

St Mary's RC PS Parent Council

Welcome to this year's first Parent Council Newsletter. First of all, please accept my apologies for the lack of updates last year. I had a particularly busy and hectic year and with one thing and another, putting a newsletter together always seemed to escape me. I would like to thank all of the Parent Council members for their support and hard work. I would like to thank all the parents for supporting the Parent Council. Through your continued support of the PC and the school, we purchased a new Smartboard for the library. We also bought a large amount of soft furnishings and other items that have made the library a much more pleasant and engaging environment for the children.

The issue of school dinners was addressed once again, following a number of comments from parents and pupils. Mrs Laird and I met with Margaret McKenzie, the Catering Services Manager. We put the issues to her and improvements have now been put in place. These will be continually monitored to ensure they are maintained. Please speak to a member of the Parent Council or myself if you have any comments, good or bad.

As some of you may be aware, there have been a number of rumours surrounding the future of St Mary's Primary. Some of these have been linked to the old Hopefield Primary site. The Parent Council meeting held on Tuesday 20th October had one main agenda item – the future of St Mary's RC PS, and was attended by Councillors Milligan, Constable and Baxter, Father Allan, Vic Bourne, Catholic Representative on Education Committee and Sandra Banks, Resource Manager for Midlothian Council. At this meeting information was shared about plans for Denominational and non - Denominational education provision for Lasswade and Bonnyrigg, which is also part of the wider school catchment review. Key pieces of information which should squash any rumours are:

- Midlothian Council need to make a decision about the use of the Hopefield site by December 2015 – Councillors recognised that the rebuilding of a school provides the best return from the insurers – proposal going to cabinet for approval in November 2015.
- There will then be a pre consultation period between now and Christmas to gather views about the proposed school on the Hopefield site. One of the options that the Parent Council will strongly pursue is to have St Mary's moved from its current site to a new school there. This would allow St Mary's to remain at the centre of the community and would mean the school was located closer to the Church.
- A fuller consultation will be carried out during 2016 to make final decisions about the use of the Hopefield site including the possible re-location of St Mary's. Due to the size of the site at Hopefield, there is the opportunity to build a school that could support more than one stream i.e. more than one class of each age group. There are also the options of denominational / non-denominational school mixing, as well as the possibility to build other community resources.
- Sandra Banks will be looking for representation from the school, Parent Council, Parish Council, wider local community to form a consultation group. I hope that as many parents as possible will engage with the wider consultation process.
- It is hoped that a decision about the new school can be made by August 2016 with a new school opening by August 2018. **There is no guarantee this will be a new St Mary's.**
- No decision has been made about the marketing of Dundas Buildings or interim use of the buildings but Bob Constable gave assurances that the security of an empty building and St Mary's will be paramount.

In summary

- **No decision has been made about relocating St Mary's but it is a possibility, and this will be our key focus during the consultation process.**
- **No decision has been made about the current site ie selling off/demolishing the school and this will not happen until a full consultation process has been followed.**

Paul Baker
Parent Council - Chair