



# Review of the Year 2014/2015

As the academic year draws to a close, we can reflect on the last year being one of significant change at St Mary's.

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## 1. Conversion to Primary / Premises

It seems hard to believe that a year ago, the building work to prepare us for becoming a primary school was entering its final stages. We are delighted with the improvements that have been made to the school buildings including:

- Year 5 and 6 classrooms sympathetically restored, to enhance their original Victorian features
- The new library area adjacent to Years 1-4, which pupils are able to access independently
- New cookery room (thanks to Mr Draper, for his support in providing and installing the kitchen)
- New music and drama rooms, for the increased choice of musical instrument tuition
- Improved accessibility, with a lift to the hall and a disabled toilet on the ground floor
- Entrance lobby, offering improved security
- Meeting room for small group work and to provide a space for staff to meet parents
- First aid room
- Quiet room adjacent to staffroom for staff use
- Multi-functional hall - on-site wrap-around care has been extended to include an After School Club (run by Pooh Corner), as well as our in-house Breakfast Club.

Additional premises projects this year have included:

- Replacement of the ceilings in the Year 1-4 classrooms (a grant was secured to fund this)
- Repairs to the steps between the playgrounds
- New flooring in the cooking room and cloakroom
- New audio visual system and curtains in the hall
- New laptops for the children
- New interactive smartboards for the classrooms
- Upgrade to the photocopier (to reduce ink usage costs)
- Update to the phone system, including extending the phone lines to the new classrooms



*Year 1 learning about algorithms using Bee Bots and games on the TES iBoard.*

We would like to thank the School Association (SA), for their tireless fundraising, which has supported several of these projects. The money they raise is spent to enhance the education of the children, on items or enrichment activities, which we could not otherwise afford. Their well-attended events not only raise funds, but develop our school community and enhance the school ethos. Our thanks go to the committee members, the volunteers who help at the fund raising activities and everyone who has helped raised money this year by attending the events. Please see the SA newsletter for more details.

We would also like to thank parents for their patience and support during the building work and after the incident where the school had to be closed for three days in the spring term, following work on the hall ceiling. The decision to close the school was not taken lightly and we appreciate that it was highly inconvenient for parents. The safety of the children is always our prime consideration.

## 2. School Upkeep Contributions

Over the summer, the quinquennial (five-yearly) building inspection is taking place. This report will inform our maintenance and premises development plan for the next five years.

St Mary's is a voluntary-aided (VA) maintained school. Maintained schools receive their running costs from central government via the local authority. In contrast to other types of maintained schools, only 90% of the capital costs of a VA school are met by the state. The foundation (in our case, the Governing Body), has to contribute the remaining 10% of the capital costs. Parents are usually encouraged to pay a voluntary contribution towards the school's maintenance funds in VA schools.

After some considerable consideration, we will be asking parents to make a voluntary contribution of £5 per family, each term, towards the school capital maintenance fund. The maintenance contribution will be used for the upkeep of the school premises. We will report to parents at the end of the year on how the money donated has been spent.

This will not impact on the fundraising of the School Association, who will continue to raise money to enhance the education of and experiences enjoyed by the pupils. In previous years, parents have been asked to make a voluntary contribution towards materials used in the Foundation Stage – we will not be asking parents for this contribution going forward.

## 3. Staff Changes

Mrs Haezewindt left the school at Christmas, having joined St Mary's in 2009. The governors were delighted to appoint Miss Hunt for January 2015. Miss Hunt went through a rigorous selection procedure, where the governors were assisted by Herts for Learning expert advisors.

We are very pleased that Mrs Dobbs will be joining us in September as our Year 6 teacher, in a job share with Ms Forsyth. The Year 6 class will also be taught by several of the teachers who have subject leadership responsibility. The children will benefit by being taught by subject specialists (e.g. Mrs Zimet will teach science) and this will help prepare them for their transition to secondary school, at the end of the academic year.

