



# St. Mary's Church of England VC Infant School

## 'Sharing, Caring, Learning and Loving with God'

### Autumn Term Newsletter Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021

#### **Head's Message**

It has been a very exciting half term to be able to meet with parents again and we all feel like more of a connected community. We have really valued being together again for singing, worship and enrichment activities. Long may this continue!

**Safeguarding:** Thank you to parents for always informing us of changes in collection arrangements. This has enabled a smooth transition for pupils on exit.

**Health and Safety:** Please can all parents ensure that scooters are disembarked before pupils enter the school gates. Thank you. We continue to remain vigilant and have Covid measures in place and thank parents for your support with getting PCR tests and meeting virtually with staff when required.

#### **Growing Our Church School Distinctiveness: Working Towards Our Key Ideals Uphold the Values of God:**

Our value and focus during worship sessions for this half term has been *Friendship*. Our pupils have identified and discussed what makes them kind and caring friends. We've learned about how friendship can positively impact everyone around us and that an act of kindness can inspire others to be more considerate in the process.

Bishop Michael will be coming into school on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November to officially open and bless our spiritual garden which was designed by pupils and orchestrated by our PTA and parent body. All of those who have supported the creation of this have been invited to the event.

#### **Nurture Creativity and Encourage Curiosity:**

In the early years we have introduced woodwork into our grow time activities. The children are learning how to use a saw, hammer and screwdriver safely. So far, we have made a car and a table and chairs.



In reception we have been busy learning about different topics this half term including World Space Week, National Eco Week and Black History month which have all created a great deal of curiosity and generated great creativity. We have had space helmets, backpacks and gloves being made and great discussions about how we are all different but equally as important as each other.



#### **Learning Together, Flourishing Together:**

During Early Years' Foundation Stage, a child's first experiences with oral health can impact on the rest of their life. That's why it's so important to teach them about this and introduce them to good habits as soon as possible. Ruth Harvey, a dental hygienist and a parent from our school, is coming to talk to the children in reception about dental hygiene on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November.



# Mary's Church of England VC Infant School 'Sharing, Caring, Learning and Loving with God' Autumn Term Newsletter Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2021

To help the children develop their independence and prepare them for real life experiences, we have introduced ceramic plates to our snack time. The children use the plates when eating their snack and are then responsible for washing and drying them. They even recycle their milk cartons and fresh snack waste! Please encourage your children to do this at home also.



As a whole school we have been focusing on handwriting. We realise the importance of the children having this fundamental skill to enable them to write their wonderful ideas that are created in lessons in a clear and presentable way. We have 'star writer' pencils that are given out weekly to the children who have made the most effort and improvement over the week. We encourage you to support your child at home with their letter formation and writing stamina. If you are not sure of the correct letter formation, please ask your child's teacher for a copy of the formation that they should be using.

### ***Supporting Parents to Support Learning at Home:***

After half term we will be fully starting ERIC (Everyone Read in Class.) This is where parents are invited to come and read with their child. In year 1 this will be on a Wednesday at 14.45pm and in year 2 on a Thursday at 14.50pm. To support you to help your child progress with their reading, the teachers will be leading the first session to model to parents how you can do this effectively. In reception, one parent will be invited into each class every Friday to read a story. The first session after half term will be modelled by the teachers and all parents are invited to come and sit with their child and listen to the story with them.

Mrs Thomas will be delivering a session to explain how we teach phonics to reception parents after half term on the 10<sup>th</sup> November at 14.45pm. Please can only one parent attend from each family. Face coverings must be worn when in the school building.

### ***Connecting Communities:***

Diwali is on the 4<sup>th</sup> November. To teach the children about this Hindu and Sikh celebration, otherwise known as the 'Festival of Lights' we will all be taking part in a Diwali dance workshop on Monday 1st November. All children will need to come to school wearing their P.E. kits on this day. Each class will take part in the workshop at different times throughout the day. In reception we are lucky enough to be welcoming Mrs Dhillon on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November to tell us about Diwali and how it is celebrated by her family.

It was wonderful to see so many parents volunteering to read to the children during our introduction to ERIC. The children, in all the years, really enjoyed this time each week and we thank you for making such an effort with props and preparation to ensure that it was engaging for the children.

