

7 November 2019

Dear Parent / Carer

Please find enclosed a copy of the Inspection Report from Ofsted following our inspection on 24-25 September. We would like to invite you to a meeting at the school on Thursday 21 November at 6.00pm at which we will be able to hear your comments and answer your questions.

As are the Governors, Senior Leaders and staff, we are sure you will be disappointed that St Mary's has not yet secured a positive judgement from Ofsted. We were pleased that the inspectors noted some positive practice during their time at the school. They recognised our work to make our children feel safe and to ensure they enjoy school, our efforts in providing emotional support to our children and judged our safeguarding to be effective. The inspectors also recognised some areas of improved practice in Phonics and Maths and noted that the end of Y6 results for 2019 are far higher than previous years, and amongst the best in the Local Authority.

That said however, the inspectors delivered a strong message that the pace of school improvement has to be swiftly and sustainably driven forward to raise and stabilise the quality of learning for all of our children. This is something to which the Governors and Staff at St Mary's have affirmed their commitment since the receipt of this report.

As you may be aware, a judgement of Inadequate requires the Local Authority to work with the school and Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) for the South West to convert the school to academy status, brokering a sponsorship agreement with a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). The MAT will then provide the required support to achieve the rapid and sustained school improvement needed at the school.

We shared with you back in the summer our considerations around converting to academy status in order to connect St Mary's directly to the school improvement offer available in our local MATs. Since our inspection the RSC has indicated they would be interested to hear the outcomes of that work, as they move ahead with their process to identify our future sponsor partner. We cannot, of course, give you any further detail on this at this time but assure you we will keep you informed as soon as we have any further information.

As advised above, we will be holding a meeting for all parents / carers at 6.00pm on Thursday 21 November in the school hall. Attending this meeting will be members of the IGB (including our supporting NLE Alun Williams), Senior Leaders and representatives from the Local Authority and Diocese. We will be able to answer your questions and provide any more information that has become available in the interim relating to our future MAT sponsor. If you wish to submit questions beforehand, please do so either via the School Office or directly to CoG@st-marystimsbury.bathnes.sch.uk. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please do not hesitate to contact us and please be assured that we will circulate all information shared at that meeting as soon as possible thereafter, certainly within a week.

We understand this judgement is a difficult message to receive and are disappointed to have to deliver it. However, we are very grateful for our staff's professional and determined response to this judgement and know that this mindset will go some way to moving the school to where it needs to be. We will welcome the support of a successful local MAT in securing rapid and sustainable school improvement, which is what our children deserve. We very much hope that after our meeting you will have the information you need that enables you to join us in a whole community response to this judgement, ensuring the swiftest possible turnaround for the children at the school.

In the meantime, we would be grateful for your understanding and ask that you please bring your questions directly to us rather than post them in social media forums that we will not see. This will allow us to address them honestly and openly for all members of our community to hear. We hope our continued commitment to transparency will help you to ask any questions you feel need answering. We are keen to avoid any potentially damaging rumours at what is an unsettling time for our community and ask you to support us in this. We believe this is the right way to move swiftly towards a more secure future for St Mary's.

We recognise that you will rightly have questions and concerns and are pleased that there are supportive relationships in the parent and carer community here that can only help as you process this inspection judgement. However, we do please ask that conversations about this report are held in the appropriate forums and with mindfulness that our staff and children are still working together every day. Thank you for your support with this.

We look forward to seeing you on 21 November.

With kind regards,

Ruth Balch & Claire Hudson
Acting Co-Chairs
Interim Governing Board