After over 20 years of service, Mrs Lee, our cleaner, will be retiring at the end of term and we wish her well in her retirement.

## 4. Governing Body

We have had four new governors join us this year – Alan Kemp, Louise Moorby, Lara Pringle and Jana Toon, who have all made a major contribution to the work of the Governing Body.

Unfortunately, due to personal circumstances, Lara will be standing down as parent governor at the end of term. We will run a parent governor election in the autumn term. To find out more, please visit our page on the website.

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

In September 2014, Heidi Baker and Helen Holmes-Higgin announced that they would be standing down as governors at the end of the academic year. Heidi has been a governor at the school for eight years and Helen for six. They have both taken on significant roles in the Governing Body, between them having chaired committees, been Vice Chair and Co-Chair of Governors.

Jonathan Gordon has decided to take a year's sabbatical from school governance, to allow him to focus on his relatively new role as Rural Dean of Berkhamsted.

Lara, Heidi and Helen leave with our thanks for their contribution to the Governing Body and we wish Jonathan well for his sabbatical and look forward to his return next year.

An update on the work of the Governing Body will be circulated to parents early in the autumn term.

## 5. Academic Achievement

Year 1 children undertook the statutory phonics screening check in June, assessing the child's ability to decode words using only their phonic knowledge. 77% of children achieved the qualifying mark.

We are pleased with our continuing high attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2), with results significantly above those achieved nationally last year. Congratulations and well done to the pupils in Year 2, to Miss Waterhouse and Mrs O'Dell for all their hard work.

The table below shows a summary of the National Curriculum assessment results of pupils in the school (2015) and nationally (2014) at the end of Key Stage 1, as a percentage of those eligible for assessment.

A full set of the results will be posted onto the school website.

| RESULTS OF TEACHER ASSESSMENT – KEY STAGE 1 |          |                          |    |    |    |    |    |
|---|----------|--------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
|   |          | Percentage at each level |    |    |    |    |    |
| NC Level                                    |          | W                        | 1  | 2C | 2B | 2A | 3  |
| Reading                                     | School   | 0                        | 3  | 0  | 14 | 31 | 52 |
|   | National | 2                        | 8  | 9  | 23 | 27 | 30 |
| Writing                                     | School   | 0                        | 3  | 10 | 21 | 28 | 38 |
|   | National | 2                        | 11 | 16 | 30 | 23 | 16 |
| Mathematics                                 | School   | 0                        | 3  | 3  | 14 | 38 | 41 |
|   | National | 1                        | 6  | 12 | 27 | 29 | 24 |
| Science                                     | School   | 0                        | 0  | -  | 62 | -  | 38 |
|   | National | 2                        | 8  | -  | 68 | -  | 22 |

## 6. Curriculum news

### 6.1 National Curriculum

The introduction of the new National Curriculum (NC) was a statutory requirement for Years 1, 3, 4 and 5 in September 2014. It will be introduced for Years 2 and 6 in September 2015. The aim of the new curriculum is to equip children with the essential knowledge and skills every child should have, whilst giving teachers the freedom to decide how best to teach. In some of the subjects, children will be expected to learn more at an earlier age, e.g. in maths, to know their 12 times table by the age of nine. In English, pupils will learn more Shakespeare and there will be more importance placed on spelling and in

the new computing curriculum, pupils will learn how to write code. Children also now have to learn a modern foreign language at Key Stage 2, which in our school is French. We have been able to teach to the new curriculum, whilst continuing to adopt a “Creative Curriculum” approach, with topic-based learning for most subjects, which means that the children cover the curriculum in an engaging and exciting way.

