



St Ralph Sherwin

Catholic Multi Academy Trust



Our Journey Together

- news from across the St Ralph Sherwin Trust

FEBRUARY 2020

ISSUE 9



Welcome back to our first St Ralph Sherwin Newsletter of 2020. The Christmas festivities seem a long

time ago now! We pushed back the publication of this newsletter so that we could capture some of the amazing work and events which were taking place in our schools in the lead up to Christmas. A New Year always brings with it many new challenges and opportunities. Here are a couple:

At our Feast Day in December I announced the first St Ralph Sherwin Staff Awards/Charity Fundraiser to take place on Saturday 4 July 2020 at

Pride Park. We have so many outstanding colleagues who work in our schools, who may go unseen and/or unrecognised for the work they do and this is an opportunity to acknowledge their amazing contributions. If you wish to nominate someone from any of our schools please use this link: <https://www.srscmat.co.uk/celebrating-staff-awards/> We are also looking forward to our first Trust Teaching and Learning INSET Day on Monday 24 February. Saint Benedict and St Mary's schools in Derby will be between them hosting the event. To make the day 'extra special' we are also hosting the Regional Schools Commissioners' meetings at Saint Benedict school on that afternoon.

This is a huge honour for the Trust and we shall have CEOs and

Chairs of Trusts from all over the Midlands and the Humber regions attend this event.

We will take this opportunity to showcase all that is great about Saint Benedict school and our Trust.

This is a relatively short half-term and by the time you read this newsletter February half-term may be very close. All of our colleagues work so hard, so I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a restful half-term break when it arrives and to thank you for your continued hard work and commitment to your schools and our Trust.

Sean McClafferty

TWO SCHOOLS CELEBRATE TOP ACHIEVEMENTS



Saint Benedict CVA and St Mary's CVA are both celebrating fantastic news. St Mary's CVA was named the top state-funded primary school in Derbyshire in the Real Schools Guide 2020 while Saint Benedict CVA Sixth Form



was top in Derby and the Diocese on the A level progress measure with a score of 0.23. That figure also put the Sixth Form in the top eight per cent in the country. Well done to the staff and students at both schools, what a fantastic achievement!



Joe Hopkins
Trust
Lead Lay
Chaplain

Celebrate
being
ordinary

Often we are told that January can be one of the most depressing times in the year, slumped in the 'post-Christmas blues' and feeling a long time away from the summer. I must say I have never found January to be that depressing, I'm not sure if it is due to my clinging on to the joy of Christmas like a climber clinging on to a cliff edge or my complete disinterest in making New Year's resolutions that I know I can't keep. Traditionally in the Church we keep celebrating Christmas until the celebration of the feast of the Presentation of the Lord (or Candlemas) on 2nd February. Although I have never had the bottle to try to keep my tree up until then.

However it is clear to see that in our society there is a shift between December and January. The great window into this is the supermarket shelves. January 2nd sees the booze being moved out of sight and enticing offers on cereal and exercise gear. Quite interestingly we see Easter Eggs and chocolate being shoved at us at the same time. My take on this is that society doesn't know what to do with itself at this time of the year. We want to set goals but we

also feel they are impossible to keep so what is the point? I believe that New Year's resolutions fail as we are faced with a finish line that is 365 days away or a set target that, even if we get close to it, doesn't feel like success unless we smash it! Instead of set targets and far off finish lines let's follow the Church's example and have themed seasons. Seasons work really well in the Church, Advent fills us with hope and expectation, Lent helps focus us on reconciliation and renewal; Easter and Christmas are seasons

"We need to acknowledge that we have good days and bad days, but we keep going."

of joy and celebration. Ordinary Time is the season our society needs. It is both exercise gear and chocolate! It has great feasts and celebrations and the everyday normality of living out our faith. If you want to focus on an area of your life to improve – health, fitness, knowledge, time for the family; why not set aside a period of time of say four to six weeks? Instead of setting a goal that will leave you feeling guilty when you don't reach it; set a broad theme such as 'I want to improve my fitness.' If you go from running for 10 mins to 12, that is an improvement, rather than I will run a marathon in June! I say this

not to set low standards but to acknowledge that we need to be kinder to ourselves. We need to acknowledge that we have good days and bad days, but we keep going. In Lent we are encouraged to focus on prayer, fasting and almsgiving; we are not told we must do 12 rosaries a day, survive on bread and water and then clear our accounts. We are encouraged to have a focus, to acknowledge that we are in need of discipline, but as they say in the world of cycling, it is the marginal gains that make the difference.

In the remaining weeks of ordinary time, I invite you to focus on finding God in the ordinary; you know what this will look like for you. It could be when you get in the car in the morning before turning on the radio you ask Jesus to be with you in the day ahead. It could be that before you go to sleep you try to find 3 moments in the day that you want to give thanks for. It could be that you find 5 minutes to read some of the Bible – the Gospel of Matthew is what is being read on the Sundays of the year, try exploring that. If you fail to do it, there is always tomorrow. Ordinary time is being present in the moment, acknowledging God is with me right now and he is calling me to serve him in this moment. The January blues are the opposite, it is about looking back at what has been and gone, and what is still not here and then knowing that you are in neither of those moments.

So, enjoy celebrating the ordinary.

A world-renowned DJ and former student returned to inspire students at Blessed Robert Sutton Catholic Voluntary Academy.

As well as hosting a question and answer session with students, Nathan Dawe also greeted some of his former teachers and was given a tour of the school.

