



Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy

... Hope - Joy - Fulfilment



Welcome to Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy



Foreword: **Mrs Kate Hayles,** **Headteacher, says...**

It is with great pride that I welcome you to our wonderful school. We attempt to live the values taught by Jesus, and defined by the sacramental tradition of the Catholic Church.

Hope, joy and fulfilment

We believe that God's Spirit is at work in everyone in our community. We will provide an environment of hope, joy and fulfilment in which the skills to fulfil God's desires for us, as unique individuals, are cultivated.

All faiths welcome

All faiths are welcome. We believe that diversity within school encourages respect and better reflects, and prepares children for, the world outside of school.

Igniting an interest in the world

Our teaching is stimulating and creative, and encourages our children to continue their education outside of school, and become lifelong learners. We want to ignite an interest in the world around them, and for that interest to lead to fulfilling and imaginative lives. Learning should be fun!

Pastoral care

Whilst academic achievements are an important part of life at our school, all our children also have the opportunity to enjoy a wide variety of sporting and musical opportunities, as well as regular trips and residential visits. Our pastoral care is exceptional, ensuring all children are kept safe and are supported both inside and outside school.

Dedicated staff

I am also very proud of our exceptionally experienced and dedicated staff, who ensure that all our children are well supported to achieve their true potential, and work hard with families to overcome any barriers to learning.

Parent partnership

Another very important part of our school is you, the parent! As you will see, by reading the many parent and pupil stories within this prospectus, you and your child are very important to us. We champion the link between school and parent and work very hard to involve you in every step of your child's time here...and increase your child's enjoyment of learning.

Get in touch

Please come and visit our school. I am confident you will find it a welcoming and supportive environment, with staff who listen, consult and actively encourage your involvement. To make an appointment to visit, simply call the school office on 0116 2624418.

Claire was close to despair because of her son's learning difficulties but Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy has reinforced her faith in the power of care and commitment

Claire Cummins lives in Leicester with her children Tamara, 13, Kayden, nine and Jace, who is eight years old.

The extra mile

It is fairly obvious that Claire did not choose the Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy for her children because of its location. Twice a day, she walks the two miles there and back but believes it is worth every single step. "Although there are other schools which are much closer, for me, Sacred Heart has been and continues to be my absolute rock. Without the support it has given our whole family I am not quite sure where we would be; certainly not in the happy place I feel I am now."

A Christian ethos

There were two main reasons why Claire applied to Sacred Heart: firstly, its excellent reputation which was borne out by the experience of family and friends, and secondly, its very strong Christian ethos as Claire's faith is of the utmost importance to her. "Those two factors in themselves would have drawn me towards Sacred Heart but there is so much more about the Academy that I have come to value greatly," she explains. "The atmosphere is lovely and the staff are nothing short of amazing. For very different reasons, all my children have flourished there."

Debt of gratitude

Now at secondary school, Tamara is a high achiever and Claire attributes this largely to the strong academic grounding she was given at Sacred Heart. Kayden has also increased in confidence through the sensitive approach of his teachers, but it is perhaps because of Jace that Claire feels a huge debt of gratitude to the Academy. "I had known for quite a while that Jace was not achieving the milestones expected for his age but I turned a blind eye, thinking that he would catch up when he started school. However, when he was in Year 2 his teacher gently suggested that his problems were greater than we had thought and I began to fear that the Academy might suggest we consider a specialist setting for him."

Determination to help

Claire's fears were unfounded, and even before Jace received an eventual diagnosis of ADHD and severe learning difficulties, the Academy put a range of measures into place to ensure he could stay in mainstream education. "They set the ball rolling immediately, offered extra tuition for him as well as one-to-one classroom support, and they were incredibly understanding in terms of his behavioural problems. What I found most impressive was that everyone was so determined to help, not just Jace but our whole family, as Jace's condition presented us all with major challenges."