## 6.2 Assessment

One of the features of the new NC was that it no longer uses a system of numbered levels to describe children’s attainment. The Department of Education felt that the use of levels had at times been detrimental to children, e.g. talking to children about their attainment using numbered levels could contribute towards the development of a “fixed mind-set” about their ability. At St Mary’s we want to foster a “growth mind-set” in all our children, where we all believe that we can improve our abilities with practice, effort and persistence. Moving away from NC levels means that we can further enrich our pupils’ learning by developing a greater breadth of skills and knowledge, so they grow confident in applying their skills to different areas of the curriculum, rather than focus on moving to the “next level”.

The school has bought into a new tracking and assessment system, developed by Herts for Learning, so that the achievement of the children and their individual and collective progress can be monitored, analysed and acted upon. Reporting from this system helps the Governing Body hold the school to account for the academic achievement of the children.

We hope that the new format end of year reports were helpful to parents, both for understanding your child’s progress and to enable you to support the next steps in their development. We would value feedback on the reports, on the feedback slips, or via the Parent Forum Reps, for their next meeting in the autumn term.

## 6.3 Music and Drama

In July, the KS2 production, “Cinderella Rockerfella” included singing and acting of an exceptionally high standard.

The annual music concert in May was another highlight of the year. Children learning music within and outside school were given the chance to perform in the concert, organised by Mrs Christie. Well done to the pupils and thank you to all of the staff and peripatetic teachers who worked with the children to stage these events.

We see music as an area to continue to develop at St Mary’s. We have renegotiated our contract with the Herts Music Service, to include providing training for our teachers, to develop the quality of music provision in the classroom. We will continue to offer peripatetic music lessons in violin, guitar and piano. The music service will also be able to run a school choir (free of charge to parents), where the children will be prepared for events during the year, including a performance at a schools’ concert at the Albert Hall.

## 6.4 Sport

Over the last two years, supported by the Sports Premium funding, we have invested in equipment, paid for specialist PE coaching and staffing, bought into staff training and teaching resources, with the aim of sustainable improvement in the

quality of PE teaching and learning. Please see the update on the website for more details:

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



*Sports Day 2015*

We have taken part in many competitions this year and there will be the opportunity to increase this further next year, when we have a Year 6 class. Some of the sporting highlights of the year included:

- Dacorum Schools’ Year 3 and 4 boys’ football - Unbeaten in 8 games, St Mary’s became District champions
- Berkhamsted Year 4 swimming gala – St Mary’s were overall winners, winning 7 of the 13 events
- Sam Baker represented Dacorum at the Schools’ Inter-District Swimming Gala, coming 3<sup>rd</sup> in his individual event and his relay team came 1<sup>st</sup>
- Dacorum Year 2 athletics - Year 2 came 4<sup>th</sup> (out of 16)
- Dacorum Tri-Golf Tournament – Year 3 finished 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Dacorum Skip2bfit competition - Year 3 got to the semi-finals, completing 31,850 skips
- Berkhamsted Key Stage 1 'Mini Olympics' – Year 2 finished 2<sup>nd</sup> (out of 7 schools)



*Mr Macey with the Dacorum School Sports Network Trophy*

This July, at the Dacorum School Sports awards, Jamie Powell was runner-up in the Lower Key Stage 2 Sports' Achiever of the Year category and our Year 4 swimming team were runners-up in the Lower Key Stage 2 Team of the Year award. Mr Macey won the Dacorum School Sports Network Trophy, for services to PE in schools.

We are very proud of what the children have achieved in sport and PE at St. Mary's and this will continue to be an area of focus and development for us. Well done to all the children and to Mr Macey. For more details, please see the Sports Newsletter prepared by Mr Macey and Mr Potter.

### 6.5 Forest School

Ms Gore and Mrs O'Dell have continued to develop the use of the forest school area, which encourages children to become comfortable with an outdoor approach to education. The after-school Forest School Club has been rotated across the year groups, as we want all children to have the opportunity to enjoy these activities.

Activities have included bush-craft skills (lighting fires and building shelters), arts and crafts using woodland materials, learning about the natural world (investigating habitats, creating homes for wildlife), as well as games.

