



STM Governing Board Newsletter – Summer 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 Summer newsletter and what an extraordinary term it has been. The Governing Board are exceptionally grateful to the dedicated staff at STM who have worked tirelessly, within an extremely challenging framework, over the past three months and will continue to do so in the coming ones. It has been wonderful to see the school community coming together to experience new ways of learning - be it in Bubbles or at home and that we have been able to share snapshots of these times via the STM website.

Canon Vincent Berry RIP

On the feast of Corpus Christi, Canon Vincent died peacefully at home after a long and courageous battle. Canon Vincent was the Parish Priest of Corpus Christi from 2006-2017. During this time he served on the governing board of our school. We remember him with joy and thank him for his years of dedication to St Thomas More School. May he rest in peace.
Amen.

As always, we are thankful to our teaching faculty. We are very sad to be saying goodbye to some of our STM family at the end of this academic year:

Mrs Sharon Holmes - Nursery
Miss Becky Newman – Year 4
Miss Rachel Stone - Year 6
Mrs Carol Kerrigan - Nursery

Mrs Sally Meredith (Year 5) is retiring at the end of this term and will be very much missed not only as a teacher but also as a Governor. The board wish to thank Sally for her service over the past two years.

As you will also be aware our caretaker **Mrs Olwyn Thomas** will be leaving in the Autumn term.

We are sad to see them leaving and thankful for all of their dedication to the school and students.

We also welcome new staff to STM for the new academic year:

Mr Eoin Power - Year 3
Mr Harvey Simpson - Year 5
Miss Rebecca Johnson - Year 6

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	Associate 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

Parent View gives you the chance to tell Ofsted what you think about STM. The survey can be completed at any time; you don't have to wait until the school is being inspected. Ofsted will use the information you provide when making decisions about which schools to inspect and when. See the STM website for the link or click on the link here:
<https://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk>

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

My first year as Chair of Governors at St Thomas More School is coming to a close and it has certainly brought a number of unexpected events. It never occurred to me at the start of the year that our society could be 'paralysed' by a rogue virus.

Still, it did happen and its impact is likely to be with us for some time. Against this background, all of the Governors can only admire the effort and dedication of all the staff at the school in maintaining some education for the children during this period. The children of Key Workers have continued to be supported throughout the period, although St Thomas More did form a 'bubble' with St Albert the Great, Hemel Hempstead to ensure more efficient use of resources. Our thanks to all of the staff at St Thomas More and St Albert the Great for their continued support of these and other vulnerable children.

Teaching staff at the school has also had to acquire new skills, as I don't think that 'remote teaching' is on the curriculum of many Teacher Training establishments. They have been able to maintain some remote teaching for all the children attending the school whilst supporting those still attending. Since the return of some children to school, restrictions mean that children have to be taught in smaller bubbles. Staff have adapted to unusual teaching environments and maintained support for those still at home. Our thanks to all.

At the beginning of the year, I outlined some of the challenges facing the Governors. The coronavirus crisis has not helped but we have made some progress in dealing with them. The financial outlook for our school has improved and some new initiatives will sustain that improvement. As a Governing Board we have also sought to be more open about our activities (hence this Newsletter) and we will this year be publishing an Annual report on the school's website.

Our fervent hope and prayer is that all children will be able to return to school safely at the start of September. In the meantime, our profound thanks to Mrs Little and her staff for maintaining some educational support for all the children during this very difficult time.

Dads in Lockdown - from **Monica Murray**:

Malala Yousafzai is a young woman who, also happens to be the youngest ever Nobel Prize laureate. She was born twenty-three years ago in Pakistan, into a lower-middle-class family. She is known for human rights advocacy, especially the education of women and children in a region of Pakistan, where the local Taliban had banned girls from attending school. In 2012, Malala was shot for standing up to the Taliban by continuing to go to her father's school. Her advocacy has grown into an international movement, and according to former Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, she has become "the most prominent citizen" of the country.

Her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, a poet, and an educational activist who ran a chain of private schools, helped educate her. He believed that his daughter was special and allowed her to stay up at night and talk about politics after her two brothers had gone to bed. Ziauddin spoke against the Taliban's atrocities and for the right of all children to be educated. His courage and passion inspired many people, including his own daughter, Malala, to join him in standing up for human rights, the right of education and the right of every child to attend school. Believing that "education is emancipation", he campaigned tirelessly for the right of girls to be educated, in defiance of Taliban law. Ziauddin always talked about how patriarchy is a "sad, frustrated life, for everyone." where entire families sacrifice their life for foolish norms and girls can't see their potential unlocked.

Even in countries like the UK, where girls are educated and often have the same opportunities as boys, issues like pay inequality for example or misogyny, continue to damage girls' careers and personal lives: "unhappiness breeds unhappiness". Fathers who help unlock their daughter's potential, bring prosperity and happiness to their entire families. Studies show that when fathers are more involved in their children's lives through caring, playing and communicating, these children have less mental health problems. In these strange times, where families are forced to be together twenty-four seven, children can enjoy more time with their fathers at home rather than just, briefly, before bed. Of course, it is quality time which counts most. High quality parenting behaviour may develop even when the father spends relatively little time with the child, but there is no doubt that a healthy male role model, both towards girls and boys, encourages emotional expression; confidence and risk taking. An adventurous father, who challenges his kids can reduce anxiety in children. This will build resilience in the child and provide a solid foundation for their future.

Despite the anxiety many feel at this time there are some positives which we can take away. One of these is having daddies at home and, critically, taking a more active role in providing emotional and academic support in the face of the challenges that we and our children are facing together. In this Lockdown we may have, accidentally, unleashed the 'power of dad'. Let us not lose what we've gained as we slowly emerge from our homes and face the world once more.

As Ziauddin said "Breaking the chains of patriarchy in our family didn't just free Malala, it freed me and my sons, too"

Thought for the Summer - 'God's loving care'

From Fr David

Lord Jesus,

When you walked with us on earth you spread your healing power.

We place our school community in your loving care & all who are affected by Coronavirus.

Keep us strong, Lord, in faith, hope and love.

Bring relief to those who are sick, console our bereaved, protect those who care for us.

We lift our prayer to you Lord, and trust in your love,

as we await the daybreak.

Amen.

We wish you all a wonderful and safe summer break and hope everybody is able to take some time to rest, relax and recharge. We look forward to September and embracing the start of a new and exciting academic year.

The STM Governing Board