

St. Mary's C of E Primary School – Annual Report 2023

2023 proved to be a huge year for the school with the highlights being the Ofsted Inspection and the completion of building and energy saving works at the school.

Our last Ofsted Inspection was back in November 2017. Typically, schools have repeat inspections within 4 years so we were long overdue. The school had been properly prepared for well over a year and so it came as some relief when the inspection was at last scheduled for 23 and 24 May. I'm very pleased to say that the inspection went very smoothly and the school was awarded a very solid 'good' rating by the inspector. The best way of illustrating the school's performance is to share an extract from the inspector's report.

'Pupils enjoy attending this small school. They learn and play together in a safe and supportive environment. The school's values of respect and compassion are demonstrated by all. This is a school where all are valued and differences are well respected. Pupils and parents/carers appreciate the teaching, support and high standards that exist at the school. There is a strong feeling of teamwork from leaders, teachers, support staff and governors, which supports pupils well..... Pupils behave well in lessons and move around the school calmly and appropriately as a result..... Pupil and parent surveys reveal an overwhelmingly positive response about the school. St. Mary's provides a happy and supportive school environment and a broad, engaging and well-taught curriculum, which prepares pupils well for secondary school and for life in modern Britain'.

The Headteacher, all school staff and the governing body were justifiably proud of these totally independent comments which reflected the enormous effort and commitment applied over a period of around 18 months waiting for the 'call'. What is also pleasing about the inspector's comments is that they put equal emphasis on the pastoral care the school provides as much as the academic input. Exactly what a church school wants to hear.

In recent years one of the school's strengths has been its strong performance in supporting children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). We have an excellent team which allows us to achieve this but unfortunately this creates a problem with lack of space for 1 to 1 interventions with the children concerned. The school leadership team along with the governors have been trying to solve this financial problem for a couple of years. At last, 2023 saw a breakthrough. After months of lobbying, the Chelmsford Diocese and Essex County Council's Education Board agreed to fund a good proportion of the cost to build two cabins connected to the rear of the



school. The school made up the balance by using its reserves, saved over many years, and kind contributions from the Parent Teachers Association.

So again, a real team effort.

The buildings opened at the end of 2023 and are in full use. We have a new, fully kitted out library, an office for the SEN staff and meeting rooms for them to use with pupils. This has made a massive difference to the school's ability to provide support it badly wants to be able give to the children. Thanks must go to all contributors who have enabled this to happen.

One other 'infrastructure' highlight in 2023 has been the Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation project which has seen the installation of new solar panels which will provide free electricity for the school, an air-source heat pump to replace our outdated boiler, new roof insulation and LED lighting throughout the



school. This has all been self-funded by an energy efficiency grant. All these features will generate savings to the school budget which can then be redirected to expenditure which will generate direct pupil benefit.



Apologies if this has all been a bit of a 'businessy' update but rest assured the school children have been actively involved in church activities and fund-raising activities too. The Easter Service, Remembrance Day and Christmas Carol Service were all well attended by our very well behaved and highly vocal pupils.



Food donations which provided 60 meals for the foodbank to distribute and a fun run which raised over £3000 for charity are just 2 examples of the great effort and support the children and their parents/carers give to the community.

I feel very privileged to be associated with our wonderful church school.

John Westnedge – Chair of Governors.

