



THE BATT C.E. SCHOOL



## THE BATT CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Dear Families

I can't quite believe that I am coming to the end of my first academic year working in support of St. Mary's Infants and The Batt. They say time flies when you're having fun, and although I wouldn't necessarily characterize the whole year in that way, it's certainly made me happy to see both schools returning to something much more like their pre-covid selves in what they are offering to children.

Across both schools, in the summer term alone we've enjoyed; May Dancing, trips outside of school, residential, sports days, productions and summer fayres and, although there is still more to do in developing the wider offer of both schools, these activities feel like a good way to end the year.

As always, I'd like to say an enormous thank you to staff who have worked hard to ensure such activities can take place, alongside their usual teaching commitment and the further demands I've placed on them in terms of school development. I'd also like to say a particular thank you to Mrs Harding-Jones and Miss Atkinson for their dedication in leading each school through a transitionary and challenging year.

I would also like to thank staff and parents and carers for the support you've all shown me in my first year as part of the St. Mary's and The Batt communities.

Below is a roundup of some of the priorities we've been working on this year and a glimpse of those we'll be looking at in the future.

In the meantime, I would like to wish you all a lovely relaxing summer.

### **Building/Site Improvements**

Building and site improvement works continue at both schools.

At St. Mary's we have recently seen the replacement of the boiler in Reception, which should ensure a toasty time for all next winter and we are also planning repair works to the school roof and refurbishment of the hall floor.

At The Batt the collapsed flooring in the rear link corridor has now been repaired and the area refurbished with new cupboards. This corridor and two others serving the Lower Juniors will also be redecorated over the summer, along with three classrooms in this part of school. Funding has also been secured from ODST for further replacement windows, a replacement boiler and updated lighting over the next 18 months or so.



## Curriculum Development

A focus this year, particularly at The Batt, has been developing the curriculum to ensure children's learning is effectively sequenced and allows for progression in all subject areas. I am pleased to say that we will start September in both schools with a clear intent of what children will be expected to learn across core and wider subjects and we'll be continuing work on how best to ensure children meet these expectations and retain core learning as they move through school.

Further work next year will look at how the Infant curriculum aligns across both schools. This work will not necessarily result in a completely 'common curriculum' for Infants (though there will obviously be lots of learning that is the same), but will ensure that at the end of Year 2, children at both schools will have accessed all the essential learning required to make a successful transition into KS2 and that there are no gaps or unnecessary repetition in learning for children in Year 3.

Both schools will be updating their websites before September so that parents will be able to see what children will be learning in each class from the start of the Autumn term.

## Transition

Transition from Year 2 to Year 3 has been another focus for staff this year, and Mrs Wilson has worked alongside Year 3 staff to create a transition timetable designed to ensure that children transitioning to Year 3 have had opportunities to familiarise themselves with the environment, their classmates and the staff they'll be working with.

Once the new term is underway in September we will review this programme with children, parents and staff involved so as to inform next year's transition planning.

## Attendance

Last year attendance at both schools was much lower than was usual pre-covid and we've been working hard to ensure that, where possible, children are attending school.

All evidence shows that there is a direct link between high levels of attendance and improved outcomes for children, with 'persistent absence' (where children miss more than 10% of their time in school) being particularly worrying.

We are therefore very pleased that current average attendance rates at both schools is 95%, an improvement on last year and above the national average and that the persistent absence rate of 13% is lower than the national average (and very much improved for The Batt where persistent absence was at 21% last year).

Thank you to those parents who have ensured that their children have attended school whenever they can.

## Joint School Development Plan 2023-2024

As St. Mary's and The Batt begin to work in closer partnership, we have agreed next year to work from a joint school development plan as the major development areas are common to both schools and working on these together means that we can share expertise, resources and training.



Our common priorities are:

#### **Curriculum alignment**

We believe effective partnerships work between schools - sharing good curriculum practice and expertise will ensure parity in quality and continuity in learning for all our children.

#### **Improving quality of teaching to ensure learning 'sticks'**

We believe children deserve high quality teaching methods (grounded in educational research) which enable them to achieve their best and prepares them for next steps and next stage learning.

#### **Implementing a CPD offer that improves outcomes for children**

We believe our staff deserve high quality, tailored CPD that inspires and enables them to be the best they can be in improving outcomes for children.

