

SCHOOL PROSPECTUS

2007/08

Dear Parents

St Mary's Catholic Primary School has developed from very humble beginnings: it was in 1883 that a School Room opened, and today we have the present site which has been occupied since the beginning of the 1970's.

The school has carried out the initial vision of Father Sweeney and the Parish Community. The children continue to receive a sound Catholic education. This is what St Mary's Catholic Primary School offers your child.

Each child is cared for and nurtured in order that their gifts and talents are fostered and developed. The school seeks to develop a partnership with family and parish community so that the love of God, the Church and our neighbour is as much a part of its curriculum as are the core subjects.

By entrusting your child's education to the staff of our school, the Governors and I feel confident that you will have chosen well and will not be disappointed.

Yours sincerely

Ian Inshaw
Chair of Governors

ETHOS STATEMENT

The school was founded by and is part of the Catholic Church. The school is to be conducted as a Catholic school in accordance with canon law and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, and in accordance with the Trust Deed of the Archdiocese of Birmingham and in particular -

- (a) religious education is to be in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, discipline and general and particular norms of the Catholic Church;
- (b) religious worship is to be in accordance with the rites, practices, discipline and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church;

and at all times the school is to serve as a witness to the Catholic faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

CURRICULUM STATEMENT

What is the Curriculum?

By Curriculum we mean:-

“All those activities designed or encouraged within our school’s organisational framework to promote the intellectual, personal, social and physical development of our pupils”.

We aim to ensure that the curriculum provides a Catholic setting in which children can grow in understanding and in the acquisition of skills, attitudes and values.

To achieve this aim, the school will:

1. Promote the Catholic ethos in all areas of curriculum.
2. Relate religious education lesson content to the child’s everyday living.
3. Help children to understand and consider world issues from the Catholic point of view.
4. Positively promote Catholic attitudes and values.
5. Ensure the children understand that their talents/skills are God given, to be used for the good of the wider community and to build up God’s kingdom.

The Education Reform Act 1989 enshrines in law that every pupil is entitled to a broad and balanced curriculum appropriate to each child’s needs.

Our broad aims are:-

- a) to give each child, according to his ability, a firm grasp of basic skills and to give many opportunities to develop creative ability and talent;
- b) to develop each child's individual personality so that he/she has an awareness of life and an ability to cope with his/her talents and weaknesses;
- c) to give the child confidence and assurance so that he/she is able to develop satisfactory relationships;
- d) to provide in school an environment which enables these things to develop and one which makes the children feel happy and secure.

Religious Education

In our school the essential truths of our faith are placed at the heart of the curriculum and are fundamental to the whole school experience.

We are aware that we have children,

- from supportive Catholic homes;
- for whom the school may be their first and perhaps only experience of church;
- from other Christian traditions.

Aim

The principal aim of Religious Education in St Mary's School is to help the children to grow in knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the spiritual and religious dimensions of life as expressed in the Catholic Faith. However, Religious Education is not just a subject among others. It is a constantly developing way of learning how to look at the world and ourselves and the relationship of all creation to the Creator God. Giving the children a sense of ultimate purpose of life, and the moral code to determine behaviour, is a vital function of our school.

All that happens in school has the potential to speak of God's loving care for each individual involved in the school's life. We hope that the children will experience that God is at the centre of the learning process and is the ultimate goal of us all.

What makes St Mary's School distinctive is its attempt to promote citizenship and generate a climate that is permeated by the Gospel spirit and values. It is a community that is rooted in Christ and the Gospel and in which the pupils are made to feel respected, trusted and loved. Responsibility for this Christian school climate rests with the Head and teachers, as individuals and as a community, through a daily witness of friendly and harmonious relationships.

The Headteacher and staff take care to promote close collaboration with the parents of pupils. Partnership of school, home and Parish is considered essential, not only to deal with academic aspects but also with personal or spiritual issues, such as preparation for receiving First Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of Confirmation. We recognise the varied religious needs of the children - those from supportive Catholic homes, those for whom the school is perhaps their only experience of church and those from other traditions.

The ethos of St Mary's School is realised through the day to day life of the school. Every effort is made to create, in the classroom, a community where the children know they are loved and where they feel confident and secure. There is too, an atmosphere of welcome, a visible care, concern and respect for the school and its community.

