



The Federation of  
**St Joseph's, & St Thomas More,**  
Roman Catholic, Voluntary Aided  
Primary Schools



9<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

### **UPDATE FROM THE GOVERNING BODY**

We write on behalf of the Governing Body near the end of what has been a challenging and unparalleled Academic Year for all members of the school community. We trust and pray that this letter finds you and your family safe and well.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding as the staff seek to manage these unusual and difficult circumstances. The Governing Body would like to thank Mr Norman and all members of teaching and support staff at both schools for their commitment and dedication during the lockdown and more recently the partial reopening of our schools. Preparations are now well underway for the planned full opening of schools in September 2020. These plans will be shared with you, in writing, before the end of the academic year.

### **Staff Leaving**

At the end of the Academic Year we will be saying thank you and goodbye to three members of staff.

Mrs Megan Clark has been Year 3/4 teacher at St Thomas More since 2015 following successful teacher training at St Joseph's the previous year. She has been an inspirational RE and Collective worship leader and we are sure she will continue to thrive in her new role at St Mary Magdalene. We thank her for all that she has done for our schools and families and we wish her every success and happiness in the future. Mrs Belton is returning from maternity leave and so we say goodbye to Miss Fisher. Miss Fisher has thoroughly enjoyed working at St Thomas More this year, we thank her for her work and wish her every success in the future.

We also say goodbye to Mr Pete Norman. Mr Norman joined St Thomas More in January 2015 for a temporary position as deputy headteacher. He stayed with us and in 2017 he became executive deputy across both schools in the federation and in 2019 he stepped up to be acting executive headteacher. We thank him for his calm, considered and committed approach. He will be greatly missed but we wish him every success as he takes up a permanent position in the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust, as headteacher at St Bede's Catholic Primary School, Darlington.

### **Staff Joining**

In September we will be welcoming new members of staff. Mr John Trueman joins the Federation, taking over from Mrs Clark as Year 3/4 class teacher at St Thomas More. Mr Trueman has worked with us before as a supply teacher at both of our federation schools and has always been a valued member of the team. We will also be welcoming back Mrs Rebecca Sheahan at St Joseph's as a higher level teaching assistant. Mrs Sheahan previously worked as a part time class teacher while Mrs Smith was on maternity leave and we are delighted that she will be returning to the team, albeit in a different role. We wish them every blessing and happiness in their new roles.

### **The Future**

The last few months have brought many challenges for all members of the school community and the Governing Body is committed to ensuring the future of Catholic Education in this part of the Durham Martyrs' Parish, in whatever form that might take. What is clear is that the current arrangements are, and have been for some time, unsustainable and

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must be addressed urgently. The Governing Body began the consultation process for possible academisation earlier this term. However, the due diligence process highlighted that there are significant areas of concern regarding the sustainability of the Federation in its current form. Throughout the process the Governing Body was supported by the Diocese, the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust and Durham County Council. The Governing Body has received formal recommendations from these three partners on next steps and we will communicate these to all members of the school community in September 2020.

The Governing Body is receiving ongoing support from the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust and the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. A key part of this support is securing experienced and talented interim leadership for the federation during this important period of transition and change over the next 12 months.

We should be able to make an announcement about this interim appointment before the end of the academic year.


There are many challenges facing our schools at this time. There are many issues that the Governing Body needs to address and many questions that need to be answered. The Governors are a very devoted group of volunteers, who are committed to ensuring the best possible Catholic education for the young people of the parish. However, there are challenges ahead which may mean that change is necessary. We should like to thank, on your behalf, the Governors for their time and commitment.

We ask for your prayers and continued support as we work collectively and seek to serve the children in our schools. In the words of our parish prayer we pray that God will *'give us a strong and positive outlook, times of hope, laughter and celebration and help us to build a community of faith for the service of everyone.'*

Yours faithfully



Daniel P. Murray  
**Chair of Governors**  
**for and on behalf of the Governing Body**



Fr Colm Hayden  
**Parish Priest**