### 6.6 Assessment for learning toolkit

In October, Mr Potter relaunched our Assessment for learning toolkit (learning how to learn), with appealing cartoon characters to personify the different learning behaviours. Thank you to Mr McPhee for designing the engaging characters for us. Find out more on our website:

<http://www.stmarys916.herts.sch.uk/assessment-for-learning/>

## 7. Curriculum enrichment

### 7.1 PSHE and E-safety

Although PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) is no longer part of the National Curriculum, we see this as an important aspect of the children's learning and have continued to have PSHE lessons at St Mary's. To enrich the children's learning in this area, the staff organised several activities:

- St John's Ambulance visit to Nursery
- Fire engine visit to Foundation Stage and Year 2
- Year 1 scooter training
- Year 3 trip to Waitrose, as part of a healthy eating topic
- Year 4 and 5 road safety training
- Year 5 visit to Hazard Alley in Milton Keynes
- Year 5 NSPCC Childline assembly
- E-safety talks for years 2-5

St Mary's pupils were invited to take part in the making of the "Road Monster" safety video, which was a project co-ordinated between schools across the town, facilitated by professional filmmakers, who volunteered their time. The nine children who took part were invited to an advance screening of the film last week. We look forward to seeing the film upon its general release to schools in October.

We have continued to work with Living Streets, on the WOW (Walk to school Once a Week) campaign. Children are encouraged to walk to school and those who do are rewarded

with collectable badges. St Mary's continues to have one of the highest proportions of children who walk to school in the area.

We are continuing to look for a sponsor for our Crossing Patrol Attendant, as our pupil numbers and the volume of traffic on New Road currently fall below the funding threshold for Herts County Council.

### 7.2 150 years of St Mary's

Throughout the summer and autumn terms last year, we celebrated and learned about the last 150 years of education at St Mary's. This culminated with a church service, attended by the Bishop of Bedford, who blessed the new classrooms.



*Celebrating tradition - Maypole dancing at St Mary's in the 1960s and today*

### 7.3 RE activities

We are proud to be a church school, with a distinctive Christian ethos and were delighted to be recognised as an outstanding church school at our SIAMS inspection a year ago.

In RE lessons, pupils learn about Christianity and the other principal world religions. Throughout its operation, the school promotes the fundamental British values including mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. To enrich the curriculum, Mrs Archbold organises many exciting trips and activities for the children.



*Year 3 visit Watford Mosque*

This year, these trips and activities have included:

Year 1: Synagogue visit

Year 2: Visit to St Albans Cathedral – Signs and symbols of Christianity

Visit to Northchurch Baptist Church

Year 3: Watford Mosque visit

Year 4: Visit to the Hindu temple at Bahaktivedanta Manor

Year 5: Visit from Rabii Raffi from St Albans Synagogue

Remembrance service at St Peter's

All classes: Easter workshop with Northchurch Baptist Church, Spring Dance Company "Worship Through Dance" event and a Salvation Army assembly

#### 7.4 Charity

At St Mary's we encourage our school community to support those who are in need. In total, we raised over £2,000 for charity last year:

- Bishop of St Albans Harvest Appeal - Readathon
- Macmillan Cancer coffee morning (£196)
- Operation Christmas Child – Shoebox gifts for children who are unlikely to receive a Christmas present
- Children in Need superhero day (£140)
- Save the Children Christmas jumper day – (£190)
- Red Nose Day (£157)
- Wear a hat for Brain Tumour Research (£124)
- Groovy Shoes Day for Rennie Grove Hospice Care (£142)
- UNICEF Nepal earthquake appeal, organised by Year 5 (£1,006)

On hearing about the earthquake in Nepal, our Year 5 children decided that they wanted to organise fund raising activities, to contribute to the relief fund, which included a sponsored run.