He said: "I'm really eager to see if it's changed; it's surreal. It was a nice community and everyone helped and encouraged me. I enjoyed my time here and I've still got the friendship group that I had when I was here. It's just nice to come back and see teachers who were here when I was and to meet the kids."



THE PRIORY CELEBRATES 'GOOD' RATING FROM OFSTED

The Priory Catholic Voluntary Academy is celebrating after being rated 'Good' in all areas by OFSTED.

Inspectors visited the school in Eastwood for two days in November 2019 and assessed the following areas: the quality of education; behaviour; personal development; leadership and management and early years provision. In the report, inspectors praised behaviour among the pupils. They said: "Pupils are polite and well behaved. They show good manners to all. Pupils respect each other's differences. Incidents of bullying are very rare."

Helen Williams HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector), Lead Inspector, wrote: "Leaders want pupils to gain a broad range of knowledge which will help them to discover where their talents lie. The curriculum is well organised. It is designed to help pupils remember what



they have learned and to build on previous learning. "Pupils behave well in class. They have positive attitudes to learning and they achieve well. Teachers are passionate about developing pupils' love of reading.

"Teachers read to pupils with great gusto. Their storytelling has pupils rapt and wanting to hear more." She also said that teachers found creative ways to help pupils develop their knowledge. Inspectors said that pupils talked confidently about, and showed respect for, a range of different faiths and cultures. The report said: "They (children) have a wide range of opportunities in school. They can join eco club or learn how to meditate. Older pupils help

younger ones at lunchtime and with their reading."

The report also said that safeguarding arrangements were effective and that staff knew families well and worked closely with them to provide support when needed.

Headteacher Anthony Harrison said: "The school community is really pleased that the inspectors recognised the achievements of pupils across our rich and varied curriculum. "The report rightly celebrates our pupils, who are joyous in their care for one another and for the world around them. In consistently living out the school's mission, they show that they have wonderful attributes, helping them to develop their personal strengths and successes."

NEW HEADTEACHER APPOINTED AT SJHCVA

The new headteacher at Saint John Houghton Catholic Voluntary Academy has outlined his vision for the future of the school and its students.

Steve Brogan was previously Deputy Headteacher at Saint John Houghton, in Kirk Hallam, for two years after moving there from Christ the King Catholic Voluntary Academy in Arnold, where he was an Assistant Headteacher.

Mr Brogan has now been appointed the Headteacher of Saint John Houghton CVA by the Saint Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust.

His vision is to deliver a world class Catholic education for the students of Saint John Houghton CVA.

He said: "I know it's a lofty ambition, and one which



will not be achieved overnight, but it is one that I hold and that I am determined to deliver."

Governance Matters

In our fourth term as a Trust, things are as busy as ever in the world of governance! The appointment of our Governance Manager, Sherri Medcalf, in September 2019 has helped to support the Trust Board (all of whom are volunteers, as are our Local Governors) in managing communication with our 24 Local Governing Bodies. Responses from LGBs on website reviews, succession plans etc are now coming through more quickly than they did last year which is great. Chairs' Symposia continue twice each term and in January for the first time, the symposium was held in three locations, connecting between Ilkeston, Glossop and Derby via a video link. The Chairs' Symposia are open to all governors and holding this in three locations enabled many new governors to participate. These sessions, now chaired by Sherri, are supported by Sean and

me with each of us being at one of the three different locations. Feedback was positive and the plan is to hold the next two sessions via video link, with the final session of the year in June being all together in Matlock, the location used for all six sessions in our first year. Improving two-way communication between the Trust Board and LGBs is one of the three key areas of focus in the LGB Development Plan for 2019-20. In support of this Sherri launched a twice-termly governance newsletter with a roundup of information and updates for governors. It also includes responses to questions sent through to the Trust Board following LGB meetings each half-term. Also, as part of improving communication, all Trust Board Foundation Directors have been paired up with a number of schools and are attending at least one LGB meeting this year for each of their paired schools. This is in addition to their Trust Board meetings which means that one

Director will have attended 29 meetings by the end of this school year and another 27.

To support governors in their roles, several training courses have been delivered, with more to follow, and attendance at most of these has been good, with online modules also being available for governors. Trust Board Directors also join the Directors of the other three CMATs in the Diocese for termly training days provided by the NRCDES.

If you have any questions about governance, or know someone who might be interested in becoming a governor in one of our LGBs or joining the Trust Board please contact Sherri Medcalf on 0300-369-0553 ext 863 or smedcalf@srsrscmat.co.uk



Jacqueline Rodden
Chair of the Trust Board

Pupils at St Alban's Catholic Voluntary Academy are enjoying a new library and nurture space which has been transformed by staff. The old school library has been revamped with new bookcases, books and furniture, a new carpet, blinds, newly decorated walls and vibrant literary themed displays.

Many of the older books have been sold or passed on and new books have been purchased and added to the library.

A nurture space has also been created within the library, which is an area where children who need extra emotional support can benefit



from play therapy. Deputy headteacher Kate Johnson said everyone was thrilled with the new space. She said: "Children can come in here to listen to stories and they can choose their own books. "You wouldn't recognise the space now compared to how it looked before."



New classrooms at Christ the King Catholic Voluntary Academy were blessed and officially opened during a ceremony held just before Christmas. Pupils, parents and staff joined together to celebrate the opening of the new facilities.