Autumn Term Newsletter

Governors of Ss Alban & Stephen Catholic Infant & Nursery School

Welcome

A warm welcome to the Governors' Newsletter for the Autumn Term 2016. Our aim is to keep you informed on governance matters and up to date on the school's performance.

Welcome also to all the new families that joined the school this term; we hope that your children have settled well and are enjoying their lessons and making new friends.

Finally, welcome to our new governors - Massimo Federici , Louise Forbes, Mrs Murphy and Marianne McMahon on her return from overseas.

Thank you

A big thank you to our headteacher, Mrs Dempsey, and her dedicated staff for their hard work this term. Every child is highly valued and carefully nurtured. This is apparent as soon as you enter the school and see how happy the children are. They are keen to learn and so proud to have their work displayed.

Thank you Frs TJ, Tom and Jimmy, Deacon Steve and Sister Anita for your spiritual guidance and contribution to the school, helping to build 'God's community of love and learning'.

Thanks also to the PTA for their fundraising enabling the purchase of extra school equipment which enhance pupils' experiences and their learning.

Diocesan News

The Diocese is proposing to convert all their Catholic Schools into Academies, many by the beginning of the next academic year. They propose that a number of Catholic Schools, both primary and secondary, be grouped together in Multi-Academy-Trusts (in our case there would be 17 schools in our MAT) and that these schools would then be responsible to a single Academy Trust Board of Directors. The Diocese intends to produce a paper for parents in March 2017. All these proposals emanate from the Diocese and not from school Governing Bodies. You can learn more about these plans (see Academy Strategy and Policy) at http://rcdow.org.uk/education/academies-/.

There are also a number of articles presenting alternative views on Academies e.g. there are several by the eminent and distinguished educationalist, Sir Peter Newsam. If you are interested in reading his views, these can be looked at online for example at http://www.newvisionsforeducation.org.uk/about-the-group/home/2011/11/16/towards-a-totalitarian-education-system-in-england-sir-peter-newsam/.

From our Head Teacher:

We've had the usual busy start to the academic year and welcomed new pupils to our Nursery and Reception classes. The children have settled well. We offered more flexible Nursery places this year which have proved popular. It has been a privilege, although something of a logistical challenge, to teach in Reception two days per week and has given me a unique opportunity to get to know all the children and families. Staff have been fantastic and I thank them for all their support. We're very proud of the transitions made by Years One and Two into their new classes.

In Nursery, we welcomed Mrs. Lloyd to the teaching team and Mrs. Realmuto and Ms. Ruff to new roles in school. In Key Stage One, we welcomed Miss Cannon to our teaching team. The new school website is up and running – Mrs Doherty has done an amazing job of retaining the character of our school and incorporating all the features parents asked for. Many thanks to her and the working party of Ms Lewis, Mrs Markovits, Mrs Reeves and Mr Smith, whose input was so valuable.

Breakfast club continues to thrive and we were delighted to launch Badgers, our after-school club, this term. We have a brilliant team of school staff, led by Ms Dickinson, who provide fun activities and a happy environment for Infant pupils until 6:10 every day. It's been a great success and the children really enjoy it.

We held a lovely Welcome Mass to bless all our new pupils in September and joined the Junior school and St John Fisher for the Advent Mass in the parish. Years One and Two spent a day each at Cuffley during 'Building Week' and we've held Anti-Bullying and eSafety weeks this term. We had a wonderful visit from some owls that inspired lots of excellent work. We had our first 'Open Classroom' on 11th November when we invited parents to come into class. It was a valuable opportunity for children to share what they're proud of and there was a positive buzz around the school - something we would love to repeat.

In recent weeks the children have impressed us with their singing, dancing and acting during Nativity performances. It really feels like Christmas and it has been a delight to see your pride in their achievements. Thank you for your support and encouragement. On behalf of all the staff, I wish you and your family all the blessings of Christmas and health and happiness for the New Year.

Committee News

We have two committees that meet every term in addition to our Full Governing Body meetings six times per year. All committees have met twice during the Autumn term and been engaged in the following activities:

Resources Committee:

The Resources Committee usually meets two times per term and deals with school premises, health and safety, staffing, budgeting and finances.

Safeguarding is a high priority and, following a comprehensive audit of Safeguarding earlier this year, Governors have now reviewed the school's statutory records to ensure that they are complete and up-to-date. Everyone coming into close contact with children at school is required to have an advanced DBS check. This includes all Governors. The school's Safeguarding policy has also been updated in line with new recommendations.

With respect to premises, an application has been made for Diocesan funding for the refurbishment of the nursery roof and for repairs to drains. Governors met with the Diocesan representative, Nigel Spears, to discuss the project and we are hopeful of having at least some of this work funded.

Other matters dealt with this term include consideration of the school development plan, meetings with our school improvement partner from Hertfordshire and presenting evidence that the school obtains good financial value in its purchases. Audited accounts (including The Governors' Building Fund) were also scrutinised and accepted.

Learning & Community

This committee deals with the school development and travel plans, curriculum, admissions and communication. New terms of reference have been drawn up for this committee. The committee usually meets twice per term The governors had a recent meeting in addition to the usual business meeting to discuss our vision for the direction of the school

- The admissions policy for 2018/19 has been discussed and agreed and approved by county and the diocese of Westminster
- Discussed the previous year's results and the steps that are being put in place to further improve standards of progress and attainment
- Discussed plans for improving the progress of children with Special Educational needs.

Attendance data (to Dec 1st 2015)

Morning Nursery (Mrs Lloyd & Mrs Smith)	90.0%
Afternoon Nursery (Mrs Lloyd & Mrs Smith)	90.6%
Class 1 (Mrs Dempsey & Mrs Murphy)	95.6%
Class 2 (Miss Ketley)	96.8%
Class 3 (Mrs Cooper & Mrs Parkinson)	97.8%
Class 4 (Miss Meloy)	97.6%
Class 5 (Mrs Tennant & Mrs Watters)	98.3%
Class 6 (Miss Cannon)	98.1%

The Governors wish you and your families a very happy Christmas with every success and happiness in 2017.

Ted Tarelli (Chair of Governors)