



## Governors Newsletter Summer 2021

As we come to the end of what has been a challenging year for everyone, we thought it would be a good opportunity to thank you all for your commitment and support for the school and to reflect on the achievements of this year. These can only have been made possible with the support of our dedicated staff, parents and of course our wonderful children who, as always, have been determined to strive to be the best they can be despite the world being turned upside down.

At the start of the year, we began with Mrs Howells, Miss Jones and Miss Crisp as our designated school leaders with the task of leading the school through these unprecedented times, as well as welcoming Mrs Claridge as our school business manager. Governors are grateful for the professional support they have received from the Local Education Authority and Diocese throughout the year. Mrs Hill, Mrs Daly and Mrs Lai had the job of providing additional classroom support to help our children 'catch up', after almost 6 months of lockdown and 23 Reception children became part of our school family, as well as a number of children in Years 1 – 6 joining during the course of the year. Despite some schools seeing a drop in pupil numbers we have been able to increase ours, now having 174 children in school. This is a positive indication that parents continue to see us as a school they wish to send their children to.

Another notable success has been the development and delivery of an impressive remote learning programme, offering live lessons alongside the teaching of our key workers and vulnerable children in school. In a recent survey, over 94% of parents expressed satisfaction with this provision. This could not have happened without significant input from all of our staff, children and especially you as parents, who had to adapt to become teachers and mentors overnight, whilst still holding down jobs and looking after younger siblings – a real team effort!

Despite the challenges, we continued to offer high quality professional development for staff, including hosting student teachers on placement, mentoring a newly qualified teacher, training an apprentice TA, funding and supporting Miss Browning to achieve her SENDCo qualification and Mrs Ferris' training towards her Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) qualification.

Our chaplaincy team have worked hard to further develop the prayer life of the school, led by Mrs Barron in collaboration with Mandy Baker the chaplain from St Peter's Catholic High School and Miss White from the Diocese as well as discovering new ways to celebrate key events in the Church calendar by using Microsoft Teams. This enabled parents and children who were self-isolating or shielding to participate and still receive some spiritual guidance or development. Mrs Gwyer has also managed to prepare nine of our children to make their First Holy Communion at Masses in Nympsfield and Dursley at the beginning of July.

Our PTA has worked tirelessly to raise funds for projects to benefit our pupils, working closely with the School Council to replace the trim trail and our Eco Committee have campaigned for and organised a petition to governors, signed by all pupils and staff, to fund the purchase of recycling bins, so that we can become greener!

Governors, like parents, have not been able to enter school, but have continued to meet monthly. Throughout the year we have monitored school performance and offered support and challenge. It has been sad not to have been able to offer school trips, swimming or cluster sports this year, or allow parent helpers into school – you have been sorely missed! However, as restrictions have begun to ease, the recent film night was a resounding success and our Year 6 pupils have been able to complete their cycling proficiency, perform in 'Joseph' and soon to enjoy a camp-out!

As the Summer Term draws to an end, we do need to say goodbye to our Year 6 pupils who will be moving on to Secondary School in September. I am sure you join with us in wishing them the very best for the future! We also say goodbye to some of our staff whom we would like to thank for the contributions they have made to the school during their time with us. Although it is always sad to see staff leave and can be unsettling for parents, it is generally accepted that teachers new to the profession would expect to stay in their first school for two or three years and then seek

further experience in another setting. This has been the case every year in recent times. This could be considered as losing talent, but it does provide wonderful opportunities for growth for those staff individually, something which governors encourage and we are delighted that staff are able to progress their careers in this way as well as helping to secure primary education in the County and Clifton Diocese.

In November 2020, our school was ranked 138 out of the top 250 primary schools in the country in the Sunday Times list of top Primary schools, one of only two schools in Gloucestershire. We continue to be in the top 1% of schools nationally in reading. This, together with a strong reputation locally, consistently ranking in the top 12 primary schools in Gloucestershire has ensured that we received a large number of quality applications for the teacher vacancies. At interview, applicants told us that they wanted to join St Joseph's because they were attracted to our vision based on following in the footsteps of Jesus, our unique REACH curriculum, our high expectations, ambitious remote learning package and seeing our happy children in our virtual school tour! Our wonderful village location at the heart of a rural community also proved to be an attraction. We are delighted with the calibre of the appointments made and are very excited that Mrs Hares, Mrs Hathaway, Mrs Hobbs and Mrs Knight will be joining us in September. They bring a wide range of experience and talent, including subject leadership and moderation, notably in English and RE, to strengthen middle leadership in school and share our vision of striving to do the very best for all of our children in 'inspiring them to REACH through Faith Hope Love'.

On a final note, we are pleased to let you know that Mrs Howells is now recovering at home, following her recent riding accident. We continue to pray for her and her family and we very much look forward to her returning in the Autumn term to lead the school through the next academic year. We would also like to thank our staff for their support at this time and especially Miss Jones who has stepped up to safely lead us, at what is always a frantic time of year, through the last weeks of the summer term.

Wishing you all a relaxing and peaceful summer break and looking forward to welcoming everyone back in September, including 26 new Reception pupils and 4 children across Years 1 - 6 – hopefully without 'bubbles'!

The governors

Nicola Connolly, Syd Gwyer, Katie McCarthy, Loraine Patrick, Catherine Pinnock, Gabriella Tiley and Natalie Jones (Ex Officio).

**The Little Way Partnership**

**Supporting our Catholic Schools in Gloucestershire**

