



Headteacher's End of Term Letter

Dear Parents/Carers,

As the end of this term approaches, I am writing to you to express my thanks for all your support over the past few months.

We have enjoyed such a positive and productive first term at St Mary's, culminating in an Ofsted inspection in the penultimate week of term! Whilst the end of a long term might not seem like the most favourable timing, I viewed it as an opportunity to let the inspection team come and see our school and pupils in typical action, and to share the many positives our school community has to offer. Firstly, can I thank all of you who took the time to complete the *Parent View* survey and give the inspectors invaluable feedback about our school, and the 300+ pupils who did the same. The inspectors commented on the high proportion of stakeholders who did so, and the overwhelmingly positive responses that you provided. This is so important to us, and certainly something we do not take for granted. I look forward to sharing Ofsted's findings and the outcome of the inspection with you all, upon publication of the report in the new year.

I have no doubt that all of our pupils are tired and looking forward to a Christmas break, but none more so than our Y11s who have been completing their mocks right up until the end of this week. Their approach to the exams has been really encouraging and hopefully this will be reflected in the marks and grades they receive. After the Christmas break, we will be closely analysing the results as we always do, targeting the support accordingly and continuing to provide a comprehensive programme of additional revision and intervention. I would strongly recommend that our Y11s access the additional support that will be available to them as previous experience tells us that those who do, go on to achieve strong results in the summer. Thank you to parents/carers of Y11, as we recognise that this can involve extra lifts and later collections! We do run a mini-bus drop-off in town most nights of the week for those pupils who may have transport difficulties but would like to stay after school for revision classes.

I would like to thank you for your support with attendance this term. I am sure that you will have seen in the media how much of a national concern this is and that many schools have not recovered their attendance in the years following the pandemic. I am delighted, therefore, to share the news with you that we recently won a '*FFt National School Attendance Award*' for 2023/2024, as our attendance figures put us in the top 10% of all *FFt* Secondary Schools in England. This is a combined effort and underlines the strength of relationship between school and home. We believe that strong attendance correlates with giving our pupils the best possible chance of achieving their potential and recognise the huge role that you play in this.

We have had some significant success on the sporting front too. Our U16 Netball team are county champions and now progress through to the regional finals in February, the U14s were runners up, and will also represent Herefordshire in the West Midlands regionals. Our U12 Basketball team were recently crowned county champions with the U13s runners up, and our U12 Rugby team are undefeated to date. Alongside this, many other year groups have enjoyed fixtures against other schools in the range of sports, always representing St Mary's with great distinction and reflecting our values and ethos.

Parents' evenings are well underway now and it has been good to talk to many of you at the ones we have held so far. We are also using it as an opportunity to get some further feedback and are grateful to those of you who took the time to answer some quick questions about your son or daughter's progress. This is something we aim to do for all year groups going forward, and we will use your responses to help shape our provision and strategic planning in the future.

The cast and crew of *Shrek* have been busy rehearsing over recent weeks in preparation for performances in February 2025, and it would be great if we could have sell-out audiences for all the shows. A school production is such a wonderful event and takes such a lot of effort to put together. I know how much our pupils would appreciate your support, and I think it will be thoroughly entertaining!

I am so proud of our pupils and staff who donated to our Reverse Advent Appeal, resulting in a minibus full of food, essentials and Christmas goodies being taken to those in need of help and some Christmas cheer! The staff and volunteers at the foodbank couldn't believe the donations were all from one school. Our Youth SVP team are also making and writing Christmas cards for the emergency services, those in hospital and residents of St Michael's Hospice.

Thanks also for your support at our recent Advent Fayre. I'm sure you will agree that the pupils who ran the various stalls had worked really hard, and their efforts led to the fantastic sum of £3,217 being raised for the PTFA and Cafod.

May I remind you that tomorrow is a half-day at school, during which we will come together as a community for carols, hymns and prayers before breaking up for the holidays.

We are holding our Carol Concert this evening at 6pm in the hall and it would be lovely to see you all there.

I am looking forward so much to working with you and your children in 2025, and want to thank you again for your commitment to St Mary's.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas and a happy new year.



Stuart Wetson
Headteacher

