Dear Parish Council

Thank you for the invite to your Parish Council meeting. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend so have sent this report in order to update you about Mary Howard primary school.

For those of you who do not know me, I am Rachel Mills and I have been Executive Headteacher of Mary Howard and St. Andrew’s, in Clifton Campville since 17th April 2023. Previously, I was Headteacher of The Howard, in Elford, for five years so I understand the importance, pressures and benefits of small village schools. I am passionate about small schools and know how important it is to work with the local community in order for our younger generations to thrive.

The school currently has 44 children and 7 members of staff. Our pupil admission numbers (PAN) are 9 children per year group. As we have children from Reception to Year 6, we can accommodate 63 children in total so at this point we are undersubscribed. We are set to welcome five new children into our Reception intake in September 2024 and eleven Year 6’s will move on to their chosen High School, which is predominantly John Taylor. From September we will only have 38 children in whole school. We are trying to sustain three classes so that we attract new parents.

Going forward, we need to raise the profile of Mary Howard and make sure that we are the first choice of parents in the village and the local area. It is imperative that the number of pupils increases in order for the school to be sustainable.

At Mary Howard, our children get an exceptional school experience with high expectations and small class sizes, in a nurturing and calm environment. Our children are happy and feel cared for and do well in all areas of the curriculum. We are on our journey to develop outdoor learning and Forest School for all children, so that we utilise our beautiful surroundings and help our children grow and flourish and find affinity with nature and the environment.

We have strong links with the church and are extremely lucky to have the support of Rev Nicky, Rev. John Grice and Sarah Ennis, who play an integral part in our school. They have fully supported our new vision and our values which we launched in September 2024.

The parable of the mustard seed inspires us that even from very small beginnings, something amazing can grow. At Mary Howard, we are aspirational for the future of all our pupils and adults, in that they will learn how to grow and flourish as healthy and fulfilled individuals who are passionate about life and learning. Our core value is Koinonia, which comes from the Greek work meaning community or fellowship that involves deep, close-knit participation amongst its people. Koinonia is underpinned by our chosen values of Love, Wisdom and Perseverance to which our children and staff live out each and every day.

In April 2024, we joined the Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust (TSSMAT), which now has six small schools, five of which are also Church of England. They include St. Andrew’s in Clifton Campville; The Howard, Elford; Richard Crosse, Kings Bromley; St. Mary’s, Colton; and Anson in Great Hayward. We believe that being part of this MAT will enhance our provision and provide invaluable support. The CEO is Mrs Charlene Gethin, mostly accompanied by her little pug, Ralph.

Best wishes

Rachel Mills (Executive Headteacher of Mary Howard and St Andrew’s)