A letter will be sent out to all parents requesting volunteers. If you have any spare time and would like to support the education of our pupils, then please do sign up to support us.



# St. Mary's Church of England VC Infant School 'Sharing, Caring, Learning and Loving with God' Autumn Term

## Newsletter Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2021

This week we have been celebrating black history month. As well as learning about historical black figures who have changed the world, such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King and Mary Seacole, we also learnt about more recent, local black heroes who have made massive changes closer to home. These included Marcus Rashford, Dapo Adeola, Dina Asher-Smith, Stormzy, Leigh-Anne Pinnoch, Maro Itoje and Malorie Blackman. We were able to have some very interesting conversations within our classes about equality and inclusion. Here is some work created by the children in year 1:



**Maths Hub:** We have joined the maths mastery 'developing mastery' programme this year. This is a national development programme with the 'Matrix Maths Hub.' We will be developing our practise further in line with current best practise of teaching maths through mastery techniques. We have begun working with our maths advisor from Herts for Learning and we will be meeting with them regularly throughout the year. Look out for more updates on our maths practise in the coming terms.

### **Church School Distinctiveness:**

On the 7<sup>th</sup> November we held our annual harvest festival in the school hall. Each year group put together a performance to celebrate Harvest. Our Reception children performed a rendition of 'Dingle Dangle Scarecrow,' year 1 recited a creation poem which they learnt during their RE lessons on creation and year 2 sang the 'Harvest Samba' song. We want to say a huge thank you to our parents for all the generous donations received for the Trussel Trust. These donations have now been collected and will really help our local community.



### **Parents, Carers and Wider Families Working in Partnership:**

We feel very blessed to have had a parent volunteer who has been coming in, generously helping us to spruce up our Early Years garden with some beautiful winter pansies. Some keen young gardeners have been brilliant at helping us to care for them!





Mary's Church of England VC Infant School 'Sharing, Caring, Learning  
and Loving with God' Autumn Term Newsletter Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> December  
2021

**Pastoral Care:**

Mrs Archer has been working with children on building positive friendships and supporting play. These friendship groups include playing games and understanding our own emotions so that we can understand others as well. Children throughout the school have been enjoying the nurture groups at lunchtime. A favourite is the lego club. This enables children a quiet space at playtimes to be creative and make new friendships.



**Forest Schools**

Over the summer Mrs Archer continued to develop our Forest School area and added a new piece of equipment. The bird watching tower provides an area for quietly watching the birds from a raised platform, whilst using the identification cards and binoculars to identify the birds that visit us.



**Pupil Voice**

Our new Reception pupils have voted for and elected their pupil leadership team.

**Worship Acolytes:** Worship Acolytes have met for the first time during this school year to discuss our leadership roles, find out more about the Spiritual Garden opening ceremony that we'll be helping with after half term – we're very much looking forward to the Bishop's visit! The KS1 Acolytes have been very helpful in supporting the Reception pupils to understand their important roles.

**Eco Warriors:** The Eco Warriors have met for the first time during this school year to introduce the Reception pupils to their roles, to discuss our aims as pupils, as leaders and as a school, and we've also learned about how the Eco-Schools award has changed. We are going to reflect on our Eco-Action Plan from 2020-21 to find out how we can improve it for this school year and inform our classes of the school's Eco-Aims.

**Our House Captains:** Our house captains have been elected and are now able to represent their house every week in our celebration assembly. They have been busy counting the house points that have been earned in each classroom. This term the winning house was Sycamore with 321 points. Well done!

**Pupil Parliament:** The Pupil Parliament representatives for reception have been voted in by their peers, well done to the successful candidates. For this half term we have collected pupil voice on a wide range of areas of the school to identify where the children would most like to influence change, this has included: lunchtime provision, reading and reading areas in classes, worship and understanding our learning behaviours. We look forward to meeting early next half term to decide on the most important focus and how we will influence change for improvement.

**Parent Voice: 'Listening to Each other So That We Can all Flourish Together'**

**You Asked for ...**

**So we...**

Parents haven't requested any changes this half term. Please do communicate with us if you have any future ideas as we always welcome feedback.



