



St John's Highbury Vale C of E Primary School

Conewood Street, London N5 1DL

Tel: 020 7226 4906

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Head of School: Mrs Lindsey Hodgson

Executive Head: Mrs Tonnie Read

Governors' Bulletin: Dec 2021

Dear parents and carers,

Following the decision to close the school, which was regretfully taken by Mrs Read, Mrs Hodgson and myself following advice from Public Health England, I am writing to share frustration that we didn't achieve the festive end of term that we had hoped for, but also to express my thanks to the SLT for managing to achieve as much as they did. We were able to stage the nativity play, we had the Christmas Fair, Christmas lunch and Key Stage 1 and 2 both had their Christmas party days. On a personal note, I always feel Christmas is beginning when I collect my tree from the car park, so thank you as ever to the Friends of St John's team for organising that bit of festive fundraising. Finally, as a nice pre-Christmas treat, on Sunday our current year 2 class were on ITV's Pet Show, go to ITV hub to see them.

New Governors

As you know we recently held an election to appoint the two new parent governors, and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Joanna Auñon and Alex Macfarlane to the Governing Body. Thank you to everyone for voting and ensuring we keep the GB vibrant and inclusive. Parents are such key members of the fabric of this school, and the GB certainly wouldn't be able to run without you. We are always looking for governors for different roles, so having four such strong candidates was great news, I know where to look next time I need to make an appointment!

Ofsted

As you may have heard, Ofsted (the government body responsible for oversight of all schools in the UK) has decided it is time to reappraise all 'Outstanding' schools, with a particular focus on the ones which have gone more than five years without inspection. We were rated Outstanding in 2014, which means we will almost





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certainly be inspected in the next twelve months, so I thought I should take this opportunity to make you aware of what that will entail, not just for staff, but also for pupils and parents.

In the past, Ofsted have left Outstanding schools alone, while they focus on the ones which are either deemed 'Good', 'Requires Improvement', or 'Inadequate'. However, since our last inspection, the framework for assessment has changed a number of times, and is now no longer driven mainly by key stage data results. The focus now is on the curriculum provided by the school and how the school support children to know and remember more. This move to new and far more stringent criteria means that schools are far more likely to be adjudged Good or Requires Improvement. Ofsted have stated that only 2% of schools across the country will receive Outstanding, as opposed to 88% of primary schools currently graded Outstanding or Good.

The Inspection

The day before the inspection, the school will receive a phone call telling us we are to be inspected. We have no say in this, we cannot reschedule or postpone, and during a lengthy phone call with the inspector, the senior leadership team will discuss the context of the school and agree specific areas for inspection. The inspectors will look at every aspect of the curriculum, how we deliver lessons, how we manage feedback, and how we individualise teaching to ensure that every pupil receives the same quality and quantity of high level teaching and learning. In addition to the forensic inspection of our curriculum offer, the inspectors also cover all other aspects of the school's provision, in particular safeguarding and our SEND offer. There are interviews with the governors to ensure that we are fully engaged with all aspects of the school, and with the children to canvass their opinions, and establish whether they feel safe and happy at school. The inspectors will spend time in class, observing lessons in different year groups as well as scrutinising the premises, facilities and fabric of the school.

How you can help

Ofsted will also want to talk to parents, so please expect to receive a parent questionnaire via e-mail during this time. We will give you advance warning of when this is going to happen, although, as I said, we only find out the day before their arrival. In the meantime, please continue to support your children's learning at home as much as





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you can, especially during the holidays. Reading, writing and numeracy, in particular, are core skills that children need to practice and if you need further guidance on how best to help your child there will be a Headteachers Update on this in the new year.

Outcomes

Obviously we hope to retain our status, but I would be misleading you if I said that was in any way guaranteed, or even very likely. Not only have Ofsted made it significantly harder to satisfy all their criteria, but there have been a lot of changes at St John's in the nearly eight years since we were last inspected, many of them beyond our control. Education budgets have been cut which meant we had to undergo a significant restructure in 2019, and while we believe that our senior leadership structure, teaching, office and facilities are considerably better now (thank you to Richard for the fantastic playground improvements!), it has been a huge amount of work to overhaul our data systems and curriculum offer and they are still bedding in. Like many other schools, Covid and Brexit have also meant we have had higher turnover of children in class than we would have in 'normal' times and have made it harder to host community events during Covid restrictions. Thanks again to FOSJ, who have done a phenomenal job at doing as much as they can – and how lovely to have that September social at the beginning of term.

Mrs Read and Mrs Hodgson, ably supported by Ms Dalal and Ms Jones are now providing the stability and continuity that we need to ensure consistency of teaching as well as achievable targets and outcomes across all year groups – every child is tracked termly. I am fully confident in the leadership they provide, and I look forward to evidencing that to the Ofsted inspectors next year. We continue to be blessed with excellent class teachers and support staff, so even in the face of the pandemic-induced move to online learning, our standards did not slip, and our results remained consistent. In addition, thanks to more prudent ongoing financial management as well as the continuing parental contributions of both time and money through FOSJ and FOSJ+, we are financially stable.





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Finally, our pupils never stand still, so nor should we. Our goal must always be to ensure that St John's pupils are better educated, happier, more self-confident, wiser, and above all, kinder. When they leave at the end of year 6 we want every pupil to feel they have been a part of something which has made them feel supported and nurtured, while constantly challenging them to be the very best that they can be. As a St John's pupil put it, "St John's is a small school, but a huge community."

So, although I can't say we are looking forward to the Ofsted inspection, I know that we will go into it confident in our vision, our methods, our goals, and most of all, our pupils.

In the meantime, best wishes for a peaceful and refreshing Christmas break, and let's hope that 2022 brings comfort and a bright future.

Harry Oulton

Chair of Governors

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