

Friendship *Generosity* *Perseverance* *Forgiveness* *Respect* *Courage*
Trust *Peace* *Thankfulness* *Compassion* *Humility* *Responsibility*



St. Mary's Church of England VC Infant School

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'Sharing, Caring, Learning and Loving with God'

Monday 14th October 2019

Head's Update

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are now well underway with our first half term and I would very much like to take this opportunity to share some updates with you.

Changes for Impact

Firstly, I would like to begin by thanking you for embracing some of the changes shared with you earlier this term. Our end of day procedures are now working more efficiently and with your written consent forms for collection, children are being released at a quicker pace and the number of phone calls to parents/carers to confirm have reduced. This has had a positive impact on parents/carers who are waiting outside and on our office staff.

At the beginning of the term we reviewed the security of the site and the locking of gates has reduced vandalism to our premises at times when the school is closed to pupils. We did have a couple of malfunctions with the locks at the start of the term and these have now been rectified. We also ensured that the gates are locked again after school once parents have left the playground and while pupils are on the field taking part in sports to ensure that our site continues to be secure while pupils are still on the premises. The front door to the school is accessible via a new door bell and this again has tightened our security of the site. We have also worked in collaboration with breakfast club to ensure that this system works smoothly for them to. We would please like to remind parents not to allow pupils onto the playground equipment before or after school.

It was reported to me that parents/carers didn't feel that the accident record form provided enough information as to the nature of the accident and where a child was hurt. We now have a more detailed form which will provide all of the requested information for you. Staff are now handing these to you on collection.

All of our volunteers have undergone intense safeguarding training. Our volunteers are really valued members of the community and are already having an impact in our school.

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Our Governing Body have now implemented the fining system to work with parents to improve our attendance figures and entitlement for our children to a broad and balanced curriculum in school. Attendance updates will be provided to you as part of the half termly newsletter.

Meetings with you are now recorded on a meeting record form to ensure that both parties can share items and have noted actions. This has had positive feedback from some of the parents that we have met with and it also ensures that when pupils transition to the next class, teachers can read the documentation to plan or pre-empt.

Our Reception pupils have successfully transitioned into the life of St Mary's and we have been really impressed with how their independence in the mornings has developed and this has been as a result of a collaborative team effort between the Reception staff and parents/carers. Thank you to you all! We are delighted to hear that this has had a positive impact on many of you and it is allowing you to have a more positive getaway after drop off.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all parents/carers for following our safeguarding procedures by not taking videos or photographs during our harvest festival. This prevents some of our families from risk of harm. Unfortunately the school does not have the ability to monitor posts involving pupils in our school on social media and this decision supports our risk assessment of this. We do however appreciate that there are certain events in school that can provide very special memories. For our Christmas nativity, we will ensure that all parents will have an opportunity to have a photograph of their own child in their costume. The class teachers will accommodate this for other events for parents where possible.

Changes to routines next half term

This half term, Reception class parents/carers have been trialling a new lunch choice system so that they can engage in dialogue and support the choice made by their child. This has had a positive impact on both pupils and their choices and has maximised teaching and learning time by the teachers in class. In response to parent request, we will be moving the choices board away from the entrance door to avoid congestion. Due to its positive impact, this will be rolled out into Key Stage 1 classes after half term.

In order to maximise the learning time for PE, pupils will be asked to arrive in school on their PE days in their PE kits. They will stay in their kits for the remainder of the day and will not need their school uniform. Class teachers will inform parents/carers of the days that pupils do PE. In the event that any additional sporting activities are due to take place on non-scheduled PE days you will be informed.

Curriculum Intent

This half term, we have been reviewing the intent of our whole school curriculum. We have looked at the extent to which we feel our curriculum meets the National Curriculum intention as well as the individual needs of our pupils and the overall needs of our school. Each subject leader has reviewed the milestones (criteria) for the end of each year group within their subject. Within each year group the stepping stones to reach the milestones in their subjects have been sequenced logically to support pupils in their knowledge and skill progression. How our curriculum will be implemented and how impact will be evidenced will be shared with all parents/carers after half term. We have been networking with other school subject leaders, researching latest developments in education for some subjects and

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continuing the professional development of our subject leaders to support the growth of effective leadership of subjects across the school.

We have been pleased to see many of you attending our curriculum mornings. This is a great way for parents to get to know how their children are being taught and so that you can support them at home. In response to parent requests we will also be providing parents with supportive guides for maths, reading and writing at parents evening. If you require any further support, please speak with your class teacher.