Sacramental Preparation and Celebration

The Sacraments of Reconciliation, the Eucharist and Confirmation are important steps for our children and we prepare pupils through a planned series of lessons, whilst acknowledging the primary role of their parents.

In Year 3, we revisit, with family, the Sacrament of Baptism as we begin to explore themes of forgiveness from daily life and scripture, leading to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Our chaplain, Father Paul Martin, talks to parents about this Sacrament prior to the celebration for children and adults which takes place in our parish church. Parents and children make a commitment to sacramental preparation through the Rites of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated in Year 6 when children are coming to the end of their primary school days and are growing towards a deeper commitment to and responsibility for their faith.

We would like to acknowledge our parents as being the first and most important teacher of their children but we recognise that some parents may be learning to understand our religious beliefs and practices alongside their children. We will make available any individual help which is required during a pupil's stay in St Mary's. Our Parish Priest is a willing adviser and guide to parents.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Our log books show that St Mary's Catholic School was opened in 1883, in Piggy Lane, for children of all ages. The existing site in Queen's Avenue was opened in 1969 with four spacious classrooms. We now have ten classrooms, all well equipped and welcoming, as well as a school hall which is used for Mass, assembly, P.E. and dance and school dinners. The school kitchen was converted into a classroom, known as the Jubilee Room, in 2000 and school meals are delivered, pre-cooked, from a local school. In September 2002, we added two, new, purpose-built classrooms for our Key Stage One pupils.

Children enter St Mary's at the age of four in the Foundation Stage and they embark on the Foundation Stage of Learning either as full-time or part-time pupils, according to their date of birth. In the final term of their period in the Foundation Stage, all children have full-time places. Children progress through the school, in keeping with all primary age children nationally, in the following year groups:-

Age 4 - 5	FS1		The Foundation Stage
5 - 6	Year One]	Key Stage One
6 - 7	Year Two]	KS1
7 - 8	Year Three]	
8 - 9	Year Four]	Key Stage Two
9 - 10	Year Five]	KS2
10 - 11	Year Six]	

St Mary's is fortunate in having pleasant and spacious school grounds for children's play and outdoor games lessons. Our P.T.F.A. have purchased substantial adventure playground equipment which provide opportunities for imaginative play.

The school is governed by representatives of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the local Education Authority, the local District Council, the parents, and the teaching and non-teaching staff. We have close links with Oxfordshire Education Authority through our Adviser and our Education Officer. The school is inspected by the Office for Standards of Education (OFSTED) under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and by Diocesan Inspectors under Section 48 of the Education (Schools) Act (1996).

The National Curriculum is studied by all children from the beginning of Year 1 (age 5).

Subjects are as follows:-

Literacy	-	the National Literacy Strategy requires that we teach a literacy hour every day
Numeracy	-	the National Numeracy Strategy requires a daily Numeracy lesson each day, beginning with mental maths activities for the whole class
Science	}	
Religious Education	}	
I.C.T.	}	
	-	Core subjects
Physical Education	}	
Art & Design	}	
Music	}	
History & Geography	}	
Design Technology	}	
	-	the Foundation subjects

Between the years 5 - 16, children are expected to progress through ten levels of attainment. The average level reached by the age of seven is Level 2 and the average level reached by age 11 is Level 4.

SATS

Children are assessed through Statutory Attainment Tests/Tasks at the ages of 7 and 11.

At age 7, the tests are in English, Maths and Science and they are assessed by the Class teacher and moderated by the Local Education Authority.

At age 11, the tests are in English, Maths and Science and they are assessed by external markers.

Transfer at the end of Primary School

The schools to which our pupils transfer at the age of 11+ are:-

- a) The Blessed George Napier School, Banbury.
- b) The Cooper School, Bicester
- c) Bicester Community College

Blessed George Napier school is our Catholic Comprehensive School to which the majority of our pupils transfer, although there is no automatic entitlement to a place.

Transport from Bicester to BGN is organised by the Local Education Authority, although a place on this school transport is not guaranteed.

There is close liaison between St Mary's and the secondary schools, to ensure that the transition is a rewarding and exciting one for children. Care is taken to inform Secondary staff about the academic and social achievements of our pupils and, where necessary, their Special Educational and social needs.

Visiting School

Prospective parents are welcome to visit the school by appointment. The Headteacher and/or Year 6 ambassadors are happy to show visitors the school on a normal working day and to answer any questions.

