

Annual Church Report – St. Mary’s C.E Primary School

It has been another busy and successful year for the school. All year groups were full and the walls in the classrooms and corridors were jam-packed with excellent examples of pupils’ work, photos and artwork. Our six core values; perseverance, truthfulness, friendship, respect, trust and compassion and our three core skills: effort, respect and safe were reinforced wherever you looked.

Here are a few of the many news highlights.

Governance

This year we said goodbye and thank you to Gill Gibson for her sterling work on the Governing Board. Her legacy of promoting curriculum, inclusion and safeguarding activities in the school is much appreciated by her colleagues. In Gill’s place we welcomed Ralph Meloy onto the Board. Ralph is a regular member of our congregation and brings a wealth of experience to the team.

The Governing Board is always looking to improve its ways of working and this year saw the creation of two new committees: Finance & Premises and People & Pay (FPP) and Curriculum, Safeguarding and Inclusion (CSI). Each governor sits on one of these committees and this structure has generated real focus on these important areas.

In order to play their strategic role it is important that the governors really get to know the school and how it operates. To help this happen we hold Governor Days three times a year where governors visit the school for a whole day sitting in classes and talking to staff and pupils to get their opinions of life at St Mary’s.

Bishop Roger’s School Visit



In the previous year we made a significant change to the fabric of the building by adding two new cabins at the rear of the school to house a new library and much needed meeting rooms which could be used for 1:1 pupil support. News of this success story reached Bishop Roger and he agreed to make a visit to the school to bless the new facilities. This was a big day for all involved. The children listened attentively to his interesting and amusing speech and joined in with the blessing prayers.

Courageous Advocacy

This is a new, big initiative promoted by the Diocese as part of the Church of England schools' promotion of Christian Distinctiveness. It sets out to encourage the children to stand up and speak out for things they think are important, and often difficult, in the world and to back this up with supportive action.

The initiative is in its infancy and we are all learning the process together. There is a strong desire to get the children to come up with the list of topics to concentrate on and for them to then drive the activities to support their passions. Various aspects of the 'green' agenda are popular and also the desire for all children to be treated fairly no matter their gender, colour, religion etc.

Courageous Advocacy will be an important focus in the coming year.

Drumming Workshop



Last September Jeff Rich of Status Quo fame came to St Mary's to run a drumming workshop for the whole school. He talked about how he got into the music business, shared some facts about his music and some interesting 'behind the scenes' information.

He then talked about the history of the drum, starting with African then European drums, old military drums and right up to the modern snare drums.

The children were invited to play some of the drums and Jeff demonstrated some drumming techniques. The whole essence of the workshop was to inspire the children and show them that music is a fun thing to do.

Grow 10



This fundraising initiative was launched last September. The ambitious campaign was driven by the children's School Council, with some help from the staff, with the aim of raising £6,000 to be used to help upgrade the school's computing infrastructure and equipment.

At its heart was asking each child to show their creative and entrepreneurial skills by turning a £1 coin into £10. If successful this would deliver £2,100.

There were many fundraising ideas including selling cakes, washing cars, dog walking, sponsored walks or bike rides, asking businesses for donations and selling unwanted toys.

When Grow 10 was brought to a close the total raised was a whopping £6,093.35 nearly three times the original target. What a fantastic effort by the children with no doubt a little support from parents too who should all be proud of their wonderful achievement. The upgrading of our IT infrastructure is now well underway.

School Performance

Pleasingly, the pupils have continued to perform admirably in their Key Assessment areas compared to other primary schools in Essex, as well as nationally. Notably our Year 1 pupils achieved an 83% Phonics Check score (above Essex and National) in June 2024 and in their Year 6 SATs tests, our pupils achieved scores of 82% in Maths, 88% in Reading, 74% in Writing and 76% in SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar) – all well above the national comparators.

In summary, the school continues to flourish. It is well led by the Headteacher and his team and well supported by St. Mary's church. I'd also like to thank the excellent team of governors who give their time so generously.

John Westnedge, Chair of Governors.