

December Newsletter

Dear Parents

The last day of the autumn term has arrived and what a busy term it has been right to the very end with three lovely Christmas events, beginning with the Early Years Nativity on Wednesday 6th December; the Infant Nativity on Tuesday 12th and the Junior Carol Service on Wednesday 13th December. Each was a joyous occasion and I know that you were all as proud of the children as I was.

Events such as these don't happen by chance and I am, as always, indebted to the wonderful staff of St. John's School for everything which they do for the children.



Our journey towards Christmas began on Sunday 3rd December with the Advent Fair. The turnout was amazing and thanks to your support we made a profit of £3,090! My thanks to everyone that supported; to everyone that ran a stall; to everyone that helped set up before the event and/or tidy away at the end of the day. Our PTFA is fantastic and the work it undertakes immense. A special thank you to Anna Michael, our wonderful PTFA Chair, for many years of dedicated service to the school and for the thousands of pounds raised during this time – every penny spent or to be spent upon the children.

As you will have seen, our early years climbing frame was replaced last week. Nothing is inexpensive these days and you may be surprised to know that this little construction cost around £14,000 (Including VAT). It is of course money well spent considering the years

of fun the children will get from it. My gratitude to the Friern Barnet Education Trust who very generously donated £8,000 towards the cost of the project. The Trust have always been great supporters of the school and every year they contribute significant sums of money towards special projects and purchases as well as towards our wider curriculum trips and workshops, which without a large subsidy from the Trust would not happen.

As mentioned in a recent newsletter, schools are struggling to make ends meet during these most challenging of times. Since Covid, parent voluntary contributions have fallen considerably and this reduction in income for the school from both the Governors' Maintenance Fund and the Wider Curriculum could make it impossible for us to continue with the current rich level of provision in the near future (support for the wider curriculum is at an all-time low, around 50% compared to 98% in 2020). Thank you to all who currently support and to those who don't, please do consider part payment or payment in-full so that we can protect our unique offer moving forward into 2024.

Our junior climbing frame has been removed due to safety concerns. The PTFA have committed to funding its removal and helping towards the cost of tarmacking the space and turning it into a proper basketball court. This project will happen next term. The children will love it!



I am very pleased that Ms. Dobie will be 'taking over the reins' in January and I offer her my congratulations upon her appointment as the new Head Teacher of St. John's. I know that the school will grow and prosper under her intelligent and compassionate leadership and I am thrilled to know that the school will be in such safe hands. I also know that you will offer her the same generous support which I have always enjoyed and that by working in harmony, St. John's will continue to be a remarkable school; '.... a school that is truly at the heart of its community' and '.... a small school in a big city' (Ofsted, September 2023).

I am also very pleased to inform you that Mrs. Horne will be the Acting Deputy Head Teacher from January. Once again, this is good news for the school as, like Ms. Dobie, Mrs. Horne is a very experienced teacher who knows the school well and been instrumental in our development over time. My congratulations to her too.

I write this, my final newsletter, with some emotion as I approach my final day as Head Teacher of this wonderful school. Being Head at St. John's for almost twenty-one years has been the greatest privilege and I consider myself so lucky to have been a part of such a remarkable school and school community for such a length of time.

St. John's is and always will be a great school thanks to the people who are here:

- The staff and governors - past and present - remarkable people. I am indebted to each and every one of them.
- You, the parents whose support I have always relied upon and been so grateful to receive; that is not the experience of every head teacher and I therefore consider myself very fortunate indeed.
- And of course, last but never least, your fabulous children who bring joy into all of our lives on a daily basis.

They deserve so much and that is why we all work so hard together to serve their interests to the very best of our abilities.

I consider myself a lucky man indeed to have had a job for forty-four years which I have always enjoyed and found so rewarding. When my career draws to a close at the end of this week I will have so many happy memories to cherish and take with me. Thank you all for being a part of something which will always remain so special to me.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Yours sincerely

Graham Gunn