As part of the induction process, parents are invited to a meeting in the Summer term at around the time when children are having their Foundation Stage school visits. The purpose of the meeting is to talk about:-

- The Foundation Stage of Learning
- Daily Routines
- School Uniform

There is also an opportunity to meet the Foundation Stage staff, the School Nurse and the school secretary.

Family Life and Sex Education

Our Policy on Sex Education was completed after a series of meetings between parents, governors and the Headteacher. We were advised by Father Jonathan Veasey, our Diocesan Primary Adviser, who spoke to parents about the sanctity and uniqueness of the individual. This principle of the holiness of human life underpins our teaching on Sex Education.

In St Mary's School, the Family Life and Sex Education Policy is intended to celebrate God's gift of life. In teaching children about sex education, we are preparing them for life as adults who will experience feelings of love, friendship, fear, trust and responsibility. All that we teach will be in the context of our Catholic faith.

The policy acknowledges the shared role of parents and the school in educating children about Family Life and Sex Education. The school will ensure that parents are informed about the specific sex education content of the lessons. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from any element of the sex education programme that is not part of the National Curriculum.

Special Educational Needs

We welcome all Catholic children, regardless of their ability. Children who have Special Needs will receive the help they need to enable them to fulfil their potential. This may be through extra help in the classroom, withdrawal from class to work in a small group or individual support. We work with outside agencies who provide specialist help, such as Educational Psychologists, Physiotherapists and Speech Therapists.

Our Special Needs Policy is in keeping with the Code of Practice published by the DFES (1995). The Policy is available on request.

Our Governor with responsibility for Special Educational Needs is Mrs Josephine Hurst.

Our teacher with responsibility for Special Educational Needs is Mrs Lucy Underhill.

Homework

In St Mary's School, we believe that homework should be a positive and enjoyable experience. Homework should develop children's enjoyment of classwork and their self esteem and should support the joint working relationship between school and home. We believe that homework should supplement and enhance learning and help children to organise their time. Homework will be appropriate for the age and ability of children.

Standards of Behaviour

It is the policy of St Mary's School to acknowledge good behaviour and to affirm children whose behaviour is an example to others. We acknowledge that not all pupils will always be well behaved and we will work to change this so that our school community is a harmonious place which is an example to others and a sign that we are a Christian community.

We will seek to encourage good standards of behaviour so that children will be taught and will play in an atmosphere which is non-threatening and peaceful. We will promote good behaviour so that teaching time is not wasted by correcting bad behaviour. We will strive to create a learning environment where good behaviour is expected and bad behaviour is unacceptable.

Home School Policy

All schools are required by law, to have a written Home School Policy which outlines the importance of a whole school approach to partnership. Our policy enshrines the aims and values of the school and makes explicit the roles of parents, children and the school. We encourage parents to discuss this policy with their child and, if appropriate, ask children to sign in agreement.

ROUTINE MATTERS

The School Day

The school day begins at 8.50 a.m. Children are expected to enter the building in an orderly manner and await registration.

Children should not arrive in school before 8.45 a.m. with the exception of pupils who arrive by school transport.

Dinner money should be given to the Class Teacher in an envelope, clearly marked with the child's name, on the first day of the school week. Money should not be brought to the school office.

The morning session is from 8.50 a.m. – 12 noon (12.05 p.m. KS2). Playtime is at 10.30 a.m. and children may have fruit or vegetables at playtime. Sweets and chocolates are not permitted at playtime as we try to encourage healthy eating. Foundation Stage and KS1 pupils are provided with a piece of fruit under the Government scheme.

The afternoon session is from 1.00 p.m. until 3.15 p.m. Only KS1 pupils have a short break in the afternoon.

KS1 and Foundation Stage children are dismissed by their teacher when they see their parent or other adult waiting in the playground. It is important that adults collect children promptly. KS2 children are dismissed as a class and meet their adult in the playground.

Once dismissed, children are the responsibility of parents/childminders and they should be supervised until they leave the school grounds. After a busy day in school, children should be taken home and not allowed to re-enter classrooms, or run, unsupervised, in the school grounds.

Absence from School

If your child is absent for sickness or medical appointments, we require a note, e-mail or telephone call for register purposes. Our registers are monitored by the Education Welfare Service and by OFSTED.

Please let us know as soon as possible if your child is not coming to school for any reason. It is impractical for school to follow up every daily absence or lateness. It is important to note this if your child travels to school alone, i.e. you must assume that they have arrived safely.

