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September 2017 Newsletter

Dear Parents, Carers and friends of St Mary's,

Believe it or not we are already 3 weeks into the Autumn term, thrilled to be back after a lovely summer break. We welcome all our new starters to Reception and Nursery – they have settled in wonderfully. Our children look lovely in their new uniforms and are eager for learning. St Mary's are thrilled that two new staff members have joined us. Mrs Haslam is teaching alongside Mr Owen in Year 6 and Mrs Whittaker is supporting provision in key stage 2. They have both had a great start to the term and are looking forward to getting to know many of our parents. They have been delighted with their classes and I'm sure you will enjoy getting to know them through the year.

Some Fantastic news.

As you know last year Mrs Hulse and I visited China to set up links with another school. Since then the whole school has been working upon incorporating an International flavour to our curriculum. As a staff we decided to work towards achieving the International Schools Award – an award which usually takes 3/4 years to achieve. We are delighted to announce that in recognition of the hard work and improved learning opportunities the school has achieved the full award - this is a great achievement and one that deserves celebrating and sharing widely. Here are some quotes from the rigorous monitoring process

'The international dimension is clearly a valued and integral part of your curriculum, staff professional development provision and whole-school ethos, promoting citizenship and celebrating cultural diversity across the school and wider community. Your exciting new link with a school in China provides the required collaborative element in several of your activities

You have good plans to sustain and further develop this and other links and it is hoped that the new partnership with China will become a long-term aspect of your curriculum-based international work. The MFL curriculum is enriched with learning about the respective culture, lending relevance and context to foreign language learning. Your Impact Evaluation provides insight into the positive effect of international work on your pupils: they have clearly been motivated to gain knowledge of other countries and aspects of their cultures, as well as gaining citizenship skills and attributes. Your ambassadorial role is well established via your promotion and support of international work amongst your local cluster of schools. You have extensive plans to sustain and further develop your international dimension via the development of collaboration with existing and new partner schools in other countries and further embedding of the international dimension across your curriculum. Congratulations on working so hard to co-ordinate such an impressive range of work as an International Co-ordinator! You are a credit to the school and the wider community.

We hope that the scope of your excellent international activities will continue to develop and benefit the school community; your support, commitment, creativity and innovative international work is greatly appreciated.

As a school we want to continue this journey and these past 2 weeks of International Learning has been wonderful for our children.

To celebrate this achievement we aim to hold a Quiz Night for parents – with an international theme. Watch this space.



More Fantastic news

Towards the end of term St Mary's underwent an extremely rigorous Audit. These audits only happen once every few years. No stone was left unturned. Auditors spent time reviewing our Governance, Financial procedures, Risk Assessments / Control, Safeguarding procedures to name a few. We are thrilled to have been graded Substantial in all areas which is the highest grading possible and a big improvement upon the last audit. I want to thank Mrs Jackson and the Governors for their day to day hard work which enables the smooth running of the school. A great achievement.

The following areas of good practice were identified:

- The Head teacher has promoted the formation of a working partnership with three other primary schools to share best practice in teaching and learning.
- A review of Governing Body minutes found good examples of clear and open discussion around key issues facing the school. There was strong evidence of governor scrutiny and challenge regarding the school's finances, including surplus funds and their allocation, and the scrutiny of financial decisions. It was evident that governors are engaged in value for money issues, cost benefit analysis, and the consideration of the perceptions of parents and other stakeholders with regards to the school's use of resources.
- Good procedures are in place for the processing and recording of financial transactions, which provides assurance that income and expenditure recorded in the school's accounts, is accurate.
- The school has accessed British Council funding to establish links with schools in China. The school now benefits from the provision of a funded Chinese language teacher for half a day per week for the duration of the school's involvement in the project. It is anticipated that any subsequent trips to China will be fully funded by the British Council.
- There are sound systems in place with regard to safeguarding, including the management of the Single Central Register. Appropriate checks had been completed and clearly documented on the register, which provides assurance that the school is complying with its safeguarding responsibilities.

Shoes

Wearing school shoes really makes our uniforms look smart. We do ask that if pupils want to access the field during break / lunch time, they have a change of footwear i.e. trainers. Pupils no longer change into pumps for indoors. Pumps may however be needed by some year groups for indoor PE. Please talk to your class teacher if you are not sure. Please ensure school shoes are Black and are shoes rather than trainers.



School Photographs

The school photographer will be in school taking individual photos on Tuesday 3rd October. If you wish to have a photograph taken with siblings who do not attend St Mary's (e.g. younger children) you will be able to come into school at 8.15 a.m. on that morning. Those children who have siblings in St Mary's will have their sibling shot taken in the school day and do not need to come in early. If you are wishing to come in early please may we ask that you enter school through the Junior Playground door.

Christmas Trips

Teachers have already decided up on their Christmas trips this year. Inevitably prices have risen since last year. We appreciate that trips can be costly, so we have capped the cost of each trip at £12. The Governors will subsidise each trip. Details will follow soon.



Important dates

To try and help you plan your diaries we have published on our website a calendar of events – a copy of which is also attached with this newsletter. Please note that there may be times when we have to alter or reschedule but we will notify you of those changes as they happen.