St. Mary's Church of England VC Infant School 'Sharing,  
Caring, Learning and Loving with God' Autumn Term

Newsletter Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2021

**'Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds'**

We realise the importance that children having an active, well-structured and happy play and lunchtime. Due to this we have been giving these times in the day much consideration. We have introduced different play zones that allow the children to access games, dressing up, reading, writing and quiet activities and a free play area.

Every week, in our achievement assembly we celebrate sporting successes. This includes individual and whole class successes. We would love to hear about and celebrate any sporting successes outside of school, please send a picture in to share with us.

**Growing Our Staffing Team**

We welcome back Miss Gamble who will be working with us to support individual pupils. We are delighted that she will be returning to work within our team. Ms Ludlow will also be joining the team to support individual pupils. We look forward to welcoming her into our team.

Mrs Green, our wonderful Early Years practitioner will also be leaving us just after half term. Mrs Green will be leaving education, but we will be hoping to see Mrs Green back in her capacity with her green fingers. Mrs Green has truly inspired our pupils to be avid gardeners and this is a legacy that she will leave behind. Mrs Green has had a huge input into the new vision in the Early Years. I know that Mrs Green will be greatly missed. Mrs Gardener will be joining our teaching assistant team and will work with Mrs Green in the week after half term.

We are sad to announce that Mrs Archer will be leaving St Mary's in the first week after half term. We are really pleased that Mrs Archer has used St Mary's as a steppingstone for her own career development and she is now going off to be a Family Support Worker. We will still see her in and out of school and we know that our paths will continue to cross. I know that all the families who have worked with Mrs Archer have really valued her care and support. Mrs Thorp will be taking on this role in the interim until we recruit a successful candidate.

**PTA 'Connecting the Community to Raise Funds to Enrich our Provision'**

A massive shoutout to Mrs Rowe for leading the planning for the Baldock Fireworks. A huge amount of work has gone into this, supported by her team of PTA members. We are all very excited for this really exciting event.

**Fundraising:**

Your PTA is very excited to be hosting the Baldock Community Fireworks and we can't wait to see some of the St Mary's children performing with the London Show Choir. Please get your tickets here if you haven't yet done so! [FIREWORKS TICKETS](#) Once they are gone, they are gone. ONLY 2 DAYS LEFT TO GET YOUR [CHRISTMAS CARDS!](#) Last orders by midnight on Sunday 24th October.

We have some lovely initiatives coming up for the run up to Christmas - details will be coming out the week commencing 8th November, after Fireworks. In the meantime, please put afterschool on Tuesday 14th December in your diaries for the Infants Christmas Disco. If you can volunteer to help run the Infant Disco, please get in touch (below). Also, we will be starting to do hot chocolate sales in the playground on Fridays after school - so bring your purses/wallets for Friday collections. We need Infant School volunteers for 10th and 17th December sessions (full training will be given). Please let Emma know if you can help - [pta@stmarysinfants.herts.sch.uk](mailto:pta@stmarysinfants.herts.sch.uk)

**Final Thought**

On behalf of all the staff at St Mary's, we wish you a peaceful half term break. Please stay safe everyone and we will look forward to seeing you all on 1<sup>st</sup> November.



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Newsletter Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2021

Attendance (%) Summer								
Week ending	10.09.21	17.09.21	24.09.21	01.10.21	08.10.21	15.10.21	22.10.21	Average across the weeks
Starlight	98.6%	99.0%	96.0%	95.7%	92.9%	91.4%	87.5%	94.0%
Sunshine	100%	100%	95.9%	99.0%	93.7%	94.9%	91.8%	96.2%
Venus	98.6%	94.2%	84.8%	91.2%	89.4%	89.6%	90.4%	91.6%
Mars	98.7%	99.1%	99.1%	99.1%	86.8%	96.8%	94.9%	97.8%
Saturn	94.9%	93.2%	96.1%	96.4%	97.7%	95.4%	96.4%	95.7%
Jupiter	98.3%	100%	99.1%	95.2%	94.5%	97.3%	95.5%	97.2%
Whole school	98.0%	97.0%	94.8%	95.9%	92.4%	94.1%	92.7%	95.3%

We would like to remind parents that we are running our attendance policy as per pre-covid. Once a child has 15 unauthorised sessions within the current and/or previous term, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued.