

9<sup>th</sup> December 2011

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Christmas update**

Much has happened over the last few months at School. The extension has been completed - and this really has made a difference to the feel of the School, in that we have an entrance where you don't have to stand outside in the cold waiting for someone to hear you and let you in. More importantly, it has released space to allow for children to be taught in small groups or individually (rather than in the Hall or a corridor), as well as making a separate School office, a staff room and a Hall which is much freer of tables, chairs and equipment. We are hoping that the Hall will very soon have a new ceiling and then be decorated.

All this does not happen by chance. The School has to plan for such developments and to have the funds to pay for them. In this letter, I describe how we arrive at our plans, the results of last summer's questionnaire to parents and how we fund the running of the School.

### **School Development and Improvement Plan.**

Each year the School prepares a School Development and Improvement Plan which is approved by the Governors. In arriving at that plan, we take account of:

- trends in our pupils' progress and our targets for them during their time at School up to their sitting the KS2 SATS exams in their final year;
- our needs for staffing, building and equipment;
- our relationships with our "stakeholders", particularly our parents and the community around us;
- parents' views, especially those expressed in response to our questionnaires;
- the 'big' strategic risks which could affect the School (these are mainly risks which, if they were to occur, could lead to a significant reduction in pupil numbers and hence affect the School's viability);
- comparisons of our School's financial and operating statistics with those of similar schools, ie by benchmarking.

The Governing Body in its meeting in November approved this year's SDIP. A summary of the main aspects of the SDIP are set out in Appendix 1 to this letter.

### **Summer Questionnaire for Parents**

In the summer the School sent a questionnaire with 50 questions for parents to answer giving their views of their child's time at St Katharine's. We are most grateful to those

parents who completed the questionnaire - the information provided by you has been very helpful to Governors. The School asked parents to complete a separate return for each child and we received a total of 29 returns. This means that we had a response rate of nearly 40% - a good result (but could do better!). Whilst it appeared that, overall, parents were happy with the education their children are receiving and their time at school, some broad themes emerged. These themes (and the Governors' responses to them) are as follows:

1. a small number of parents (17% of the responses received) thought that the School premises could be smartened up - *hopefully the extension and the work on the school hall will go a long way to meet these comments;*
2. a minority of parents (14% of responses) thought that they were not being given enough information on their child's progress and how they could support their child or they (the parents) were not being given enough encouragement to participate - *we are encouraging parents to come to parent evenings and we are putting on workshops to inform parents on how particular parts of the curriculum are being taught and to help them support their children. We would also remind parents that teachers are approachable and are very willing to discuss any individual queries that parents may have;*
3. Whilst most parents were happy with the amount of homework that their children were being given, a minority of parents (30% of responses) thought that they were being given too much - *whilst we will keep the amount of homework under review, we do not propose to make any significant change at the moment;*
4. Some parents (21% of responses) thought that the system of rewarding children could be made more effective - *we have made changes to the rewards system as from September. We have introduced Golden Time which is 30 minutes of free time (on Friday afternoons) for all children, where they get to choose a fun activity. Children who misbehave may lose some or all of this time. Golden Time is linked to the School's Golden Rules and is intended to promote good behaviour and good learning attitudes. We believe that it is having a good impact on children's progress in learning. We also have learning points awarded by teachers which are linked to the 5 learning to learn skills ('what makes a good learner' skills); these are celebrated in Celebration Worship with a certificate to take home.*
5. Some parents (24% of responses) thought that there were not enough after school clubs - *this term we introduced more after school clubs and lunch time clubs but they are dependent on there being a sufficient number of children participating in them on a regular basis and on the activity being financially viable; sometimes it has been hard to find a suitable person capable and willing to run a club.*

We have also looked at all the comments included in the responses. Many of these reflected themes which are covered by the points mentioned above. Others covered points which we were already thinking about. For instance, the question of parking was mentioned. This has been a long running concern for the Governors; we have looked at numerous suggestions for long term and short term solutions. We hope that filling the holes along the verge next to the macrocarpa hedge will improve the position slightly for a short period at least but we are continuing to pursue this issue. In this

connection, thank you to those parents who completed the recent travel survey questionnaire - when we have considered the returns in detail, we will be in touch with you again. Another example was the suggestion to make more use of the Forest and the environment around the School - we are looking into this already.

