

# St Mark's School

(Church of England Controlled Primary)

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Dear Parents and Carers,

This is the final newsletter for the Autumn Term from the IEB (Interim Executive Board) appointed to St Mark's Church of England School. It has been a very busy time for all the staff and children culminating in the wonderful Christmas festivities that you will be sharing this week. The Christian identity of the school is particularly apparent at this time of year. With this in mind, teachers have visited other schools to see and learn from examples of good practice in raising this very important feature of St Mark's identity throughout the year. We have noticed that this key element of the school's ethos is clearer for all, through vibrant entrance displays, enthusiastic singing and inclusive Christmas events.

As we progress and develop our school, Mrs Harding leads in her role as Acting Head Teacher and we would like to congratulate her and Mr Henderson in directing the school through the many challenges of this term. Mrs Whitehead continues her absence and we wish her a speedy recovery in the New Year.

Behaviour across the school continues to improve and all staff are maintaining a consistent approach to children's interactions around school and in classrooms. The playground is a calmer environment for everyone; Mr Henderson and Mrs Harding regularly talk to children about their relationships with others at these times of independence. As Governors, we have sought the views of children, particularly at lunch time. They confidently and willingly tell us about how happy and enthusiastic they are with the school's reward systems. Parents tell us they notice that staff are present on the playground just before school and they appreciate this immediate contact.

It has been important for us as Governors to monitor carefully how any changes to the school curriculum have had an impact. This half term we focussed on the introduction of the new scheme, Power Maths. With a clear agenda, we spent a morning visiting all classes and joining in with children's lessons in Mathematics. We sat amongst the children and asked them to tell us about the new scheme, how it worked and how it had impacted on their Maths learning. They were very forthcoming about the key features. Here are some of their comments:

- Yr 2 **'it's much more entertaining now and it gets harder every day so I like it.'**
- Yr 4 **'I really like the challenge bits!'**
- Yr 5 **'I like working out on my whiteboard and using the equipment'**
- Yr 6 **'it's hard getting used to the new maths language but we really help each other to solve problems'**

After our visit, we met with the Mathematics leader, Miss Moore and Mrs Harding to feedback on our findings. It was pleasing to see the positivity from teaching staff and children on this recent innovation. We know that further staff training is planned and another update on progress next term will be scheduled.

Mrs Harding and Mr Henderson have taken many 'learning walks' around school, most recently looking at the quality of teaching in Reading. As Governors, this will be the focus of our monitoring visit next term. We also intend to look at pupil attendance and the school's approach to tackling this problem which is a key area for improvement.

The conversion process to become part of the CDAT Academy group is making good progress with the hope for completion by the Spring Term. Mr Dixon, the Head Teacher from CDAT, has visited our school and continues to offer advice and practical support. As an example of this, a CDAT Business Manager has already started to prepare, streamline and update the school's business systems.

In the last weeks you will have received a Parent Questionnaire from the school based on Ofsted guidelines that we would be very grateful if you could return. Your responses will enable us to identify any areas of school life that we need to focus on in the future to continue to enable rapid progress in your children's learning. The more information we receive, the more meaningful and accurate will be our analysis when we feed back to you.

Finally, as Christmas approaches and children take part in all the exciting celebrations, we hope that you and your family have a peaceful and joyous time.

Thank you for your continued support to our school.

Carol Williams  
Chair of the IEB