#### **Improving inclusive provision for vulnerable learners**

We believe that there is no ceiling on what can be achieved by our students, regardless of need, circumstances or background and will work to ensure they reach their potential.

#### **Embedding vision and values**

We believe that education is wider than academic study and that values education (grounded in Christian belief) will enable our children to flourish in all areas of life.

### **SEND Provision**

As part of our SDP priority to improve inclusive provision for vulnerable learners, we will be focusing on how best to support children with SEND. This is obviously an area impacted significantly by provision and resourcing by the Local Authority, but we want to ensure that in-school provision is a real strength moving forwards.

As part of this, I think it's of vital importance that we hear the experiences of children with SEND and their families, as understanding these and working in a meaningful and trusting partnership with parents supports effective planning and provision. I will therefore be inviting parents of children with SEND to participate in a parent forum from early next term, when as well as gathering feedback, we can plan how best to build this ongoing partnership.

### **Parental Engagement**

Thanks to those of you who completed the Governor Parental Questionnaire at either school. Governors will collate this information and feedback will be used in future planning for both schools.

Unfortunately, we ran out of time during the Summer Term to put in place a series of school/parent forums where we are able to share and discuss school priorities with parents over a cup of tea, but I am still keen that we offer these to parents in the coming year.

Topics we might cover would include curriculum development, subject workshops, assessment, The Batt and St. Mary's partnership, homework, transition etc.

Please look out for invitations to these in the coming term.



## Parent Associations and Charitable Donations to School

School budgets across the country are 'tight' at best and St. Mary's and The Batt are no exception to this. Despite budgetary constraints we remain committed to maintaining a broad extra curricula offer to our children - however this has become more difficult as neither school can continue to make up the shortfall in voluntary contributions for trips, visits, workshops etc. I appreciate sometimes that busy parents 'forget' to make these payments, rather than not intending to pay and would ask that parents please do pay when it is possible for them to do so. Unfortunately, as a last resort, we may have to consider withdrawing events in future where contributions do not effectively cover costs.

We continue to be fortunate in the additional funding we receive from the Friends of St Mary's (FoSMS) and The Batt School Association (BSA) as these often subsidise trips so we can offer them to parents at a more manageable cost.

Both associations are run by small groups of dedicated and hard working parents and would welcome new recruits, so please do come along to meetings next term when they are advertised if you would like to help. The support of both groups is very much appreciated and their contributions to funding mean we can afford resources and experiences for children that we would not otherwise be able to offer.

Our schools have also benefited this year from donations from the Witney Educational Foundation, The Jim Cousins Trust, The Batt School Trust and St. Mary's Church and I would like to say a big thank you to these organisations who have done much to support some of our most vulnerable children.

## Staff Changes

As we end this school year we are saying goodbye to some staff and will welcome others in the new term.

At St. Mary's, Miss Adair will be leaving to take up a Year 4 teaching role at The Batt and Mrs Cullen will return to her Teaching Support role. We are also saying goodbye to Mrs Morris who will continue her journey towards becoming a teacher in another school.

St. Mary's will look forward to welcoming Mrs Brodie from September.

At The Batt, Mrs Locke and Miss Gray will be leaving us for new adventures and Miss Bullock will be leaving to start her teacher training. We're pleased that Miss Adair will be increasing her teaching commitment from September.

We will also be saying goodbye to Mrs Lockwood who is retiring this year. Mrs Lockwood has worked at The Batt for over 30 years and has influenced many hundreds of children's lives in that time, as well as seeing a fair few changes in Headteachers! I know you will join with me in wishing her a fulfilling and well deserved retirement.

## Start of Term and Changes to School Day

**The Autumn term begins on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September.**

**Please remember that the timings of the school day change for both schools from the start of next term.** The new timings will ensure that we are meeting the Department for Education's expectation that children are in school for at least 32.5 hours a week and will hopefully allow for parents with children at both schools to move between the two.



Timings are as follows:

**At The Batt**

Registration Bell 8.40am (with gates opening at 8.30am)

End of School Day 3.10pm (with gates opening at 3.00pm)

Please note there will no longer be a different start time for Infant and Junior classes.

Children will be admitted to class promptly at 8.40am and dismissed promptly at 3.10pm.

**At St Mary's**

Registration at 8.50am (with doors opening at 8.40am)

End of School Day 3.20pm (with doors opening at 3.15pm)

We look forward to seeing you then.

Happy holidays.

Ms Debbie Seccull  
Executive Headteacher

