

# STMS Head Teacher Letter January 2018

Dear Parents

Firstly I want to say a huge well done to all those children who attended the Portsmouth Anti-bullying conference on Tuesday. It was really fantastic to hear inspirational stories from those who have been bullied and those that are taking action to prevent bullying and to support those being bullied. Those that attended the conference will now be trained as Ambassadors and hope to organise their own anti-bullying festival in school and work with fellow pupils and parents to stamp out any bullying that might rear its ugly head.

At that conference, I am also very proud to say, we received two awards: The award for 'Supporting Pupil Wellbeing' and the award for 'Good Citizenship'. Thank you to all our staff and pupils who do so much in these areas. Our new Ambassadors will be in touch soon to share their ideas with you.

As I said in my last newsletter, our Local Authority Primary Phase Inspector visited on Monday to monitor the quality of teaching, pupil outcomes and leadership. She was very pleased by what she saw and the steps we are taking to tackle school improvement priorities. She is confident St Thomas More's is a strong school with many outstanding features and confirmed that we are a low priority for local authority support. She is extremely pleased by the standard of teaching, pupil outcomes and leadership at all levels and agrees whole heartedly that the areas for further improvement, identified by Ofsted, are exactly what the school needs to address at this point in time. She feels these are the areas that will make our school a truly outstanding school very soon.

This year our main focus is on developing our teaching so that children can be challenged to go deeper with their learning. This means, not just knowing the facts and strategies, but being able to use them to generate new ideas and new knowledge. It requires them to be able to make reasoned arguments and explain their thinking and strategy.

Since the introduction of the new curriculum, this has become a focus for all schools and I am proud of all we have achieved in this area already this year. Over the coming months, we will be working with Local Authority advisors for Maths and English, to pick apart our teaching and the learning our children experience and to ensure they are given the most appropriate diet of teaching that will enable them to do things in greater depth.

It's been a while since we organised a Parent Forum to discuss and share thoughts on how the school is doing and what our priorities are for development. So we have set aside an evening for just that. The next Parent Forum will be held at school on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> March at 6:30pm. This is for parents only and there will not be childcare on this occasion.

Finally, I regret to inform you that Mrs Ward, Year 4 class teacher in Columba will be leaving us at Easter. Mrs Ward has been with us for five and a half years and contributed a great deal to the school in that time. I'm sure you will want to join me in wishing her well for the future. We have advertised the post and are confident of filling the post after Easter. Let me assure you, if we do not appoint a strong full time class teacher before Easter, the post will be covered by existing staff who know the class and their needs well. We should be in a position to update you soon after half term.



