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19th December,

Dear Families,

Firstly, apologies that this Bulletin comes to you a little later than planned. As I'm sure you'll be aware, The Batt had its long over-due Ofsted Inspection on 5th and 6th December and this has meant a bit of catching up over the last week or so.

However, the delay does mean that alongside updates on the strategic direction of St. Mary's and The Batt, I am able to offer you heartfelt good wishes for Christmas and the New Year!

Kindest regards,
Deborah Secull
Executive Headteacher

Christmas Performances

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank children and staff for the wonderful Christmas performances and celebratory events we've seen at both schools this term.

Children who took part in our Nativity performances were amazing (and brilliant at taking on extra parts when winter illnesses struck). At The Batt, both Reception and KS1 performances were wonderful, despite the interruption to rehearsals our Inspection necessitated and though I would never be foolish enough to choose a favourite, I will certainly never forget St. Mary's Infants' bespoke Nativity – written by Miss Atkinson and featuring children playing school staff!

Of course, yesterday evening also saw the inspiring Carols by Candlelight service at St. Mary's Church, featuring The Batt School Choirs and I'm sure those of you who attended will agree it was a very special service and showcased the marvellous musical talent of children in school.

I do hope you have been able to enjoy some of these events as part of your build up to Christmas!

Staffing Changes

At the end of this term we are saying good-bye to a number of teachers and I know, like me, you will want to wish them well.

At St. Mary's we will be without Miss Elam, Miss Atkinson and Mrs. Cullen when we begin the New Year. Miss Elam will be taking a break from teaching, while Miss Atkinson will be extending her

experience to include SEND and secondary teaching and Mrs. Cullen takes up a full time teaching role at The Batt School.

From January Mrs. Dunstan and myself will be leading at St. Mary's as we continue work to bring the partnership between St. Mary's and The Batt still closer.

As we work to ensure greater future consistency at St. Mary's, we are still seeking the right teacher to join our team, so for an interim period Year 2 will be taught by Mrs. Wilson, who will of course be known to many of you.

At The Batt we say good bye to Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Wilson who are moving to new educational adventures and Year 2 will also miss Mrs. Dunstan as their class teacher as she takes on the Deputy Headteacher role working across both The Batt and St. Mary's.

Developing Our School Partnership

Mrs. Dunstan taking on the Deputy role across both schools is an effective way for us to continue developing the partnership and consistency between both schools.

Our [Schools Development Plan](#) for this year outlined the need to bring the infant curriculum into greater alignment so as to ensure that children entering Year 3 at The Batt have had an equally good educational experience and covered the same essential early key knowledge and skills they need as a foundation for KS2.

Our Infant teams at both schools will be planning and working together more directly from January and Mrs. Dunstan, working alongside me at both schools, will facilitate the development of this alignment as well as supporting a more consistent approach to school culture around elements such as behaviour and attendance, personal development and safeguarding.

Either Mrs. Dunstan or I will be at St. Mary's every day and you can contact us via the St. Mary's school office should you wish to speak to a school leader.

Behaviour

In the last Bulletin, I said that Miss Atkinson and Mrs. Harding-Jones were working on Behaviour Blueprints which summarised the policies relating to behaviour at both schools for parents in an accessible format.

You can find The Batt Behaviour Blueprint and the [St Mary's Behaviour Blueprint](#) on the Policies page of the relevant school website.

However, as we continue to ensure consistency of best practice across both schools, we will be continuing to develop behaviour related policy at St. Mary's in the new year and will share more details of this with parents there in the new term.

Special Educational Needs

Another feature of the Schools Development Plan for this year is to review and improve provision for vulnerable learners, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.

As part of our strategy for this we held a SEND Parent Forum at the end of Autumn Term 1 and recently held an inaugural meeting of a SEND working party which we hope will continue to build trust and partnership working with parents.

The first SEND newsletter also went out to parents last week via school newsletters last week – you can find it [here](#) if you missed it.

This letter detailed, along with lots of other news, the recommendations made by our ODST School's Improvement Advisor about provision for children with SEND in school and the progress we are making in this work.

Professional Development of Teachers

Another strand to our Schools Development Plan was to ensure that professional development for staff was more relevant and impacted directly on improved outcomes for children.

As part of this, both schools are taking part in a Growing Great People pilot programme for staff development. This involves identifying areas of growth for individual teachers which will support them in improving provision for children currently in their classes, rather than looking at more generic targets as has been the case in the past. It also fosters a collaborative approach between staff to the benefit of all children within school.

Teachers have met this programme with enthusiasm and are working on targets such as improving questioning, mastery approach in maths and developing adaptive teaching approaches to name a few.

Alongside this internal collaboration we are also planning to enable staff to visit other schools so as to observe and share best practice over the remainder of the year.

It is anticipated the programme will be rolled out to all ODST schools from next September.

School Site and Resources

The reception class at St. Mary's has seen redevelopment, both indoors and out this term so as to improve the organisation and availability of resources to foster more inclusive and independent learning opportunities for children, and The Batt has seen the development of The Hive, a dedicated intervention space for children receiving bespoke curriculum elements.

In resourcing both of these areas we have drawn on charitable donations and I would like to thank again St. John's College, Oxford and The Batt School Trust respectively for their contributions.

Improvements to the fabric of the building continue at The Batt with all old windows and door facing onto the quad having been replaced at half term.

Future work is now being planned to the roof at St. Mary's and to heating and lighting at the The Batt.

Ofsted

The Batt was last inspected by Ofsted in 2011, and by virtue of its historic 'outstanding' label has gone uninspected since then. Thus the visit from inspectors on 5th and 6th of December was long awaited and overdue!

Though there has been much in the media lately to question the approach of Ofsted, leaders in school found the process to be generally supportive and helpful and Inspectors keen to understand the journey the school has been on in recent years.

I would like to thank again all those parents who took the time to interact with inspectors and so helped them to have a rounded picture of the school, and those of you who sent in gifts and words of encouragement.

I would also like to say that both children and staff, as always, were a credit to the school.

We hope that the final report will be available to share during the first half of the Spring Term.

Term Timings

As a reminder St. Mary's will close for the Christmas holidays at 1.30pm on Wednesday 20th December, 2023.

It will re-open at 8.40am on Monday 8th January, 2024.

The Batt will close for the Christmas holidays at 1.15pm on Wednesday 20th December, 2023.

It will re-open at 8.30am on Monday 8th January, 2024.

Those of you looking ahead to term dates for academic year 2024/2025 can now find these on school websites under [term dates](#).

Wishing all of our families a very merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year.