

St Mary's C.E. Primary School

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Headteacher: Mr Calvin Henry



Wednesday 7th September 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

We hope this letter finds you well, that you and your children had a lovely summer holiday and that your children have settled well once again into the life of St Mary's. Also, a very special welcome to all new families to our school.

As you may recall, Ofsted, the organisation that inspects schools, visited St Mary's earlier in the year at the end of March. We now want to take a moment to update you on the outcome of our inspection.

While there are areas where our school was rightly praised, we want to let you know that the inspection was a difficult one. While we are always very open and listen to all feedback, we had some real questions and concerns about how the inspectors came to some of the conclusions they did. This is why we want to write a longer letter than we usually would, just to explain the outcome to you.

There is much in the Ofsted report that we agree with and support. The Inspectors noted that:

- *Pupils who attend the Church Lane site and younger pupils at the school's other site in Rectory Gardens enjoy school.*
- *The curriculum is well planned and helps pupils to learn important ideas and produce work of good quality.*
- *Pupils enjoy participating in after-school activities such as sports, gymnastics, coding, drama and music.*
- *Pupils take on additional responsibilities through membership of the school council and benefit from contributing to the local community.*
- *Leaders have ensured the curriculum is organised so that pupils revisit important ideas. This helps them apply their understanding to more challenging concepts.*
- *Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are accurately identified. These pupils are well supported to access the same curriculum as their peers. This is because staff make sure their tasks and resources are adapted to meet their needs.*
- *The curriculum has been designed to consider pupils' personal development. Pupils are encouraged to stay physically and emotionally safe and are taught to value and celebrate diversity.*
- *Governors have a secure understanding of the quality of education provided to pupils.*

The inspectors also raised some useful points about teaching and learning. We are always, for example, looking at further improving reading. Some of the feedback in this area already links in with our ongoing plans, within which we are making strong progress. This year, our children's phonics and reading results in Years 1 & 2 respectively, are above national averages. We are proud of our children's achievements!

This being said, the inspectors also raised issues linked to safeguarding, behaviour and how concerns are managed by our school.

We want to stress that ensuring your children's happiness and safety at St Mary's is at the heart of everything that we do. However, as with any school, we have previously had a small number of issues where a minority of our older children have used inappropriate language, particularly as they are learning about the boundaries of what is right and wrong. We treat any such incidents extremely seriously, and it is with a sense of sadness that we were not given the proper opportunity to show this to the inspectors.

Once Ofsted has concerns about aspects of safeguarding, there is usually only one judgement that they can reach. As a result, the outcome is that the school has been graded as Inadequate overall. We do not think this a fair judgement on our school. In saying this, we do not want to come across as being dismissive of the feedback. We listen and we act where it is in the best interests of our children. There are indeed some areas for us to strengthen and we have already taken action where needed. Also, we will send out in the newsletter an overview of our school improvement priorities for 2022-23 within the next couple of weeks so you can learn about any additional steps we are taking.

Of course, this is not the outcome that any of us at St Mary's expected and we do not feel that it in any way reflects our school, our brilliant children and our school community. Just as an example, 96% of you told us that your children are happy and feel safe in our school, and a similar percentage of you said that you would recommend us to other parents. This also reflects what our children say to us through children's surveys.

We have spent much time and energy challenging Ofsted's findings through their Complaints Process, albeit with little success. This is why it has taken so long to get the final Ofsted report to you. We could spend additional and considerable time and money trying to fight this outcome further, since we have concerns about many aspects of the conduct, process and findings of the inspection. Alternatively, we can address the concerns raised and make sure that the next time that Ofsted inspects us, their judgement accurately reflects our many strengths and strong school values. We believe that this is the right approach.

The Ofsted report for our school is now available on the school's website ahead of its official publication tomorrow (Thursday 8th September). [Click here](#).

We understand that there will be questions and comments once you have read the report. This is why we will be having a meeting to discuss the report and the implications of it at a meeting at our school on **Tuesday 13th September at 6pm in the hall at our Rectory Gardens site.**

In the meantime, please be assured that **your children are safe and happy at our school** and that St Mary's continues to be fully committed to ever-improving the quality of provision and in-school experiences for your children at every level. As your headteacher and Chair of Governors, we will drive this forward relentlessly to ensure that the great school that we were yesterday and are today, will continue to become ever better tomorrow and beyond.

This letter is one that I was hoping I would never have had to write to you. So finally, thank you. Your ongoing support for our school will be hugely appreciated.

Calvin Henry

Headteacher and Chair of Governors.