



STM Governing Board Newsletter – Spring 2024

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 where we wrap up another great term with the feeling that Spring is springing all around, very noticeably on the grass verges along the drive to our main entrance! A super well done and thank you to Colleen Duggan and her team of children helpers who worked on this area last year. We are all very much enjoying the fruits of your work now, thank you. It has been lovely to see the school community come together in many ways again this term, particularly for STMSA fund-raising events. We also enjoyed meeting those who attended the recent Parent Teacher consultations at school and hope to continue this going forward.

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>

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
Kate Addison	Staff Governor
Marian Lally	Assistant Head Teacher
Kathy Little	Executive Head

All governors serve STM in a voluntary capacity

A note from the Chair - David Swarbrick

As this term draws to an end we see changes around us (daffodils, trees in bud, trees in bloom) that tell us that things are beginning to improve with spring's arrival and summer not very far away. At St Thomas More you can also see some changes with new markings appearing on the playground, this is because the OPAL play scheme is being implemented. This scheme represents a very different approach to playtime in the school and when the scheme is fully implemented all of the school's children will be able to play together at the same time.

We will also have a new range of equipment and facilities to make these play periods more fulfilling and enjoyable. Play periods will thus provide opportunities to develop a 'whole school' culture and develop new skills such as 'problem-solving' and 'teamwork'.

The OPAL scheme has already been introduced to the children with them able to benefit from it for one day a week (Fridays). This will gradually increase and hopefully be fully implemented by the end of the summer term. I understand that the children are already enjoying the new scheme although perhaps you should ask your own participants how they find the new scheme.

Easter is early this year and it is interesting to see that the clocks go forward and British Summer Time begins on Easter Sunday. So on that day we will be able to welcome and celebrate the promise offered by the arrival of British Summer Time as we welcome and celebrate the promise offered by our risen Lord.

I wish you and all your families the peace and joy of a Happy Easter.

Sports Premium Update - **Kate Addison**

Approximately 25% of a child's time at primary school is break times, which is why we have chosen to commit a large proportion of our Sports Premium expenditure on making break times as inclusive, active and fun as possible. Our aim is for all children to be able to access high-quality play every day! In September, we began our journey with Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL). OPAL provides us with a mentor to help us ensure that break times are the best they could possibly be, whilst encouraging children to be active for at least an hour each day, in line with Government guidance.

Whilst active play is our main focus for the near future, we are pleased to be able to continue our partnership with Dacorum School Sports Network (DSSN), who organise the different events, tournaments and leagues that we are entered in to across the Dacorum area. So far this year children have attended: Glow Dance, Multi-Sport, Athletics, Cross Country, Football matches and Netball matches with many more events lined up for the Summer term!

EUREKA! - **Monica Murray**

"The monotony and solitude of a quiet life stimulate a creative mind." This is a quote from Albert Einstein, who would be frankly horrified and shocked from the life style we have nowadays, especially where we live. Running, rushing, constantly stressed and anxious to be on time here and there, since such an early age. Is this really that good?

Creativity starts with spending time alone, with yourself: in these moments of silence those "Eureka!" (from the ancient Greek: "I got it!") arise. Moments where we get to "feel" and know ourself better. The lives of our children, mine in first instance, are often packed with structured activities from dawn till dusk. Piano lessons, football, drama, coding and all sort of classes: the modern child's schedule is often meticulously organised, leaving little room for unstructured play and imagination. However, there is a growing recognition among educators and parents alike of the importance of giving primary school children especially, the space to develop their imaginations rather than filling their days and weeks (with months well planned in advance!) with a massive amount of organised activities and social schedule.

Free time is crucial for kids; it provides the unique opportunity to explore, create and innovate. Even daydreaming (something my oldest - and my husband - are the best at) is essential, magical and unrepeatably; a unique treasure just there, at our arch, to project towards a mysterious and wild world of our own, as Willy Wonka, the king of imagination, would certainly say. Unstructured play promotes physical health and well-being, develops independency, self esteem and resilience. If it happens outdoor it also promotes connection with nature especially in this age, where screen time is on the rise. Of course, structured activities certainly should have their place, but should not overshadow the importance of free play and exploration.

By prioritising unstructured time, parents and educators can help nurture the creativity, social skills, and resilience of the next generation, laying the foundation for a brighter and more innovative future. "There is no life I know I can compare with pure imagination" says Willy Wonka, a solitary but imaginative, "mad", wild, individual, who creates a world of colours, flavours, smells and magic. From being a pure orphan, left on his own, and not to forget, he becomes a millionaire! This is extreme, but the concept is there. And, to use the lovely old Willy 's words again, it is clear: "We are the music makers and we are the dreamers of dreams".

Easter Wishes - Fr Joseph Okoro

“For our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
(2 Corinthians 5:21)

God’s interest and care for us is so incredible that it prompted the psalmist to ask God: “What is man that you should keep him in mind, mortal man that you care for him? Yet you have made him little less than a god; with glory and honour you crowned him...” (Psalm 8:4-9) This utter wonder which stemmed from the psalmist’s contemplation on the beauty in God’s creation, has since been surpassed by the Easter story. God, through the life, passion and death of his Son Jesus Christ, has shown us how much we are worth and the value he attaches to us as his children. God gave his Son Jesus Christ to die on the Cross so that we might be saved from our sins and eternal damnation. One word best answers the psalmist’s question: **LOVE** – God’s infinite love for humanity.

Therefore, as the Easter People redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ, let us spread this selfless and sacrificial love in a world that is in so much need of love to heal the wounds of war and division.

Wishing you and your loved ones blessings of the Risen Lord. HAPPY EASTER.

We wish you all a wonderful and refreshing Easter break and look forward to seeing you in April for the start of our Summer term.

With thanks from the STM Governing Board