Please come to the office when collecting or leaving a child during the school day.

Holidays

The date of school holidays are usually known over a year in advance and a calendar is sent to parents annually. Children should not be taken out of school for holidays in term time but if this is unavoidable, a request for absence form should be completed. This form is available from the school office.

Medical Matters

If a child is unwell in school, we will usually contact parents. Please do not send children to school if they are unwell or not fully recovered from an illness. Prescribed medicines may be given, at the discretion of the Headteacher, but we cannot guarantee that they will be given at set times. It is important to note that class teachers do not give medicines and that any medication must be clearly labelled and given in at the school office by a parent or guardian.

We do not give children any form of painkillers; if your child is in pain or has a temperature, they are not well enough to attend school.

Inhalers are stored in a cupboard in the medical room and are taken out when required. All inhalers should be clearly labelled to avoid misuse.

If a child has a bump on the head during the course of the school day, we will put a sticker on the child's jumper and send a standard letter to alert parents.

It is essential that we know of any medical condition or change in your child's health. It is also essential that your contact telephone numbers are accurate in our records in order to get in touch if necessary.

Staff will use their discretion when a child is ill or has a minor accident: very often the required treatment is TLC (tender loving care) which we administer happily, with the intention of settling the child back into class.

SCHOOL DRESS

St Mary's pupils have a school uniform which they are proud to wear. The uniform shows that children belong to our school and that they are ambassadors for St Mary's when they wear it outside the school.

No jewellery should be worn by pupils in school - including earrings. Children may wear a watch.

School colours consist of royal blue, grey and blue, and any sensible combination of these colours.

BOYS should wear a choice of:	GIRLS should wear a choice of:
Royal blue school sweatshirt or jumper	Royal blue sweatshirt or cardigan
Royal blue polo shirt	Royal blue polo shirt
Grey trousers, long or short	Grey skirt or trousers
	Royal blue gingham/blue stripe dresses (summer)

Items of uniform with the school logo are available (to order) from the school office. These include sweatshirts, cardigans, polo shirts, tee-shirts, summer hats and fleeces.

Jeans should not be worn in school.

Footwear - Children are asked to wear soft shoes in school; these should be changed when children go out-of-doors. A large shoe bag with a draw-string for these shoes is necessary. Shoes should have children's names inside.

For P.E. children should wear dark shorts and a tee shirt. School tee shirts are available from the school office. P.E. bags are also available from the school office.

It is essential that all items of clothing are clearly named.

The P.T.F.A. have items of second-hand uniform for sale.

Swimming

Key Stage 2 pupils will usually have a weekly swimming lesson and need to wear a swimming hat, available from the school office. Boys need to wear trunks and girls need a one-piece swimsuit. Bikinis are not suitable.

Charges for School Activities

The 1988 Education Act allows us to seek voluntary contributions for the benefit of the School or any school activities, although there is no obligation for parents to make voluntary contributions.

We hope to continue to offer our pupils a broad range of activities to enhance their general education and to foster involvement in the community.

It should be noted that if insufficient funds cannot be raised it may be necessary to curtail or cancel some activities.

A copy of this policy, which was reviewed in July 2006, is available on request.

GOVERNORS AT ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

NAME	STATUS	TERM UNTIL	COMMITTEES
Ian Inshaw (Chair)	Local Authority		Personnel Admissions
Teresa Mansfield (Vice Chair)	Foundation		Finance/Bldgs/H&S Admissions
Father Paul Martin	Foundation		Curriculum (R.E.)
Josephine Hurst	Foundation		Personnel SEN Governor
Terry Kenny	Foundation		Finance/Bldgs/H&S Performance Management Appeals
Brendan Hattam	Foundation		Finance/Bldgs/H&S Performance Management Appeals
Nicky Blacker	Foundation		Curriculum (Literacy & Citizenship) Performance Management Admissions
Tony Madden	Foundation		Finance/Bldgs/H&S
Chris Hartley	Elected Parent		Finance/Bldgs/H&S
Sue Davies	Staff (Teacher)		Curriculum
Vie Peart	Staff (Support)		Finance/Bldgs/H&S
Patricia Pickering	Staff (Headteacher)		All Committees
Mary Cronin	Associate		Curriculum (I.C.T.)
Noeline Winter (Clerk to Governors) St Mary's School Bicester			

