



STM Governing Board Newsletter – Spring 2020

Our Mission Statement: Learning to love, live and celebrate as we grow in the knowledge and love of Christ
Our Vision: To provide an outstanding education, with Christ at the centre, underpinned by a Catholic, spiritual ethos

Welcome to the Spring newsletter! Given the extraordinary time we are currently experiencing we have opted to deliver a more “compact” edition this term, leading with a note from the Chair. The Governing Board are exceptionally grateful to the caring and dedicated staff at STM and the strong leadership that has been demonstrated in the past few weeks by Mrs Little and the SLT. We also welcome **Gary Brine** to the Board as a Foundation Governor and look forward to working together to support our wonderful school.

A note from **David Swarbrick** - Chair of Governors:

As the Easter Holiday approaches I would like to give you an update of where the focus for the School Governors has been over the last term.

Obviously in the last few weeks the Covid-19 situation has been uppermost in everybody's mind. The School Leadership Team have worked very hard to keep parents and everyone involved abreast of the precautions being taken to keep the children and their families safe and healthy during the pandemic. Following the school's closure staff are working hard to minimise any damage that such a closure will have on the children's education.

One of our major concerns during this term has been the school's finance. Our income has been reduced this year due to two factors. Firstly the number of parents choosing to enrol their children at St Thomas More has been declining but secondly the school is supporting more children with 'special education needs'. These children often require more one-to-one support in the classroom that obviously has an effect on costs. The school is particularly well equipped to support such children, due to the capability and experience of our SEND coordinator, Mrs Loria who, with the support of teachers and assistants is capable of ensuring these children receive the education they need.

In the past exceptional needs funding (ENF) has been available to offset some of the additional costs needed but this year such funding has been sparse or unavailable. In addition, to acquire such funding can require parental support. We would encourage parents of children requiring or receiving additional financial support to work with the school to ensure that this support is obtained. In spite of the unavailability of additional funding the school (with the support of the Governing Body) took the decision to provide all the support needed by these children and has absorbed the cost within existing funding.

Next year the system for obtaining ENF is changing in Hertfordshire and we are confident that we will be able to obtain a more acceptable funding settlement.

Further services for children at St Thomas More are being planned and we are sure that these changes will make our school offering more attractive to parents. This combined with improved financial support for our children who require it should allow us to restore the schools finances to their previous 'good health level'.

I will keep you updated on these developments.

GRIT - from **Monica Murray**:

Grit (adj) - “*courage and determination despite difficulty*”.

These are evocative words particularly given how many of us are now in self-imposed isolation in our houses, with our families. Everyone is experiencing something new. Life has become unpredictable and this causes us worry. Not in a long time has the planet needed to come together and collectively demonstrate the idea of *grit*.

In the context of this terrible virus, what do we mean? Firstly, we should all resist “temptations”. The Government has issued guidelines on isolating as a family. We must stay strong and maintain appropriate social distance. Several epidemiological studies demonstrate that you should think of your family as a single individual; if one person puts themselves at risk, everyone is potentially at risk. For example, it seems so easy, so “innocent”- a playdate, a quick coffee at your sister’s or your neighbour’s. It is not. This creates a connected social network that undermines all of the work in the community. So let’s have grit! Resist!

Secondly, in our family ‘microcosm’ grit should be about using this time productively. Have a clear idea of what you would like to do. Create a program of activities which can achieve these objectives, but nothing too “overwhelming”. As Mrs Little quite rightly pointed out in her newsletter, let’s not raise the anxiety levels of our children, never mind ourselves. What does this look like in practice?

Allow time for being creative (music, art & crafts, writing a diary); for learning-based activity (maths, reading, watching educational videos); being helpful (little jobs your children can be responsible for, like setting the table, baking, housework); and, critically, family fun (board games, hide & seek or a treasure hunt)

Finally, be positive! This WILL all end. When that time comes and you look back on the period of isolation, what will you have done? What will you have achieved? What will have you learned about yourself and the world that you can help make sure your life, your family’s life and society will be a better version of what went before? Will you be able to say that you and your family demonstrated *grit*?

To borrow from the philosopher Leibniz, *the existing world, the one that God created, is the best of all possible worlds*. We are still in control. Follow the guidelines and may it be, as D’Artagnan said, “all for one and one for all!”

Let’s stick to it.

**A Prayer for this time - 'Not Everything is Cancelled'
From Fr David**

The Sun is not cancelled
Spring is not cancelled
Relationships are not cancelled
Reading is not cancelled
Music is not cancelled
Imagination is not cancelled
Kindness is not cancelled
Prayer is not cancelled
Hope is not cancelled
Love is not cancelled
God is not cancelled: Trust in him who never abandons us.
Amen.

WHO WE ARE

David Swarbrick	Chair
Jan Davis	Vice Chair
Kathy Little	Head Teacher
Sally Meredith	Staff Governor
Michelle Anderton	Associate Governor
Fr David Burke	Foundation Governor
Theresa Kelly	Foundation Governor
Peter Fitzgerald	Foundation Governor
Leanne Butler	Foundation Governor
Jo Cosgrove	Foundation Governor
Gary Brine	Foundation Governor
Monica Murray	Parent Governor
Laura Connor	Parent Governor

All governors serve STM in a voluntary capacity

We will be keeping the whole school community in our thoughts and prayers throughout this time.

The STM Governing Board