SCHOOL - ST MARY'S C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL REPORT 2020

Our Christian Vision: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13:34

Unconditional love underpins all we do at St Mary's Church of England Primary School. We value and embrace the individuality of every child as they discover, learn and flourish in a place of security and love.

On behalf of St Mary's C of E Primary School, I have written Annual Reports for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting for many years. Usually, I write about special events, such as school productions and educational trips, and the school's academic performance in national tests. As we all know, 2020 was certainly not a typical year! For much of the year, schools were closed to most pupils. Trips and national tests were cancelled and audiences could not come into school to watch productions. It was a year like no other!

School Closures

Schools were closed to most pupils for a large part of 2020. However, we remained open for 'vulnerable' pupils and the children of key workers. This meant that the school was actually open throughout the lockdown. There was a lovely atmosphere in school. The children in attendance were happy, settled and very resilient. One of the things we enjoyed was planting flowers and vegetables supplied to us generously by QD.

We kept in touch with the children at home through an online learning platform and lots of telephone calls. As a church school, it was very important that our Christian vision should shine through our actions during the pandemic. We tried hard to show our care for the children and families in practical ways. For example, we put together care packages of household items for our families eligible for free school meals. We also loaned out school laptops and purchased book vouchers for them to make sure they could access new reading material. For those families who needed us to, we delivered these items and food parcels to family homes, which gave us the opportunity to see some of the absent children.

We used our discretion to invite children into school we thought were particularly vulnerable and, consequently, the number of pupils actually in school was higher than the national average throughout the lockdown.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Girl Guides and the army based at Wattisham for loaning us large tents in the summer term. These were used like outdoor classrooms and enabled us to invite lots of children into school to say goodbye to their teachers and meet their new teachers for September. This transition and induction support really helped children when they were eventually allowed to return to school. The help we received with the tents was yet another example of how well our community can come together supportively in a crisis.

Even when children did return, there were strict safety measures in place and many restrictions on school life. For example, the children had to stay in 'bubbles' throughout the day and could not mix with any other children. This meant that they had to have staggered start and finish times, designated spaces to play outside, lunches in the classroom and no collective worship in the hall. Parents were not allowed to come onto the school site. We did not let that stop us doing our usual Christmas productions! The nativity performances were recorded and the videos were shared with parents online. If nothing else, the pandemic has led to lots of interesting innovations and new ways of doing things!

Ofsted

Just before the pandemic, the school had an Ofsted inspection. The report was published just days before schools were closed. Although such a lot has happened since, we must still celebrate the outcome as inspections are very important in the 'life' of a school. It was a very positive experience and the inspectors were very complimentary about many aspects of school life. Overall, the judgement was 'good'. However, the Early Years provision was judged to be 'outstanding'. In particular, the inspectors were impressed by the school's pastoral care, the teaching of reading and the positive start children make at the school.

Staffing

During 2020, we said goodbye to two midday supervisors who had served the school for a number of years. We have welcomed two new midday supervisors and two part-time teachers into our St Mary's family. Generally, our staffing remains stable and unchanged. The staff team has coped admirably with the many changes and challenges of 2020. They have supported our school community with compassion, dedication and boundless energy. Throughout this difficult year, staff members have faced adversity with positivity and supported one another well. I am thankful for all their contributions to St Mary's School.

Church Links

It was more challenging to maintain our physical links with the church during 2020. The children were unable to visit the church for services or learning experiences. However, we have been grateful for videos of stories from Father Jo that the children have watched in school. We have continued to study a different Christian value each half term, which is the focus for collective worship. Regular worship has been a 'virtual' experience! We have used recorded Bible story videos (I now have my own YouTube channel – who would have thought it?) and livestream video sessions for collective worship. Also, we have continued to give out weekly certificates to children for displaying our Christian values through their daily behaviour and actions.

We are all hoping and praying that everyone in our school and church communities and beyond stays safe and healthy and that 2021 sees a return to a more 'normal' state of affairs in school! *Andrew Frolish (Headteacher)*