The class topic will be sent to you and will also be updated on the website by half term so that parents can research any areas of interest with their child over half term.

Church School Distinctiveness

We were overwhelmed to see the hall completely full up with parents/carers engaging and supporting in our Harvest Festival. Thank you also for your donations. We have been considering how to accommodate you more effectively and we will provide more seating for our next event. We have high expectations of our pupils entering and leaving worship or an assembly in silence to provide time for them to reflect and to embrace calm and I would like to thank parents/carers for also modelling this expectation to pupils throughout the service. For our next festival we will open our front entrance doors earlier and allow you to be seated before our pupils process into the hall.

Thank you to those of you who attended the 'Vision' creation meeting and for those who came on other occasions to discuss ideas. We have now taken all requests, ideas and ideals from parents/carers, pupils and Governors and last week we held a 'Distinctiveness Working Party' to take all of those ideas to formulate our distinct vision. We have looked carefully at the context of the school and what our school needs and this has definitely been captured by the input from all stakeholders. In the newsletter the key ideals which will make up our vision will be shared. As a church school, our vision will be rooted in a key message from the Bible which will demonstrate how our school will be distinct from all other schools around us.

Some parents/carers have asked why pupils are attending collective worship more this academic year than last year and therefore I thought it appropriate to share my response with all parents. Our pupils are attending the same number of collective worships that they attended in the previous academic year and the time allocated for this in school has not changed. The only change is the terminology used for this. Last year, worship was referred to as an assembly, however in line with diocesan expectations we are referring to this time as collective worship. The principles of the session have not changed. A Bible story is used to demonstrate a particular value. Children are then encouraged to demonstrate this value within their own lives. Regardless of faith or non-faith these values are important for all members of our community. Children are invited to join in prayer if they wish to. Some parents have requested to take part in a collective worship in order to understand its contents and this has very much been welcomed. On a Friday pupils attend an assembly where achievements are shared such as, 'Star of the Week, Golden Table and Star Awards'. Pupils who come to the golden table have an opportunity to eat lunch with the Head teacher and their achievements are recognised and celebrated. Staff will inform parents/carers if they are on the golden table or star of the week through Marvellous Me.

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Newsletter

As stated in my 'Head's welcome letter' a newsletter will be sent out to all parents the week before half term. As a staff we have decided to give parents a newsletter that will capture everything from this half term. It will be detailed and will celebrate many areas of school life and keep you up to date with pupils' learning. We will be ensuring that all dates for the next half term are also provided on the newsletter.

PTA

The PTA will continue to send out their PTA newsletter monthly and I look forward to seeing many of you along with our wider community at our fireworks night on Saturday 9th November.

Communication

As a society we are showered with many different methods of communication and sometimes we can feel that there is too little or even too much communication. We would like to work with parents/carers to find out the communication methods that work for you and the timeliness of these. We wish to be reflective and responsive to meet the needs of our community. During parents evening there will be a communication questionnaire available and we would very much value your input in completing these to help us to devise communication procedures that will be effective for you. After half term the senior leadership team will evaluate the questionnaires and feedback to you. Thank you in advance for your time in completing these.

Ofsted

Ofsted last visited St Mary's on 12th June 2018. The senior leadership team have reported to me that Ofsted needed to see more evidence to confirm the judgement of good and identified some priorities for improvement which the school were advised to address. These priorities are available on the school website. These priorities are continuing to be addressed this academic year. Ofsted will be visiting us in the near future as part of a section 5 full inspection which will last two days and will determine the final grading of the school. When Ofsted arrive, parents will be invited to share their view on the school via a link to 'Parent View'. Please do support the school by taking the time to complete this. Details will be sent out to you.

Birthday Sweets and Cakes

Pupils are given birthday sweets at the door at the end of the day. Parents/carers are then responsible for deciding whether they allow their child to eat them. If your child has specific dietary requirements, we welcome parents to provide a small supply of treats to keep in class if you so wish.

Any cakes that come into school must be in packaging with an ingredients list so that we can ensure the safety of pupils with allergies and meet dietary requirements. Thank you for your help with this.

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Final Thought

Our school's strength is that its community is welcoming, responsive and caring. We pride ourselves in listening to our parents/carers, seeking understanding, reflecting and responding so that we can all flourish together. Therefore please do get involved with the communication questionnaire and please do not hesitate to make an appointment to speak with staff should you wish to discuss anything further.

Best wishes to you all,

Miss V. Edey

Headteacher

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