



ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Mrs. R. Akehurst

Thursday 26th May 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

Headteacher and Governor Forum – Monday 23rd May 2022

Thank you to those who were able to attend the meeting with myself, the governors, CEO of Frassati Trust and the Portsmouth Diocese Director of Education on Monday evening. Whilst this meeting was originally planned to discuss the swimming pool, I am most grateful for the opportunity we all had to discuss a much wider matter of community at St Mary's.

To be able to celebrate the diverse, passionate, talented and committed team we have was a real delight. The Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways and undoubtedly the intervention was welcome and left us all with a positive feeling for the future – a future where we all work together for the benefit of the children in our wonderful school and share a commitment to doing all we can to enable our children to be the best they can be and valuing each and every one of them as individuals.

We appreciate that many of you were unable to attend due to the short notice, but I hope this summary will give you an idea of the issues raised and the plans we have agreed together. The theme throughout this letter is one of partnership and I look forward to leading a school where this is valued.

For those of you unable to attend, here are the main points that were shared and those agreed for moving forward:

Community

- From next academic year, a termly Headteacher's forum will be added to the school calendar, the focus of which will be shared with parents in advance and allow meaningful discussion and debate in order to support the school development. **This will be led by the Senior Leadership Team and Governors, and staff and parents are invited to attend.** Minutes will be made available to all parents of these meetings.
- A request was made to reintroduce class reps, which we support, and a protocol will be agreed with the Headteacher and the Chair of FOSM
- It was very clear that we have a wealth of skills within the school community and parents at the meeting have agreed to establish working parties which utilise the talents and support the school in projects going forward. **The first of these will be the Swimming Pool Working Party** and advice and support was also offered for communications and media within, across and from the school.
- It was acknowledged that the school has had a lot of change over recent years. The Headteacher and Governors are new to the school, with most governors recruited to the board from January 2021 or after, and the Headteacher from January 2022. We are unable to change the past, but the leadership of the school are committed to working with the school community to rebuild trust, to be transparent and honest and to make this school one of the best in the area.
- It is now time to look forward with positivity and support one another on this journey for the children – as that is what they deserve.

Swimming Pool

- **The school leadership recognises the importance of a broad and balanced curriculum. There have been discussions with governors about the condition of the pool but there were never any plans to remove it. Unfortunately, this current situation is purely one which is beyond our immediate control and needs to be addressed this calendar year.**
- In consultation with the governors, the swimming pool will not be open this academic year for health and safety reasons, these are as follows:
 - The outside of the pool is not safe, due to the poor condition of the slabs and two pipes that are sticking out at the back of the pool – which are a trip hazard.
 - An uncertain supply of key chemicals e.g., chlorine, due to the war. The supplier could not guarantee when we would receive delivery. Without these chemicals it is not safe to use the pool.
 - There is a significant leak, which has the potential to introduce contamination, which is a significant health risk to anyone considering using the pool. Until the location of the leak is discovered, this poses a huge concern.
 - An initial independent inspection of the swimming and surrounding area has been undertaken by Focus Leisure, with the Chief Executive and the health and safety lead visiting the site. They both have expressed serious concerns about the state of the swimming pool and the plant room. They also confirmed that they would not take on the pool (if asked) in its current state. They have recommended an inspection, at an approximate cost of £16,000, with a view to further work costing a minimum of £10,000 to get it up to an acceptable standard for our children to use.
 - The original pool maintenance company's contractors are unwilling to continue support due to the state of disrepair.
- In addition to this, the school has been hit by the rise in costs of chemicals and oil to heat the pool. As a result of the leak, an increase in water is currently having to be used to keep the pool topped up, which is an unavoidable essential.
- As mentioned above, a working party will be established to assess the viability and feasibility of the pool going forward. This will be presented to the Headteacher, Governors and shared with the wider parent body.
- We will make every effort to reinstate the use of the swimming pool for next academic year, however we are unable to make a commitment to do so until we have all the information to hand.
- In the meantime, the headteacher is looking at ways to support the children in Upper Juniors (particularly Year 6) who have not yet managed to achieve learning to swim 25m. There will be no other swimming offered to children in other year groups at this stage.
- Anyone who may have the skills to support us in undertaking the work to either investigate, manage or support this project to get the pool up and running for next academic year are very welcome to pass your details on to the office. We propose a meeting at St Mary's on **Thursday 9th June, 6pm** for all those who express an interest when a project manager from the parent body can be elected, and the task can get underway.

Summer Use

It is also acknowledged that the pool has a much wider benefit to the community during the summer holiday period, perhaps more so in the current economic climate. We are saddened that we cannot support families this summer but Claire Robinson, Governor and Headteacher of Holme Grange School in Wokingham, has offered the use of her swimming pool one day per week during the school holidays, should the FOSM pool club wish to use it. This would be on the condition that a qualified lifeguard was provided by FOSM for these sessions.

In addition, we are also reaching out to St Edmund Campion, to see if they have any availability for our school to use their pool both during curriculum time and or over the school summer holidays. The CEO of the Frassati MAT has agreed to discuss this with both schools so that the possibility of a temporary shared resource could be mutually agreed.

A meeting that was called to address discontent and disappointment within the community, has resulted in a positive plan of action going forward and this commitment is shown by the fact that this letter comes from the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and The Chair of FOSM.

Thank you – let’s work together to make this wonderful community even better.

Kind regards

Rosie Akehurst

Mrs. Rosie Akehurst
Headteacher

Marius Hopley

Mr. Marius Hopley
Chair of Governors

Shelley Collins

Mrs. Shelly Collins
Chair of FOSM

Louise Rance

Mrs. Louise Rance
Chair of the Pool Club