



STM Governing Board Newsletter – Spring 2023

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. This term feels like it has sprung along rapidly and we find ourselves welcoming Easter and all it means for us. We would like to give thanks for our staff, our brilliant young learners and the entire school community.

We are really pleased to announce that we now have a full complement of Governor's on the Board. We welcome three new appointments this term; **Cecilia Cinquina** and **Margaret Atwill** who have both been appointed as a Foundation Governors and **Chris Hammond** who was voted as Parent Governor in the recent election. Welcome Cecilia, Margaret and Chris, we are very much looking forward to working with you.

A note from the Chair - **David Swarbrick**

This has been a term of both 'upsides' and 'downsides' for the Governing Body at St Thomas More so a bit of a roller coaster for us all!

The 'downside' I refer to is obviously the Ofsted inspection report. Whilst we were pleased that many of the strengths of the school shone through in the report (well-behaved and happy children, positive atmosphere leading to well-balanced, responsible citizens etc) we were disappointed that the report identified some areas requiring improvement. We therefore spent much of the first half of the term reviewing, with the school leadership, a robust improvement plan that should rapidly implement the required improvements. I think we are all pleased to note, in the second half of the term that the plan is already being effectively implemented and already yielding results.

The major 'upside' that we have seen this term concerns recruitment. Firstly Ms Marian Lally joined the school at the start of January as Assistant Head. In this role she is already making a significant contribution to the school; a contribution that we believe will have an increasing impact over the next few terms. Some new Governors have also joined us significantly improving the scope and capacity of the Governing Body. Firstly Father Joseph joined the Governing Body in January and we believe that this will allow us to establish closer links with our parish. Cecilia Cinquina is also joining the Governing Body as a Foundation Governor as is Chris Hammond who was elected recently as a Parent Governor – our thanks to the 42 parents/carers who voted in this election. Both Cecilia and Chris have backgrounds in education that will bring valuable experience to the Governing Body.

As I write this we will shortly begin meeting to review and approve the documentation that is an essential part of process leading to us becoming an academy. Currently we are on track to become an academy by the end of this academic year – another 'upside' that we believe will increase our opportunities to develop St Thomas More by establishing closer links with the Dacorum family of Catholic Education.

I wish you all a happy and peaceful Easter

As always, we are thankful to our wonderful staff. This term we are sad to be saying goodbye to one of our cleaners **Francielle Almeida**. We thank you for all you have done for our school community.

Inclusion and Exclusion - **Monica Murray**

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men... We are the body of Christ, and each one of us is a part of it.” **(Paul to the Corinthians) 1 Corinthians 12:1-31**

Schools are a microcosm of society. They are where our children navigate their lives, day after day; and day after day I ask my own children, what have they done at school? If I am lucky, I might get an answer which sounds like "Nothing!".

But what I don't ask, and what I should ask more, is if they have performed any act of kindness or witnessed one. This can be any act: from helping a friend who is struggling with Maths, to playing with that someone who may be left alone in the playground, or standing up for another when he or she is put in the "minority" in a discussion or inviting a child to a play date or a party who may seem to not be invited.

Do we promote kindness and compassion enough or do we, by our actions and words, reinforce, tolerate or ignore exclusion?

Empathy is like a muscle that we must exercise regularly, and we need to model the kind of attitude we want for our children to adopt. There is an entire world of humanity accessible via empathy, a world where toxic behaviours, unkindness, exclusion, and discrimination are abhorred. There is solid, scientific evidence which suggests that practicing empathy and inclusion has a positive impact on our mental health, both for whoever gives it as well as, of course, for those who receive it. This can impact positively on academic and personal development.

Altruism is linked with positivity and happiness. Moreover, as Catholics, and Christians, this is a part of our school values. As in life, our main, leading values, come from our souls and hearts before they come from our rational mind. This should be the base upon which our community is built: our constant objective in our daily lives. If we want to live in accordance with what we value and support in the church.

In a time which seems to have lost the essence of humanity, with a war destroying an entire country, which could escalate and where no end is in sight, how can we move towards creating another kind of world for young children, a new perspective, a new dawn?

Schools must play a key role in this. However, we, parents, are the base of this "project". We, as parents, must talk to our children about empathy, inclusion, about being understanding and compassionate towards those who are different, whatever this may mean. Let us not forget that those with differences are the ones often excluded and statistically more likely to experience bullying by their peers and friends. This is tremendously sad, but true.

As parents, we should encourage and promote inclusion towards those who think, act, look, or express themselves differently. This is vital. This will be our future, and more importantly, our children's future. This is how we can live in another kind of world, where inclusion, love and kindness are pre-eminent. Maybe it will help us avoid making the same mistakes that humanity makes over and over again.

WHO WE ARE

| | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| David Swarbrick | Chair |
| Marie Capes | Vice Chair |
| Jo Cosgrove | Foundation Governor |
| Fr Joseph Okoro | Foundation Governor |
| Ed Murray | Foundation Governor |
| Cecilia Cinquina | Foundation Governor |
| Margaret Atwill | Foundation Governor |
| Monica Murray | LA Governor |
| Laura Connor | Parent Governor |
| Chris Hammond | Parent Governor |
| Eoin Power | Staff Governor |
| Marian Lally | Assistant HT |
| Kathy Little | Executive Head |

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>

Easter Message from Fr Joseph

"We are the Easter People..."

Jesus, after he had risen from the dead, he came to his disciples, and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." (Mtt. 28:16-20)

It wasn't that long ago we celebrated Christmas - the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. Easter, the feast of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, brings to fulfilment the very reason for Christmas - that Jesus was born to save us from our sin.

It is because of Easter therefore that we are called Christians - followers of the Risen Jesus, charged with the responsibility of spreading the message of Jesus Christ. Our school's mission statement and vision – "***We are a loving, learning community committed to putting Gospel Values at the centre of all that we do***", is tied to the responsibility Jesus gave his first disciples. By this vision, we commit to teach and guide the pupils to become who Jesus calls them to be as his ambassadors; so that informed by the Gospel values, they may so take active part in the society now and in the future.

As the priest appointed to serve our parish community of Sacred Heart Berkhamsted, of which our primary school is part of, it is delightful to see the growing collaboration between the parish and the school in the aspects of religious and social life. In the last couple of months, the pupils with their teachers have attended year group Masses in the parish, and recently, the St Patrick's Day Parish celebration. We have also gone to the school for various other celebrations relating to our Catholic faith.

The Easter event of over two thousand years ago has made all this possible today. Therefore let us all continue to fulfil the Easter mandate to teach and guide our pupils to observe all that Jesus commanded us to do in the Gospels, for we are the Easter People. Alleluia! Alleluia!

We wish you all a restful and enjoyable Easter break and look forward to seeing you for the start of the summer term.

With thanks from the STM Governing Board

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