



**W**elcome to the latest newsletter from St Mary's Governing Body, and in particular to our new Year 3 parents and carers. We aim to keep you up-to-date, via regular newsletters, on the work that the governors do to support our children and staff. As we approach the end of the year, the Governors would like to wish you a merry Christmas and happy 2016.

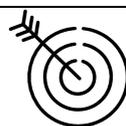
**Autumn Term Activities:** These are some examples of the work that your school governors have been involved in:



## Policy Reviews:

Each term, the Committees review a number of school policies, to ensure they are up-to-date and relevant. Statutory and curriculum policies are available on the [school website](#). Other policies can be viewed by request at the school office. This term the following policies were reviewed:

-  Safer Recruitment
-  Alcohol, Drugs & Gambling at Work
-  Flexible Working
-  Employee Code of Conduct
-  Child Protection
-  More Able & Talented Children
-  Supporting Children with Medical Needs
-  Equality Scheme



## School Development and Improvement Plans:

Both plans have been agreed with governors, and each Governor has been assigned one or two objectives to monitor with staff throughout the year. Both Plans are available to view via the [governors' pages](#) on the school website.

## Schoolgateway

If you use the School Gateway facility to make payments – thank you! This is a very efficient tool and saves the school time compared to cash or cheque payments (although all payments are, of course, welcome!) As with all electronic methods of payment, there is a small charge to the school when a credit or debit card is used. If you could use the bank credit transfer option instead, the school is charged less. Every little helps!

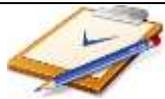


## Parent Consultation Evenings – Q&As:

Thank you to everyone who gave feedback to governors on topics they would like to know more about. In this edition of the newsletter, we cover disciplinary procedures, pupil assessment and homework policy. In future editions, we will cover school library procedures, break and lunchtime procedures, and being a voluntary controlled school. Additionally we've worked with Mr Cosslett to provide answers to the questions that were raised on the night, see below:

<i>Can the lunchtime student rotation be reviewed, as my child sometimes doesn't have time to finish her meal?</i>	We have reviewed this and, on the busiest school meal days (Wednesday and Friday), we have lengthened lunchtime by 15 minutes. There is no afternoon break on these days.
<i>Can Years 5 and 6 have bigger school meal portions?</i>	Children can request more, especially vegetables or salad, if they wish.
<i>Can parents email St Mary's teachers directly?</i>	We don't have this facility, however, you can phone the office 01920 463641 or email the school at <a href="mailto:admin@stmarys306.herts.sch.uk">admin@stmarys306.herts.sch.uk</a> and ask for a teacher to contact you.
<i>Can an induction be held for new parents, to cover subjects such as homework or reading?</i>	We cover this at the Year 3 new intake parents' evening in July each year, before the children join.
<i>Is there a facility for lending musical instruments?</i>	The school doesn't currently operate a lending or loaning service. We suggest speaking directly to Herts College of Music.
<i>Can we have homework briefings to parents?</i>	We don't have any group parent briefings planned at the moment, but please do talk to your class teacher if you have questions about homework.
<i>Do we have a nurturing policy?</i>	Our <a href="#">key values and aims</a> are built around a nurturing principle, and our aims are supported by our <a href="#">child protection policy</a> . All can be found on our school website.
<i>Can more activities be laid on by the after-school club?</i>	Although based on St Mary's premises, the after-school club is an independent organisation. Please give any feedback directly to the provider.
<i>Can holiday/half-term clubs be provided?</i>	We recommend and promote Chauncy school's holiday clubs. In addition, Steve Holman's football academy operates from St Mary's during most holidays.

**Feedback to Governors:** At the parent evenings, you asked for more information on 1) Pupil Assessment 2) Discipline, and 3) Homework within St Mary's.



### 1) Pupil Assessment:

Assessment is a complex area. Teachers use a variety of key strategies to support assessment. This may include teacher in-class marking and feedback, child self-marking, child peer-marking, distance marking, and the use of school and standardised tests to help make judgements about how children are doing against the new national curriculum objectives. The [Assessment Policy](#) is available on the school website. If you have individual questions about assessment, you are always welcome to speak to your class teacher or the headteacher.



**2) Discipline:** Children are taught what is unacceptable behaviour at school, and are made aware of the consequences. The school recognises that some children have social, emotional and behaviour difficulties that will be taken into consideration. The key is a positive working relationship between the children and their teachers. A range of sanctions are available to reinforce expectations and are used as 'fit for purpose' according to the inappropriate behaviour and the needs of the individual child:

- ✚ withdrawal of privileges
- ✚ timeout including removal from class to minimise disruption to other children's learning
- ✚ missed breaktimes for reflection, discussion or to complete work,
- ✚ verbal or written self-evaluations
- ✚ letters of apology
- ✚ behaviour charts
- ✚ held back for 10 minutes at the end of the school day
- ✚ detention
- ✚ exclusion

There is a lot more information available via the [Behaviour Policy](#), available on the website.



### 3) Homework:

The [homework policy](#) can be found on the curriculum pages of the website. The policy is due for review next year, and we are currently reviewing our practice, which will be reflected in the policy next summer. Following a recent Learning and Teaching committee meeting, staff have had the first of their planned meetings on homework, focusing on spelling. Clear expectations for differentiation, tasks and time were shared with staff, alongside sharing resources and best practice in the school. There are other staff meetings on homework planned in the spring and summer terms. In the January INSET day, staff will be introduced to Spellodrome, an excellent on-line spelling homework website, which we have been successfully trialling in Year Six this half term.

#### **The Role of Parents**

We greatly value the help and support parents, carers and guardians can give to their children at home. We appreciate the constraints that there sometimes are on this important time and hope that our policy for this key area of your child's academic life provides appropriate guidance.

It is helpful if parents discuss with their children the following questions:-

- When is it a good time to do any homework?
- Where is the best place for homework to be done?
- What helps concentration?
- How long should my homework take me?
- Should I ask for help with my homework, even when it is finishing work started in class?
- Who should I ask for help and how much help should I expect?

Further guidance is available in the front of the children's home-school diary.

It is vital that parents display a positive attitude to homework and value its importance. It's also important for parents to recognise that it is the children's responsibility to complete the learning. The boundary between what many parents see as constructive help, and what children view as interference is indistinct and can vary from day to day. Parents need to listen to the child's explanation of what they have to do and discuss the work their child is doing and whether or not help is needed plus what form this might take.

If parents have any problems or questions about homework, please, in the first instance, contact your child's class teacher or make a note in your child's home-school diary.