

We have nearly reached the end of the school year, and for our year 6 pupils, after approximately 1,330 days at primary school, the end of a chapter in their education. For our Reception children they are already approximately 14% of their way through primary school. What milestones!

It has been another active and vibrant year in the life of St Nicholas School, with significant events and achievements; at a national, school and personal level. First **opened in 1858** we have a long and cherished history and I hope this newsletter fairly captures some of the highlights from this year's chapter of the story.

Underpinned in all we do as a school are our vision and values **'Believe and Achieve'**.

- Believe in ourselves, those here to help us and God
- Achieve our goals
- Celebrate success in every area of school life

Our **Christian values** of hope, responsibility, kindness and perseverance permeate our learning and activities throughout each school day. **Collective worship** sessions take place in school, and also on Tuesday mornings in St Nicholas Church. A governor recently attended a collective worship service in the hall, planned and led by three Worship Ambassador pupils, with the assistance of curate Cath Da Costa. The theme of the worship was Friends & Friendship with children lighting a candle, saying prayers, singing hymns, hearing a bible reading and engaging in a talk about Friendship. The leaders included a passage from Winnie the Pooh and used slides to engage all the children. In addition, Mrs Crouch spoke about how to be a good friend and what behaviours to use or not use in being kind to others. Parents and carers are welcome to join the Tuesday morning collective worship sessions in Church so do join us next term if you can.

The children came together to join the national mourning of the **death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in September**. Just the week before, Topaz class had received a lovely thank you card from Queen Elizabeth II following her platinum jubilee celebrations. The ebulletin reminded us that through her life she showed us how to appreciate the gift of life through being patient, humble and selfless. The children also enjoyed celebrating the **Coronation of King Charles III** in May. In the Coronation Celebration Worship, Reverend Stamps spoke about the spiritual significance of the Coronation and the choir took part in the Song to the King project led by the Royal School of Church Music. What a scoop that the composer, Jo Forbes, attended our service! The news was tweeted on the school twitter feed <https://twitter.com/StNicsHarpenden>.

The children have continued to work hard and we are proud of the **learning progress and attainment** each pupil has made, both in their daily learning as well as formal assessments. Well done to all the children completing SATs and we hope you are as proud of the results as we are.

Key Stage 1 comparative report

2023 Key Stage 1 SATs results by subject	Percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected standard: St Nicholas (2023)	Percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected standard: Nationally (2022)*
English reading	78%	67%
English writing	70%	58%
Mathematics	87%	68%
Science	95%	77%

Key Stage 2 comparative report

2023 Key Stage 2 SATs results by subject	Percentage of pupils achieving at least the Expected Standard: St Nicholas (2023)	Percentage of pupils achieving at least the Expected Standard: Nationally (2022)*	Percentage of pupils achieving Greater Depth: St Nicholas (2023)	Pupils achieving greater depth: Nationally (2022)*
English reading	83%	73%	50%	27%
English grammar, punctuation and spelling	88%	72%	54%	36%
Mathematics	96%	73%	54%	27%
English writing (teacher assessment)	92%	71%	13%	20%
Science (teacher assessment)	92%	80%	-	-

**Please note: national data is from 2022. National data for 2023 will be published in the autumn term.*

A **broad and balanced curriculum** remains important for happy and engaged children. We are lucky to be able to offer some brilliant clubs, adding fencing and coding as new clubs this year. The school choir has been active and have performed some musical treats, together with heart-warming individual musical performances in assemblies and services. We are hopeful that we can resume a School Orchestra club in 2023/24.

Thank you to all staff involved in planning and running some excellent **school trips** this year, including:

Year 6 PGL residential week away
Year 5 Celtic Harmony residential two days
Diamond - Silverstone
Sapphire - RoboThink discovery centre
Emerald - Roald Dahl museum, Johnson Zoo
Topaz - Neasden Temple
Garnet - Hammonds End farm

There have also been numerous **workshops** adding to the vibrancy of the learning experience. This has included a Viking workshop for Sapphire and the Wind in the Willows theatre and Brazilian capoeira dance workshops for all classes. I was in school for the latter and it was lively!

