

Dear Parents/Carers

Some of you will be wondering whether the new Wyndham Park/St Mark's "Primary Learning Collaboration" is a good idea – after all you signed up to separate Infant & Junior Schools, by choice – and so did I when I came here on interview in 2008. At the moment though, the only consistent thing in education is change, so we have to keep looking at what we do, and how we do it, to make sure that what we provide for the children is the best we can do, and the best they can get. Whilst no one planned for the two schools to be anything other than partners in the academy trust, we are in a position in which decisions about change have had to be made, and made quickly.

I am writing to you to let those of you who don't know how things are going at St Mark's – because you may not be able to get an accurate picture from the historical view of our last Ofsted and conflicting comments from the playground and on social media. As you know, the two schools' staffs work very closely together already, so the new arrangement is seen by them as the next – relatively natural – step to help us provide a seamless primary education for your children.

Most of you are very familiar with Wyndham Park – because your children are already there, or have been there – but we know that some of you are not yet familiar with St Mark's, so we thought we'd tell you a few facts.

### **School Effectiveness**

It's all well and good us saying how 'good' the school is, but it's better to let outsiders come and see, and tell us whether they agree. So, in February the school was reviewed by a visiting team of professionals ([Challenge Partners](#)) to judge our progress over the last eighteen months. After a rigorous process the team concluded that the school is in a strong position throughout and making consistently good progress overall. We were judged to be 'strongly good' in all areas reviewed. Some highlights include:

- A distinctive school culture with a welcoming and friendly atmosphere.
- A dynamic, effective and inspirational team...energetic, enthusiastic and very committed.
- Expectations of pupils' behaviour and work ethic are high and they are modelled well by staff.
- Learners, who work hard, are proud of their school and learning. They are happy and safe
- Pupils are productive, for example, regularly producing substantial pieces of writing.
- Pupils feel valued and show great confidence when speaking or explaining their work to peers and visitors.
- Teaching is improving quickly and securely through a strong monitoring programme combined with effective sharing of practice. New approaches to teaching are having a positive impact on all pupils' progress.
- Senior Leaders have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas of improvement and use accurate school evaluation well for improvement planning.

### **So what do existing parents say about St Mark's?**

Earlier this month we asked for them to fill in Ofsted's Parents' Questionnaire – the results showed *more than 90% positive endorsement from parents* saying their children are happy, feel safe, make good progress, behave well and are well looked after and taught. It's good to know from everyone's perspective.

### **What makes our School special?**

#### The Curriculum we offer:

Our excellent provision gives your children the chance to achieve more because:

- We have specialist teachers for Music, Computing and PE who are real experts
- We hold the Gold Kitemark (PE and Sport) and the Silver Award for Primary Science Quality Mark
- We have two nationally recognised Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs) for Maths and English who help us continue to improve our practice within St Mark's & Wyndham Park

#### The support we offer:

- We support children with understanding their own emotional literacy, so that they are more ready to learn - this significantly reduces issues, both for the individual/the class – allowing all to focus on their learning
- Our Inclusion team (SENCO, PSA, DHT, ELSA) is strong – supporting children and their families

- Our range of extra-curricular provision is outstanding - covering a wide range of areas e.g. participation and competitive sports, science, art, language, cooking, choir, programming, geography etc.
- Putting the needs of families first is a central part of our offer. The school offers a thriving after school care facility on site which serves working family's needs.

The staff we offer:

- We appoint staff who are ambitious for your children and for themselves – they want to make a difference and genuinely care about your children. We invest heavily in recruitment, induction and training and, as a result, they often move on and often up. Our challenge is to find innovative ways to keep them!
- We work with the University of Winchester to find and train new teacher trainees as part of a local collective of ten schools (It's called ArrowITT if you're thinking about training...)
- We also work closely with a Teaching School Alliance and we have been successful in creating a Challenge Partner Hub (South Wiltshire) in recognition of our progress and the capacity within the trust.

**What do people say about this St Mark's?**

"It's a genuine family here. A place full of fantastic children and passionate, caring and committed staff; it makes it a pleasure to come to work!"...."Kindness from the top down."....." I love the fact that whoever you are there are always subjects you'll love."...."For us it's simple – our child is so happy! He's making great progress and loves learning"....."My children grew greatly in confidence... and I couldn't be more grateful to all the staff."

We have amazing children, and we know that they are brilliantly prepared by our colleagues at Wyndham Park. The school remains a significant feeder school to local grammar schools because of this preparation, and the continued commitment of both the hard-working, committed, caring staff teams providing supportive and challenging learning for children through a broad and balanced curriculum experience. I stated at the top of this that when I came to Salisbury 11 years ago, I signed up for separate Infant and Junior Schools, and I am on record stating the benefits of separate schools – and those reasons remain valid. Neither I, nor the CEO, nor the Trustees, have any interest in spoiling the great things that are already going on in each of our schools. What we are setting out to ensure is that both schools (and their communities of children and families) benefit from Infant and Junior expertise, whilst providing an aligned leadership structure. It will not only help us with sustainability, it will give us a clearer overview to ensure individual children and cohorts have a consistent, progressive and seamless passage through their primary years. Children only get one go at their education, and we want to make sure that, with your continued support, it is the best that it can possibly be. We believe in better!

**2019 Attainment % of children at the expected standard or better (EXS+):**

2019	Reading	Writing	Maths	EGPS	RWM
<b>St Mark's</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>87</b>
National	73	78	79	78	65
Wiltshire	74	77	76	76	64

The percentage of children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (87%) is the best results the school have ever achieved as it is 22 percentage points above national.

All other attainment measures are strong compared to county or national averages.

**2019 Attainment % at greater depth standard (GDS):**

2019	Reading	Writing	Maths	EGPS	RWM
<b>St Mark's</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>17</b>
National	27	20	27	34	11
Wiltshire	28	19	23	29	10

Why do this? Why wouldn't we do this? We believe in better and we put our money where our mouth is.

Sincerely  
 Gareth Flemington  
 Headteacher (St Mark's C of E Junior School and Wyndham Park Infants School)