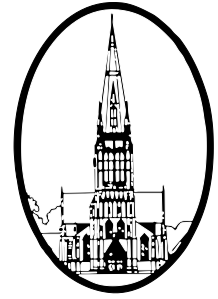


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**Headteacher: Jane O'Brien**

*"St Mary's... feeding the mind, body and spirit  
so we can be the best we can be."*

13<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Dear parents and carers,

Following our amazing Ofsted report, myself, governors and the school's senior leadership team have been looking at how best to build on our strengths as we prepare for our exciting future.

In saying that, it is also important to reflect on the fact that there are going to have to be some evolutions as we respond to changes both in our community and across the education sector. All London schools are, for example, having to manage a falling number of children. We also know that what is required of schools is constantly shifting, and pressure is also growing on our funding.

That is why we have worked to develop a plan to help our school to flourish for years to come. There are three key elements; Leadership, Structure and Opportunity and Innovation.

### Leadership

With my move to a school in Haringey, there has been understandable questions about who will lead the school moving forward. I hope that the following will put your minds at rest, knowing that the school is in safe, experienced and familiar hands!

Mrs McKelvey, who has been Deputy Headteacher at St Mary's for 13 years will be stepping up into the role of Headteacher in 2023 / 2024.

Mrs McKelvey has worked closely with me on the day-to-day management and strategic leadership over the past 10 years. She has much experience of leading the school when I am not on site. She is the 'face' of St Mary's, known to not only the children and families but also the wider community. She knows the routine, policies, procedures and most importantly 'you', the children and families that we serve. Mrs McKelvey will be supported in her first year of headship, as I was in my first year, by other local school leaders. I hope you will be pleased with this decision.



## Structure

The impact of having fewer children (a problem in all London boroughs) is being felt by many schools. Given that less children means less funding, we are all having to make changes accordingly. As a smaller school we are feeling the pressure, but we also have greater opportunity to look at how we respond to best support our children and our community.

After much research, we have been looking at best practice and ideas across the LDBS and other schools, and have decided we will be moving to a 'half form entry' model as of September 2023.

What does this mean?

In short, we will have mixed age classes. This is common across the country, not just in rural areas but increasingly common in London too.

For example, at St Mary's this academic year, we have had a family of learners from Nursery and Reception. They have worked together successfully with one teacher, Miss MacKay, and additional support staff. We will use this model, as it has been extremely successful, with these classes.

- From September we will move to a mixed Year 1 and 2 class (Key Stage 1), Year 3 and 4 class (Lower Key Stage 2) and 5 and 6 class (Upper Keys stage 2), as well as keeping our mixed Nursery and Reception class (EYFS).
- We will have four classes in total.
- There will be four familiar teachers, one for each class.
- We will have familiar support staff in every class.
- We will have a compliment of other staff as we have now, e.g. Spanish Teacher, Singing teacher, SENco etc.

I appreciate that this is a significant change – and where there is change there will be questions and concerns. Given the changes in our community, however, this move gives us the best education offer coupled with the platform to ensure that our school will thrive for generations to come. There are some real benefits for the children.

- There can be a greater sense of co-operation and opportunities to work with a wider circle of children and opportunities to build bigger social groups and develop friendships.
- Having mixed year groups working together can have a positive impact on children academically. We will be able to further challenge some children and further support those that may need more help with broader differentiated tasks.
- Children benefit in many ways from the opportunity to become a positive role model which the younger children often aspire to.



- Mixed grouping can enhance and nurture deeper thinking and problem-solving skills across all subject areas.
- In English, mixed grouping allows for a wider range of vocabulary to be taught and children to learn stronger social and verbal competences. Children can become strong communicators using language often beyond their current year group.

We understand that this is a lot to digest and that you may have some questions – which is why we are always here to answer any questions you might have.

### Opportunity and Innovation

We are embracing the changes that are needed to support the next chapter of St Mary's proud history, that is why we will be building on our strengths to enable the school to thrive successfully into the future.

As part of this, we are looking at innovative ways to use our buildings and resources to help generate further funds to help offer a broader education experience for our children and provide a place for our community to meet and flourish. This is something that will happen over time, but it is an important change for our school.

If you have questions or concerns about any of the above, in the first instance, please do not hesitate to contact myself or Mrs McKelvey.

Kind regards

Jane O'Brien  
Headteacher