*Nepal sponsored run*

## 8. Extra-Curricular Activities

We were keen to increase our choice of extra-curricular activities and the progress towards this was recognised in your responses to the parent questionnaires. Last year 59% of parents agreed that St Mary's offered a good range of extra-curricular activities, increasing to 78% this year. 11% disagreed and 10% didn't know. We will continue to develop the range of extra-curricular activities, taking on board the feedback from parents and pupils, eg. Mad Science Club was introduced following the successful workshops run in school. We will also seek to improve communication about the activities on offer.

Some of the many activities that have run this year have included (\*free of charge);

Sports – Running Club\*, Fitness is fun club\*, Netball Club\*, Boogaloo Boogie, Street Dance, Tennis Club, Cricket Club, Table-tennis\*, Speed-stacking\*

Other – Sewing Club\*, Chess Club\*, Forest School\*, Green Team Gardening Club\*, Mad Science Club, Story Club\*, Choir Club

Our thanks go to the volunteers and to the staff who give their time to run these activities, which are so enjoyed by the children.

## 9. Pupil Premium and Free School Meals

Since the installation of our new kitchen in October, we have been able to supply free school meals for all children up to Year 2, with a choice of a hot or cold lunch. 81% of children up to Year 2 have opted to have a school meal.

If your child is in Reception, Year 1 or 2, you don't need to apply for free school meals, but if your family fits the criteria below and you don't apply, your child could be missing out on 10% discount on all school activities and up to £1,300 of Pupil Premium funding, to support your child's education.

Year 3 and above - Your child may be able to get free school meals if you meet any of the following criteria, receiving:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers' Allowance
- Income-related Employment Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit, (providing you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)

For more information on how we use the Pupil Premium, please follow the links to our website.

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

## 10. Financial Report

Our end of year financial report is available on the website

<http://www.stmarys916.herts.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Final-budget-position-2014-151.pdf>

Like many other schools across the country, St Mary's is facing pressure on school finances, because of the impact of an increase in salary on-costs. Following public sector pension reforms, the employer contribution rate into the teachers'

pension scheme will increase from 14.1% to 16.4% from September 2015 in most schools. New rules on National Insurance, which remove rebates for salary-related pension schemes will take effect from April 2016. Nationally, this is estimated to place an annual cost of 2% on school staffing budgets.

In addition to the increased salary costs, St Mary's currently has low pupil numbers in upper Key Stage 2 and in the Foundation Stage. Whilst smaller class sizes can be beneficial for the pupils, the majority of school funds are generated from the number of children on the school roll.

We are managing our budget constraints creatively, to ensure that the quality of education and experiences that the children receive will not be compromised.

## 11. Stakeholder engagement

Many thanks to those parents and pupils who completed the online questionnaires this term. The results are currently being analysed and an action plan developed, to address the issues raised.

At the staff and governor strategy meeting on 2nd September, we will review the responses, to feed them into our school development plan.

The results of the survey will be posted onto the website and we will publish our response and action plan early in the autumn term.

The Parent Forum continues to grow and develop as a vehicle to allow the Senior Leadership Team and Governors to consult with parents and for parents to contribute to the development of the school. Our thanks go to the Parent Representatives who meet half-termly to join the discussions. Please look out for details in the newsletter in September about the first meeting of the Forum in the autumn term.

If you would like to provide us with feedback on this newsletter, or any of the issues raised in it, please forward it to your Parent Forum Representative, ready for the first meeting of the Forum in the autumn term.

**Thank you to the staff, pupils, parents and governors at St Mary's, who work together to make our school a unique community. We look forward to working with you next year, to continue to develop and improve our school, for the sake of the pupils, who are at the heart of everything we do.**

We hope that you have a refreshing summer break and look forward to seeing you in the autumn term.

|                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Miss V. Hunt         | Headteacher           |
| Rev J. Gordon        | Co-Chair of Governors |
| Mrs H. Holmes-Higgin | Co-Chair of Governors |