

# St Helen's and St Mary's Primary School Partnership

## Growing together, pursuing life in all its fullness

### Partnership News

Edition 2—Summer 2020

#### About 'Partnership News':

The partnership between St Mary's and St Helen's was established in June 2019. Our main aim since then has been to work together to enhance the learning and experiences of the children. Already, the work of the partnership is making an impact in both of the schools. We wanted to share some examples of this with you and so have launched 'Partnership News'. We'll publish a newsletter like this three times per year, in the Spring, Summer and Autumn terms. We hope you enjoy finding out about what has been going on! *Andy Spens, Executive Headteacher*

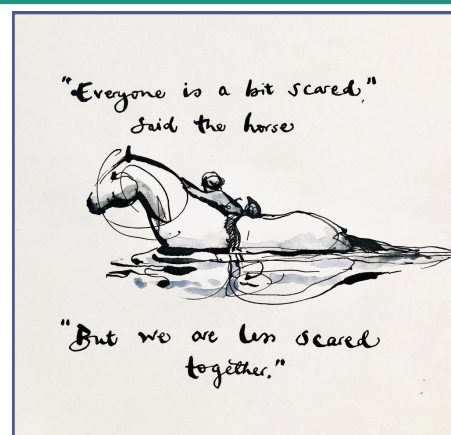
#### The partnership during COVID-19, by Mr Spens

I wonder what the most overused words and phrases have been since the COVID-19 period began? Definitely 'new normal' and 'unprecedented' would be up there near the top of the list! These have been the most extraordinary times that we have lived through.

One of the aims of the partnership from the very beginning was that the two schools would provide support for each other. Little did we know that we would be facing a global pandemic so early on! It's not been easy and we won't have got everything right, but it certainly has been the case that we have been stronger together.

Whether it was redesigning the way that we would reopen more widely from 1st June with a group of senior leaders and governors from both schools, or solving the problem of not being able to gather for assemblies by putting together a partnership programme of Youtube assemblies with both of the clergy teams, the schools have worked more closely than ever through this time.

A personal highlight were two particular collaborative and creative ideas which showed how much we can achieve when we pull together. These were the 'Captain Tom' style challenges which raised over £11,000 for the Southmead Hospital Charity and the 'Looking to the Rainbow' song which children and staff from both schools recorded together. ( <https://youtu.be/OzPwbb6gzng> )



This edition of 'Partnership News' profiles many of the things that have been going on and also looks ahead to the 2020/2021 academic year. As we look ahead to September and our plans for all of the children to return, I wanted to thank you for your continued support over what has been an incredibly challenging time for us all.

Thank-you for everything you have done to support your children at home and for working with us at both schools so positively.

I hope that you and your families have a great summer and wish the departing Year 6s every success into the future. It has been great to have them in school for their final term at primary school.

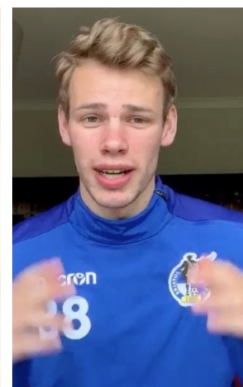
## 'Captain Tom' challenges raised £11,791 for Southmead Hospital Charity

Inspired by Captain Tom Moore, children and staff from St Helen's and St Mary's undertook a week of sponsored challenges raising money for the Southmead Hospital Charity. Over the week, children ran, walked, bounced, pogoed, swam, skipped, cycled and a whole lot more besides to do their bit for the staff, patients and families of Southmead Hospital.

Smashing our original target, we raised an unbelievable amount of money and even made it onto BBC Points West! It shows how much more we can achieve when we do it together! A huge thank-you to all of the parents, families and friends who supported us through the week!



## Captain Tom's Challenge!



Helen's, Alveston & St Mary's, Yate  
'Captain Tom' challenge for:



Starts Monday 27th April and runs for 1 week until Monday 4th May





### **An update from governors on making final decisions on the Partnership:**

*The Partnership Board, which consists of governors and senior staff from both schools, has continued to monitor the operation of the partnership. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, the Board had been evaluating the partnership and seen many indications that it was proving successful. For example, the joint development of the curriculum showed that the partnership could have a significant positive impact on the day-to-day lives of both schools. There is more information on this below.*

*The Partnership Board was due to collect and consider opinions from across the school community and beyond, and make recommendations to the governing boards of both schools before the end of this academic year. Each governing board would then make an independent final decision as to whether to continue the partnership based on the best interests of their school. However, when the Partnership Board met after the COVID-19 outbreak, it was agreed that the evaluation process should be extended. We felt that during lockdown was not the right time to speak to parents and carers, staff and other key groups on this topic, and that it would limit Governors' ability to fully consider the impacts of the partnership on our two schools.*

*The final decision on whether to continue the partnership will now be taken in December of this year, and in September the Partnership Board will gather the views from all key groups in order to help the Governing Boards make their decisions.*

**Neil Martin (Co-Chair of Governors, St Helen's) & Charlie De Nobriga (Chair of Governors, St Mary's)**

### **Curriculum Design for 2020/2021**

Over the last academic year, one of the most significant pieces of work that we have done as a Partnership is the design of a new approach to the wider curriculum in our schools. Driving this forward has been a working party of teachers from both schools working alongside an independent teaching and learning consultant to support its development. This has been really successful and was particularly noted during the OFSTED inspection at St Helen's in December.

Getting our curriculum right for the children in September is really important to us. Children will have had different experiences during lockdown and so we have been working hard behind the scenes to develop an approach to the curriculum for September which will help our children to:

- **Reconnect** with their friends and their school community
- **Respond** to themselves, their emotions and to the world around
- **Re-establish foundations** – quickly identify learning gaps and prioritise the teaching of key skills in English and Maths

Our curriculum for September will be centred around the value of 'Hope' and as part of their topic, children will be learning about key figures from the past who have overcome challenge and brought hope to their friends, families and communities.



Year 1 and 2 teachers working together in an online planning session with our 'School Improvement Partner' and Teaching and Learning consultant Vicky Gordon.

## Other Partnership activities:

Although the Boards of Governors of both schools have yet to make final decisions about whether to continue the partnership, we want to continue to make the most of the opportunities it presents to us. We have also been considering what the future of the partnership looks like, and how we would take it forward into the next academic year. In particular :

- Our Year 1 and Year 2 teachers will be working together over the next 12 months along with teachers from Raysfield to develop a play-based approach to teaching in our Year 1 class at St Helen's and Year 1/2 classes at St Mary's. They will be working with our School Improvement Partner, learning from the latest research and implementing 'continuous provision' in their classrooms. We're looking forward to seeing the impact of their learning over the next year.
- Both schools are currently working with a company to redesign their school websites ready for a September launch. Working together has enabled us to save money, but also develop some consistency between the two websites, whilst keeping an individual school 'look and feel'. We look forward to sharing it with you in the new academic year!
- Next year, one of our goals as a partnership will be to further develop subject leadership in each of our schools by linking up subject leaders and working more closely together to develop expertise in particular subjects and share our knowledge. During lockdown, our art leaders and geography leaders have been working together to develop a clear progression of skills for both schools in their subject areas.



### Partnership for Excellence

Collaborating at all levels, building capacity for leadership and striving for excellence.

### Partnership for Enjoyment

Enriching our learning and experiences, fostering enjoyment.

### Partnership for Exploration

Continuously improving, innovating and exploring.

### Partnership for Achievement

Working together to raise outcomes, keeping children's achievement at the very centre.

