

2016 School Review



Dear parents, families and friends of our school,

I have spent an academic year as the new headteacher of St Mary's School and time has certainly flown by. Whilst recognising the various traditions of St Mary's I have tried to make changes and move the school forward, developing a positive environment which celebrates our children's talents and encourages them to take risks. The changes this year I believe, will establish the foundation blocks to enable our new vision for the school to be fulfilled. This has also taken place at a time of seismic educational change nationally. However I believe the sign of a good school ensures that we provide an education that meets the needs of each child despite the many changes and challenges schools face. I have, like many parents, concerns about both the testing and demands placed upon our primary children in England today. We are determined to focus on supporting our children to reach their potential and giving them the skills and resilience required for the future.

We have very special children in our school who clearly have a lot of potential and talent. Having an equally special school environment is very important to ensure the children feel valued. Consequently we have begun to develop the school building and outdoor spaces. We will continue an ongoing plan of school development to provide an outstanding space in which to learn.

Throughout the year we have reflected on how we can further improve our school for our children including developing the curriculum, outdoor and residential opportunities as well as enhancing our creativity. Partnership and communication has also been central in our work including our new website and email service. I hope that our newsletters and blogs enable parents to connect with learning in classes and reinforce and enhance our children's learning, along with an open door policy. I would like to thank you for your support in helping moving the school forward. It is our challenge to make the vision for our school a reality, to provide greater outdoor learning opportunities and encourage creativity in everything we do. Our children are unique individuals and we will work tirelessly to ensure everyone progresses academically as best as they can. Dovetailing with this, we aim to challenge our children and enable them to develop and discover their talents and celebrate them. The combination of excellent academic progress and discovering their abilities serving to build self-confidence.

In the many years I have been teaching I am aware of the uniqueness of children and how they develop at both different rates and at different times. Like my own children, they prove to be very different individuals and they make progress at different rates, often in writing, reading or maths. It is always encouraging to know that your child has made progress in a year and attained well however I would like to take this opportunity to remind you not to be unduly upset if you feel your child has not progressed consistently in a particular year. We monitor every child to ensure they have the right support but also recognise, despite testing, that all children progress unevenly and mature differently. Furthermore we must take a long term view which ultimately means ensuring our pupils in Year 6 have built up the academic knowledge, acumen, character and skills to be ready for secondary education. The new high expectations of this year make achieving the expected progress this year very difficult. Despite what I have just said, we will always have high expectations for all of our children and I thank the children, staff and parents this year, for their exceptional hard work in such a demanding year and time of national change. The important issue is that we maintain communication to

ensure the best education for your child, in partnership with you. Progress is most effective when parent reading and homework support dovetails with the learning in school. I firmly believe in 'Roots and Wings', enabling our children to have an academic foundation in tandem with the skills to apply these, then enabling them to fly as individuals, with confidence, becoming rounded children. It is our aspiration that through the many experiences and adventures we plan in our curriculum that our children will grow and then be confidently released into the next phase of their educational journey.

This year our children have had various chances to explore their creativity including poetry and art competitions, performances both at Christmas, Easter and at the end of term. This has also included music concerts and assemblies or presentations. As I walk around classes there are some superb examples of art on the walls and in books. It is this creativity which we hope to further develop over the next few years. Throughout the year I have had the privilege of attending various sporting competitions and events. Whether at a muddy and cold cross country race, a sunny cricket festival or exciting inter school athletics, our children have shown great determination and skill when competing. We have also participated in swimming galas, hockey tournaments and many other inter school sporting events. The experiences have taught our boys and girls to learn from losing, always showing sportsmanship whatever the result and celebrating success. Furthermore I have seen and heard of excellent examples of individual determination and team work. Beyond our school provision it is also wonderful to hear about our children's active lives in a huge range of sports as well as their personal achievements. It is our intention to further increase the opportunities to take part in sport as well as increase the variety of options we offer to our children, competitively, after school and in lessons. Thank you to everyone who has supported our children and donated funds to provide new equipment and sports kit this year.

The various visits, events and visitors in school serve to fuel our children's imaginations, experiences and enhance their learning. This year our school council have been extremely active both in school and at the Pupil Parliament and have visited London to explore the value of voting at the Houses of Parliament. Many of our children have had some wonderful outdoor experiences during the year in various weather conditions e.g. day and residential outdoor activities and open water swimming.

The wealth of volunteers we have in school has been wonderful both from students from Queen Elizabeth School and from parents and family members. Thank you to everyone who has enriched our children's learning experience and supported children in reading or working in groups. Our PTA have also given so much of their time and energy raising funds but also providing a raft of community events which are so valuable. Special thanks to all of the PTA who have supported our school and are now stepping down; we value your energy, time and enthusiasm.

I have been very proud of our children and staff this year working towards and responding to, our high expectations. I really have been impressed with the level of good behaviour and the way our children have been inclusive and supportive to new children. I look forward to next year and taking our children on an even more exciting educational journey and I wish our children leaving us, continued success in all they do, as they make the transition into exciting new beginnings. I hope you all have a wonderful summer.

Brian Jones, Headteacher