Chair) Louise Moorby (Vice Chair) Louisa Osmond
St Albans Diocese	Helen Holmes-Higgin David White
Local Authority	Vacancy
Associate Members	Karen Bristow Lynne Gore Lara Pringle

What are our aims for the school?

With a whole-hearted commitment to putting our Christian faith and spiritual development at the heart of St Mary's, we aim to:

- achieve excellence in all that we do
- deliver the highest standards of teaching and learning
- develop happy, confident children, instilled with a life-long love of learning
- create an environment where everyone in the school can reach their full potential
- encourage mutual respect, acceptance and tolerance throughout our community
- encourage a true partnership between the school, parents, the parish, governors and the local authority, for the benefit of our children

We need your help

There are many ways in which you could support the work of the school e.g. by putting yourself forward for election as a parent governor, by volunteering to help in the school or by raising money through the School Association. Through any of these activities, you can have a positive impact on the experiences that the children enjoy at St Mary's.

We are committed to understanding the views and needs of our pupils and their parents. You can help us with this through:

- completing the annual parent and pupil questionnaires – your responses are invaluable in helping us formulate our school improvement priorities and to help improve our understanding of

your views on the school's strengths and development areas. The 2015 survey results are on the website and will send you an update on the actions we have taken as a result of your responses later this term.

You can also complete the [Ofsted Parentview questionnaire](#) at any time during the year.

- St Mary's Parent Forum – a vehicle by which parents can express their views and contribute to the development of the school. Issues that you would like to put to the Headteacher and the Governing Body can be raised at the half termly meeting. Issues that the Head and the Governing Body would like to ask for parental feedback on are taken to the meetings. If you would like to stand as a representative, please contact the school office.
- Applying for the Pupil Premium if you are eligible - Registering for free meals could raise an extra £1,300 for the school, to fund valuable support for your child, such as extra tuition, additional teaching staff or after school activities. This additional money is available from central government for every child whose parent is receiving one of the welfare benefits listed below.
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Support from NASS (National Asylum Support Service) under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - the guarantee element of State Pension Credit
 - Child Tax Credit (with no Working Tax Credit) with an annual income of no more than £16,190
 - Working Tax Credit run-on
 - Universal Credit

It is therefore important to sign up for free school meals, even if your child is in reception, year 1 or year 2, where free meals are provided for all children, so that the school receives the funding, which will be spent on supporting your child.

Raising concerns and complaints

If you have a concern or a complaint which is specific to your child, your first port of call should be the class teacher, or other appropriate member of staff (e.g. the Special Needs Co-ordinator, if the concern is regarding special needs). If the issue is not resolved, you should make an appointment to see the Headteacher. If the issue is of general concern, you can raise it at the Parent Forum.

Individual governors should not provide an alternative route to voicing parental concerns. However, if any matter is not resolved to your satisfaction using the routes above, you can put your complaint in writing to the Chair of governors, c/o the school. Please see our complaints procedure summary under the policies section of the website for more details.

We hope that this gives you a clearer understanding of who the governors at St Mary's are and the role that we play at the school.