On the **Sports** front, the children continue to have opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities. Swimming continues for all year groups, Year 5 complete their Bikeability training, and there has been competitive participation as a school in chess, football (boys and girls), tag rugby, netball, rounders, kwik cricket and athletics. In District Sports, St Nicholas came third out of 8 small schools in Harpenden. Sports Day was well attended and enjoyable with St David's House winning this year. Well done to everyone for your sporting endeavours during the year, both in and outside of school time.

Only when you pause to look back on the year do you also realise just how many **special days** are celebrated, all presenting important learning opportunities; Chinese new year, Safer internet day, Mental health week, Poetry day, World book day, Odd socks day during Anti-bullying week, Christmas jumper day, Sport relief / Red nose day, World earth day, World music day, World wellbeing week, Talent show.... The list could go on!

Parental support for all of the activities above can't be underestimated and your engagement as parents and carers is hugely appreciated by the staff and pupils. At home, reading with your children, encouraging homework and developing online safety skills is critical. We also appreciate your attendance at events, assemblies, nativity shows and parent workshops e.g. reading, online safety, mindfulness; all important opportunities to come together as a school community and enrich our shared learning needs.

Supplementing the school-led activities, the **PTA** members have once again generously given their time, creativity and energy to organise a wide range of activities for the pupils and their families. Highlights have included the Christmas fair, school disco, fun run, family quiz night, Valentine's Day "love yourself day" and the remarkable gate design!, film night, Easter bonnet parade, Easter trail at Hammonds End, lambing visits, family bingo, frozen fridays. The recent Summer Ball was also tremendously successful raising a staggering £10k. The PTA only succeeds with the involvement of many rather than a few. Thank you particularly to Abbie Winters and Rachael de los Reyes-Churchill who are stepping down from the PTA Exec at the end of this term - you have both been amazing! Thank you to Sara Longden for becoming PTA Chair from September. Please consider how you can give some of your time, in whatever capacity you are able, to sustain an active and successful PTA - "many hands make light work".

Thank you to Mrs Crouch and all members of staff for their commitment and care for the school. At Easter, we said farewell to Mrs Birss, and at the end of this term we will say farewell to Mrs Kieran, Mrs Weldon and Mrs Hill who have all made significant contributions to the life of St Nicholas School during their time with us. Of particular note is Mrs Kieran who has achieved a remarkable 30-years of service at St Nicholas. This is a significant milestone and we were delighted to present her with a Bishop's Certificate this week, awarded on behalf of the Bishop of St Albans for 'Living with Christian distinctiveness and generous service'. We wish them all the best in their futures. Their contributions are too numerous to mention but please give them a huge thank you if you see them before the end of term. They all have a special place in our hearts as they leave for their new challenges.

We look forward to welcoming Miss Machell who will be teaching in Emerald from September. The staffing for 2023/24 is:

- Garnet – Miss Robertson
- Topaz – Mrs Hammerson & Mrs Williams
- Emerald – Miss Machell & Mrs Jayes
- Sapphire – Dr Cherniaeva
- Diamond – Mrs Kennett

The incredible staff team is supported by wonderful teaching assistants, midday supervisors, special educational needs support, the school office, the Herts Catering team, and Mr Higley as (Premier league Luton Town FC supporting!) caretaker. We also continue to work closely with Lucie Allen and Becca Brown at The Club, Simon Price at Team Horizon and other club providers. What a team!

Finally, thank you to all of the **Governors** who give a significant amount of time to bring their skills and experience to the governing body. During the year we welcomed Mary Jean Pritchard to the governing body. We are also looking forward to new governors joining us in the Autumn term to replace some long standing governors who are stepping down, including a warm welcome to Charlotte McCrossin, who will start her governor role in September. A special mention to Delia Bonner, who is retiring after 13-years of outstanding service as a Governor, including 5-years as Chair of Governors from 2013-2018. Delia has been magnificent, applying her previous 40-years teaching experience in her governor role at St Nicholas and we will miss her wisdom and pragmatism. I am delighted that Delia has also been awarded a Bishop's Certificate in recognition of her generous service.

We will let you know the nomination details for a parent governor vacancy when term resumes in September and hope you will consider putting yourself forward.

So, it is onwards to the summer holiday; a wonderful chance for renewal with opportunities to learn and develop through time spent with friends and family. Before you become fully immersed in the holiday season, do take a moment to reflect on your own school experiences this year, particularly those for which you are thankful.

I hope you have a relaxed, creative and enjoyable break.

Caroline Fleming
Chair of Governors