



Diocese of St. Albans



ST MARY'S
CE HIGH SCHOOL

13th September 2019

Dear Parents and Carers

I am delighted to welcome you to my first letter home.

I am honoured to be the Head Teacher of St Mary's CE High School and when I was considering applying for the Headship, I read some quotes about the school that made me excited about being the Head Teacher: *'Pupils were welcoming and spoke openly about their sense of belonging to the St Mary's High School community. The pupils like coming to the school because the adults who work with them know them well.'* I have certainly found your children welcoming when I have met with them – they talk warmly about the school and I am learning a lot about the community through them; they are a credit to you and the school. Another quote I read stated: *'the inclusive and personalised approach to learning rooted in the Christian values of love, trust, compassion and forgiveness'*. I was raised a Christian and these values have always been important to me; I am delighted to be Head Teacher of a school whose values so closely match my own.

I have been a school leader for a total of 15 years in Hertfordshire, London and, most recently, in Buckinghamshire and have always taught in mixed, all-ability schools serving children from a wide range of abilities, backgrounds, cultures and communities. The roles I have had as a school leader have ranged from responsibility for the curriculum and Heads of Department, to Safeguarding and Inclusion.

I am intending to write to you every fortnight to share with you news about the students and what they are doing in school. I hope it will give you a sense of what we do and make you feel more involved in the life of the school.

We had some great news about one of our students when we returned after the summer holiday. A young man in Year 11 plays American Football for the Hertfordshire Cheetahs. This year the team played very well and became the Under 17 Southern Conference Champions. Over the summer, this student was scouted by Team GB to play for England. His mum said: "We are all extremely proud of him... and this has now motivated him to do well in his coming GCSE year." We are very proud of him too!

Continuing with sports, just before we broke up for the summer, a team of three boys won the inaugural QUAD KIDS athletics competition (made up of Hurdles, Long Jump, Javelin and 800m) with one of them achieving second place in the individual competition. At a similar time, some of our girls competed in the Nicky Morris Athletics competition against 18 schools and came away in 3rd place overall.

In July, our winning song-writing team performed at 'The Rock Assembly' (a multi-schools event organised by the Transformation Trust). The student songwriters won the opportunity to perform their own song at Wembley Arena, and we took a large group of students to watch them, as a rewards trip. The song, "This Generation", captures and refreshingly celebrates the positivity of their generation and provides a very high standard of evidence to support the performance units in their Level 2 Music qualifications, to be completed in 2020.

Following the results over the summer, we are delighted to welcome back our largest Year 12 cohort ever. Last Thursday, our new Year 12 students took part in an Independent Learning Conference. It was a three-hour session with The Life Skills Company covering the following topics: Speed and Skim Reading, Effective Note Taking, Condensing Text, Time Management and Presentation Skills.

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Lieutenant Ellis Way, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire EN7 5FB t: 01992 629124 f: 01992 643354
e: admin@st-maryshigh.herts.sch.uk w: www.st-maryshigh.herts.sch.uk
Head Teacher: Mr Nicholas Simms B.Sc. (Hons), NPQH

'A good school' Ofsted May 2018

'An outstanding church school' SIAMS May 2015

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The change from GCSEs to A level/Level 3 BTECs can be a difficult one, and we recognise many students find the adjustment tricky in the first weeks of Year 12. This programme will give students the skills they need to study effectively both in lessons and at home, and we will continue to support them in their journey to the end of Year 13. If you do not follow our 6th Form Twitter account, please do. The name is @SMHSixth and there are some photographs of this event on their feed.

In addition to supporting the new Sixth Form with their studies, we are doing something similar with Year 10. Students are focusing on revision in form time to help support with their exams in November. These activities require each student to bring in a piece of revision to form every morning, where they are able to work together to support each other with revision. If you have a child in Year 10, perhaps ask them about this activity and find out how their work and revision is going; we all know it is better to prepare for exams over a longer period than to cram at the last minute, and this activity is designed to develop that culture in the students.

You will know we take attendance very seriously, and do not as a general rule authorise absence. However, if your child is genuinely ill and you need to keep them off school please remember that all absences (and lateness) need to be reported on the direct line for attendance: 01992 642918.

I would like to remind all parents/carers and students that next Tuesday (17th September) is the school's Secondary Transition evening. **Students will be dismissed from school at 12.20pm on this day.** The school transport has been adjusted to leave site at 12.40pm.

I will end by saying what a pleasure it has been to get to know more of your children over the last two weeks. I have been impressed by their behaviour, standard of uniform and maturity when I talk with them. I say again, they are a credit to you!

I wish you all a very happy weekend.



Nicholas Simms
Head Teacher

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