



Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to the Autumn 2014 Newsletter. St Mary's has gone through a number of changes this past year, and we, the governing body of St. Mary's would like to update you on what these changes mean for our school.

Staffing changes

We were sad to announce the resignation of Mrs Elly Haezewindt last term and would like to thank her for her commitment to the school over the past 6 years. We were grateful that Elly gave us two terms notice of her intention to leave, as she was keen to see the building work and transition to a primary school through to completion.

We look forward to welcoming Miss Vanessa Hunt as our new headteacher in January. In our recruitment campaign, we were looking for a candidate who could do three things:

- take us from being a good school to an outstanding one
- grow us successfully from a first school to a primary
- uphold and develop our Christian ethos

We ran two rounds of advertising and held three assessment/interview days and were delighted to appoint Miss Hunt, who has a very strong track record of teaching and leadership in church schools. Miss Hunt has already made a couple of visits to St. Mary's, as part of her handover and she is very excited to be joining us in January.

The transformation to a primary school

The building work to convert St. Mary's into a primary school is nearing completion. Our aim was to create the best possible school environment for our pupils, now and in the future and to ensure that we made the most of the opportunity to expand and improve the school facilities. We hope that you are all as delighted with the transformation of the school as we are.

We are very grateful to the staff, pupils and parents for their patience and forbearance during the building works. Particular thanks are due to Andrew Reay (Finance Governor), to Elly Haezewindt and Karen Bristow (Staff Governor), who have taken a leading role in appointing and working with our architects and the contractors.

We would also like to thank Mr Draper (Dad to Harry in Y1), who generously arranged for the supply and fitting of the new kitchen for our cooking area and to the School Association, for their on-going support in fund-raising. Our pupils' education is enhanced by the improvements to the school facilities and the trips that they fund.

Governing Body changes

We thank Mark Drew, David Jervis and Sue Yeomans who left us last term, either due to relocation, or coming to the end of their four-year term, for their hard work and valuable contribution to the Governing Body.

Jonathan Gordon continues as Co-Chair of Governors and Helen Holmes-Higgin joins him as Co-Chair. Helen has been a governor since 2009 and has been Vice-Chair of Governors since 2011. Heidi Baker takes on the role of Vice-Chair of Governors. Heidi has been a governor since 2006 and has taken on the Vice-Chair role in previous years.

We have also welcomed several new governors since the summer term, who are all making a significant contribution already:

- **Alan Kemp** (Local Authority Governor) – After a career of over 30 years as a Police Officer, Alan's retirement has been a busy one, working with the Dacorum Borough Council Planning Department, becoming Berkhamsted Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. He is a committee member and Press Officer for the Berkhamsted and Tring Branch of the Royal British Legion. He is the Designated Senior Person, looking after safeguarding matters, for Aylesbury Sailing Club. In his spare time, he has designed and project managed the building of his new home.
- **Louise Moorby** (St. Mary's PCC) – Louise is Mum to Lucy in Y2 and Millie in Reception. After a career as a buyer and online trading manager for Sainsburys, she has until recently been the Secretary of the School Association. With a French degree and a keen interest in education, she is now undertaking a PGCE, training to become a primary school teacher.
- **Lara Pringle** (Parent Governor) – Lara is Mum to Tom in Y4 and her eldest son, James also attended St. Mary's. Lara has a degree in philosophy, religion and economics and is a qualified barrister. She is a Senior Crown Prosecutor for the Crown Prosecution Service. Lara also runs the Berkhamsted ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) and ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) Support Group.
- **Jana Toon** (Parent Governor) – Jana is Mum to Amelia in Y3 and Henry in Y1. Jana is bi-lingual and a native German speaker. She works part-time as Assistant Manager of Press & PR at The German-British Chamber of Industry and Commerce. Jana previously volunteered as a committee member and then became Chair at Rainbow Corner Pre-School.



The work of the Governing Body

School Vision

Last year we undertook a review of our school vision and strategic aims. We consulted with our pupils, staff and parents and formulated a new set of aims and a new school motto – see the website for more details.

<http://www.stmarys916.herts.sch.uk/about-our-school/vision-and-aims/>

Ofsted and SIAMS Inspections

Five of the governors met with the Ofsted Inspectors in May and three of the governors met with the SIAMS inspector in June. If you haven't already read the reports, you can find them on the school website:

<http://www.stmarys916.herts.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/st-marys-ofsted-2014.pdf>

<http://www.stmarys916.herts.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/14-07-National-Society-Statutory-Inspection-AnglicanMethodist-Schools-Report-25-June-2014.pdf>

The Ofsted report said "Governors....are ambitious for the school and provide a high level of challenge to school leaders and other staff". We are delighted that Ofsted recognised that the governors of St Mary's are supportive as well as challenging and are united in our vision to "achieve excellence in all we do". We are determined to do the best for each and every pupil at St. Mary's.

School Development Plan

In September, we took part in a workshop with the teaching staff, to develop the school improvement priorities for the year. We worked in small groups, considering our strategic aims and using information from various sources, including parent, pupil and staff questionnaires, the Ofsted and SIAMS reports, reviews of the work of the school undertaken by a Hertfordshire Improvement Partner and various school self-evaluation documents.

This was worked up into a School Development Plan, with "SMART" objectives. The governors will be monitoring the school's progress towards the identified improvement priorities each half term. The agreed headline priorities were:

1. To raise standards in writing to accelerate progress to become in line with other core subjects
2. To increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, in order to sustain the rising trend in pupil achievement
3. To continue to develop the quality of leadership and management across the school, so it becomes outstanding

Mrs Haezewindt has sent out an update on what the school is working on under these three headlines, e.g. ensuring that more able pupils are challenged enough, embedding the new National Curriculum and the new assessment measures for pupil achievement.

As you can see, your views are an important part of helping to shape the future of St. Mary's and we are committed to listening to and understanding the views and needs of our pupils and their parents and carers. Every opinion is valuable to us.

We would like to thank the staff for all their efforts this year, the parents and carers for their support and the pupils, for making St Mary's such a lovely school. With our best wishes this Christmas and for the coming year.

The Governors at St. Mary's.

Making your views heard

You can express your views and contribute to the development of the school best by completing the annual questionnaire and through the Parent Forum, which meets half termly.

If you have a concern or a complaint which is specific to your child, in the first instance please see your class teacher, or other appropriate member of staff (e.g. The Special Needs Co-ordinator, if the concern is regarding special needs). If the concern remains, you should make an appointment to discuss the matter with the headteacher.

If the issue is of general concern, it can be raised at the Parent Forum.

Individual governors are not an alternative route to voicing parental concerns. However, if any matter is not resolved to your satisfaction using the routes above, you can write formally to the Co-Chairs of Governors, c/o the school. Please see our complaints policy summary on the website for more details.

The Governing Body at St. Mary's is a group of volunteers who work collectively, as a corporate body, forming part of the school leadership. Find out more about who we are and what we do, by visiting the school website:

<http://www.stmarys916.herts.sch.uk/about-our-school/governors/>