



Thursday 18th July 2019

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to update you on the secondment of Mr Sweetingham and Mrs Mitri to St Mary's and St John's (SMSJ).

Review of the secondment

In a report shared with the governing body of SMSJ, it was noted that Mr Sweetingham and Mrs Mitri have carried out the following actions:

- made huge improvements in safeguarding, both in terms of processes and culture
- introduced a collective worship policy and developed the quality of RE teaching
- introduced new assessment and marking systems
- ensured that the learning environment is tidy and the classroom displays are up-to-date
- provided essential support for staff, especially the current leadership team and Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs)

And all of this in three days per week for just one and a half terms! We are very proud of everything that Mr Sweetingham and Mrs Mitri have achieved at SMSJ.

St John's has also benefited from the secondment. Staff from our school have been given the experience of further developing their leadership skills, sharing their knowledge and best practice with other teachers and learning how a three-form entry school functions. This experience has also helped us to understand some of the organisational implications of possibly forming partnerships with other schools, something which many single-form entry schools across Barnet and London are being encouraged to consider to ensure financial sustainability.

Impact on St John's

As a governing body, we have sought a wide range of opinions on the secondment via surveys and anecdotal feedback from staff, children and parents. Naturally opinions vary considerably, but everyone agrees that the secondment has had an impact on our school. While the structure we put in place (Mrs Stylianou and Mrs Cruikshank leading the school in Mr Sweetingham and Mrs Mitri's absence) has worked well in terms of supporting staff and allowing our school to function to its usual high standard, it is undeniable that having your Head and Deputy Head split between two schools does make some decision-making harder and does mean that some priorities have to change.

As we approach the end of the academic year and review the objectives the Governors set at the start of September, it is clear that our staff have all worked exceptionally hard as a team to achieve most of our School Improvement Plan, and we wish to congratulate them on this hard-earned success. As a Governing Body we feel confident that, while the secondment has had an impact on our school, it has not been to the detriment of our focus on being the best our school can be. Furthermore the secondment has allowed us to make a significant financial contribution towards our budget.

Nurture Encourage Challenge through Christ



Plans for the Autumn term

Due to reasons beyond their control, SMSJ have been unable to recruit a new Primary Head to start in September. Therefore, the LDBS asked our Governing Body if we would consider continuing the relationship with SMSJ but with a different arrangement. The proposal is for St John's to provide two days per week of strategic leadership until Christmas. This would allow us to continue to support the staff at SMSJ at a time of huge change for them, as well as continuing to offer development opportunities for the staff at our school, for example sharing best practice and mentoring NQTs.

When we agreed to the original secondment, we did not envisage being asked to extend our support. However, having weighed up the pros and cons of the situation, we have agreed that St John's will continue to support SMSJ with strategic leadership for two days a week. This will be led by Mr Sweetingham, with support from Mrs Mitri as required.

The reduction from four days to two fixed days per week, along with the change in focus to a more strategic consultancy, means that this new arrangement should involve less additional work. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of staff (including Mr Sweetingham and Mrs Mitri themselves) were in support of continuing the relationship with SMSJ meant that this extra workload is viewed as manageable for a short period of time.

By ensuring that our Head or Deputy Headteacher will be on our site for five days a week, we believe the continuing impact on St John's will be minimised, as our senior leaders will provide consistency and a constant presence.

Having reviewed and addressed the key concerns that we had, we were able to agree to this extension of support for the following reasons:

- We are continuing to support a school in need, as per our Christian ethos and our mission and vision.
- We continue to gain financially from this arrangement.
- We continue to build on our good relationship with the LDBS and to put our school in a good position to consider future options.
- Our senior leaders continue to gain experience in leadership in different settings.
- The new Headteacher is currently being recruited for SMSJ so we are confident that this arrangement will definitely finish at the end of the Autumn term.

If anyone has any questions about this, please do get in touch via our email address (governors@stjohnsn20.barnetmail.net) or come along to our termly drop-in for parents. The next one will be held on Friday 6th December.

With best wishes
Imogen Hall
Chair of Governors

Nurture Encourage Challenge through Christ