### **School Finances**

One area which the Governors keep under close scrutiny is the funding of the School. Over 95% of our funds come from our Local Authority; the rest is made up mainly of payments from parents for swimming, trips and similar activities, as well donations from the PTA. With cuts in the services being provided by the Local Authority, it is ever more important to ensure that funds are spent effectively.

Part of our funding is ring-fenced for capital items such as premises and certain ICT expenditure. The cost of the recent extension was paid for mainly out of the School's capital funds, though we also had to use a small amount of our revenue reserves, together with a top-up grant from the Local Authority. This has left us with no capital funds until we receive further capital funding from the Local Authority next financial year (starting 1 April 2012) - this is expected to be a very small amount.

The rest of our funding (revenue funding) can generally be used for any purpose. Last year (ie year to 31 March 2011) about 78% of our total (non-capital) costs went on staff pay and training (£268,472). A further 12% went on premises and grounds maintenance, energy and other occupation costs, and on administration supplies and services, leaving around 10% for learning (including ICT) resources and services (including outside specialist teachers). These figures have been fairly consistent over recent years and (according to our benchmarking information) are not out of line with other similar schools. The current year's costs are expected to be similar. Further details of our financial performance in the year to 31 March 2011, together with the current year's budget, are set out in Appendix 2.

Our income from the LA depends to a significant extent on the number of pupils on the School's Roll at a date in January. The payments which we received from the LA for the current financial year to 31 March 2012 were calculated from the number on roll in January 2011 which was 74 pupils. We currently have 79 pupils and, if this figure remains unchanged in January next year, our income should increase somewhat. We are currently about to review our ICT needs and hope that the increase in pupil numbers may enable some money to be made available for ICT improvements. However, we have not had any indication from the LA of the level of funds which we are likely to receive from them next year.

I hope that you have found this letter of some interest. Please feel free to contact me if you would like further information. You will appreciate that I will not be able to give you specific information about any individual at School, including any child of yours or any other child.

Finally, on behalf of all the *Governors* I wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Yours sincerely

P R J Holland  
Chair of *Governors*

PS: A copy of this letter will be put on the School's website, [public.merlin.swgfl.org.uk/establishments/8653023](https://public.merlin.swgfl.org.uk/establishments/8653023)

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **School Development and Improvement Plan - Summary**

1. **Teaching And Learning**
  - Raising attainment and accelerating progress;
  - Improving the quality of teaching and use of assessment to support learning;
  - Improving the conditions for learning, eg learning to learn skills and behaviour, also our ICT review;
  - Leading on learning: developing the School as a professional learning community.
  
2. **Staffing**
  - Reducing the burden of management and administration, eg by use of Cluster appointed employees.
  
3. **Grounds And Buildings**
  - Improve parking arrangements
  - Monitor playground space
  
4. **Links With Parents And Community**
  - Put PR activities on structured basis
  
5. **Governors**
  - Fair spread of *Governors'* activities and duties, with appropriate training
  
6. **Governmental Reforms**
  - Adapt to take account of new regimes from national and local government
  
7. **Community Cohesion**
  - Continue to develop links locally, nationally and internationally.

## APPENDIX 2

### Financial Results For Year To 31 March 2011 and Current Year's Budget

Summary accounts	2010/11	Budget 2011/12
<u>Revenue income:</u>		
LA funding, inc pupil related payment	325,198	325,673
Pupil premium, grants and payments	7,183	7,380
Other income	<u>8,699</u>	<u>5,651</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>341,081</u></b>	<b><u>338,704</u></b>
<u>Revenue expenditure</u>		
Teaching staff	188,219	185,480
Non-teaching staff	74,302	74,644
Indirect staff expenses, training	5,951	5,102
Premises	29,140	19,597
Educational supplies etc	35,250	36,150
Office and other costs	<u>13,588</u>	<u>19,551</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>346,450</u></b>	<b><u>340,524</u></b>
<u>Revenue deficit for year</u>	<u>-5,369</u>	<u>-1,820</u>
Rev rollover/contingency at year end	<u>16,799</u>	<u>14,979</u>
<u>Capital:</u>		
Rollover at start of year	44,836	50,067
Income	7,579	14,878
Expenditure	- 2,348	-64,945
<u>Rollover at end of year</u>	<u>50,067</u>	<u>0</u>

PRJH 8 Dec 2011