

## Annual Church Report 2022 – St Mary's C of E Primary School

2022 started in similar vein to how 2021 finished with the Covid virus severely impacting the normal operation of the school. At its peak in the Spring Term around 20% of both staff and pupils were having to self-isolate at home. The teachers and support staff did a brilliant job keeping the school open and safe and providing home learning for the children. They showed great flexibility, ingenuity and commitment to keep education alive in extremely challenging and stressful circumstances. Indeed thanks go to the whole school community as parents/carers and the children themselves played their part in overcoming the many difficulties faced.

January saw a change of the chair of the school board of governors with John Westnedge, a foundation governor, replacing Vicky Boraster-Sharpe who was a parent governor. Later in the year a long standing governor well known in St Mary's Church circles, Richard Peet, also retired from the board. Both Vicky and Richard served the school brilliantly with dedication, commitment and cheerfulness. More details about the Board of Governors can be found on the school website – [www.stmaryssw.org.uk](http://www.stmaryssw.org.uk).

Just as the school was getting through the Covid disruption, towards the end of February, the next incident blew in. Huge storms, cold winds and even hail caused damage to the school with trees blown over and large roofing panels from the reception outdoor play area found many metres away on the sports field. Fortunately, all was resolved quickly and a far more secure structure put in place.

Thank goodness it's wasn't all doom and gloom. Being a pupil at St Mary's comes with lots of good things too. The school plays host to many visitors during the year who come to supplement the academic part of the curriculum for the children. Two such visits were from James Ketchell the explorer and two local police constables Jasmine Thorndyke and Conor Fields.



James is the only person to have climbed Mt Everest, cycled round the world and rowed solo across the Atlantic in succession. He thrilled and engaged the children with stories of his adventures around the world emphasising the importance of some of the school's values of resilience, perseverance and kindness. He also brought along lots of his kit for the children to try on and even got them to try some of his special dried adventurer food.



The two police constables came to bring to life examples of careers open to children when they leave school so they are better informed about choices available to them. Their talk also homed in on two of our school values – respect and trust – and so helped the pupils understand the different roles and activities that police officers have to fulfil whilst on duty.

The school believes it is equally important to take the children out of school to visit places of interest to reinforce their learning in the classroom. Two such visits were to Colchester Zoo and the local reading library.



The zoo provided the opportunity to see wild animals at close quarters. The penguins, giraffes, elephants, rhinos, lions, tigers and monkeys were the favourites. The children learned about the animals' homeland including terrain and climate, habitat and diet and a whole lot more.



The autumn term of 2022 saw the launch of the Essex Year of Reading which is a countywide campaign to help children discover a love of reading and ensure every child can read at their age level or better. It's part of a programme to help children recover from the possible impact of Covid. The school's response to this initiative was to



arrange a visit to Saffron Walden Library for each class in the school and it is hoped that there will be a visit for each class

every term. The children will learn how books are filed on the shelves by subjects or categories and test their learning with quizzes and 'find that book' challenges. It is hoped that most children will join the library as a result of these visits.

Finally a few points on school performance in 2022.

The school's GLD results (for Reception pupils) and also our phonics results (for pupils in Year 1) were excellent and above national percentages – which was a fantastic achievement bearing in mind many of these young pupils have missed a substantial portion of their classroom teaching during the various COVID lockdowns. The end of Key Stage 1 SATs assessments also bore out really solid results – and the children should be really proud of the progress they have made in challenging times. Moreover, pupils in Year 4 did incredibly well in the Multiplication tests in June and our Year 6 pupils also performed brilliantly and outscored all national scores, reflecting some consistent 'hard graft' during their time at the school.

During the year, we also introduced our three key words: Safe, Effort and Respect. It was great to see that these important concepts are already firmly embedded in the school and, pleasingly, the children's behaviour continues to be brilliant with lots of outstanding examples of politeness and good manners on show whenever we visit the school.

So, all-in-all, the year saw the school strike a really good balance between classroom (and home) learning and real world experiences. It's a happy school!