Vital support

When the children were late arriving at the Academy because of the problems involved in getting Jace up in the morning, their teachers provided catch-up lessons to make sure they didn't fall behind with their work. They also, says Claire, offered vital support to her when she was almost in despair. "It is hard to describe the extent to which our lives were affected by Jace's condition but his teachers completely understood what we were going through as a family and have been there for us every step of the way. They have not only very effectively supported Jace in his education but they have wiped my tears on many occasions, and become wonderful friends."

Beyond expectations

During the last 12 months in particular, Jace has progressed beyond Claire's expectations. "He is reading now, able to count and is starting to understand colours and shapes, and although that might sound like a small achievement, for Jace it is brilliant. Because of the dedication of the teachers and their commitment, Jace's prospects are so much better than I could have hoped."



Children say

Kayden: "Sacred Heart is the place where I found all my friends."

Tamara: "The teachers were always fair and always did what was best."

Jace: "I like my teachers, a lot."

School day



The school gates open at 8.50am, for the start of the school day at 8.55am. School finishes at 3.00pm.

Breakfast Club

We have a fantastic Breakfast Club from 8.15am each morning. Children are offered toast, a choice of cereal and juice, and also have time to read, draw and play games before the start of school.

Uniform

We expect to see all children in a school uniform. This ensures the children look smart, which in turn, encourages them to take pride in their school and approach learning in the right frame of mind. A school uniform helps promote a sense of belonging and community.

School meals and snacks

Children have the choice of either a hot nutritious meal from the on-site kitchen or bringing a packed lunch into school. Free school meals are available to Key Stage 1 children and to those children whose parents are in receipt of income support.

Break-time and drinks

Under the Fruit in School Scheme Key Stage 1 children are entitled to a piece of fruit each day free of charge. This is given as a playtime snack. Key Stage 2 are welcome to bring a healthy snack from home. Water is available throughout the day although children are encouraged to bring to school a plastic water bottle.

Milk is provided free to pupils under five and those who are eligible to receive free school meals. Milk is available to other pupils through the Milk in Schools Scheme for a small charge.



Sinikiwe wanted an Academy which would uphold and reinforce her Christian principles, and she has found that and much more at the Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy

Sinikiwe Mabena lives in Leicester with her partner and her daughters Zoleka, 11 and Zama, nine.

Upholding the principles of faith

Moving to a new Academy is a major step for any child, especially when they are seven and nine years old as Zoleka and Zama were when they started at the Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy. Not only that, but they had also not long moved to the UK from their native Zimbabwe so they faced a greater challenge than most. It was largely for this reason that Sinikiwe chose Sacred Heart, an Academy which has offered her and her daughters the continuity she looked for:

"Our Christian faith is very important to us and the girls had attended a Catholic Convent in Zimbabwe. When we came to England I wanted to find an Academy which would support and reinforce our faith, and I have found that at Sacred Heart, where day-to-day Academy life revolves around the principles we live by at home. I feel like we have found another family and I could not ask for more than the Academy has given us."

Helping parents to help their children

Because formal education in the UK starts earlier than in Zimbabwe, Zoleka and Zama were behind their classmates when they started at Sacred Heart. However, through a process of assessment and booster classes in reading and maths, they have started to catch up well. In addition, Sinikiwe herself has been given advice and guidance so she can support her daughters at home. "The teachers have given up their own time to give the girls extra reading and maths lessons," she

says. "They have also arranged to give the girls extra homework assignments, as well as showing me ways that I can help them and this has all made such a difference. Because I work full-time I don't always have the chance to sit down and read with them at home, and sometimes the maths is taught in a way I'm not used to. When I mentioned this to the teachers, they took the time to explain things to me, and gave me some simple but effective ideas."

Support network

Another major bonus for Sinikiwe is the Breakfast Club provision, which means that she can drop the girls at the Academy on her way to her job as a nurse, and the fact that the Academy takes responsibility for handing them over to their after-Academy care at the end of the day. "It means I don't have to worry about anything while I'm at work. What is really nice is that I heard about the childcare we use from another parent at the Academy: Sacred Heart has become a wonderful support network in all sorts of ways. I frequently meet other parents and teachers at the church we attend near our home so we feel like a part of a lovely community."

Common ground

The girls' integration into the Academy was made easier, believes Sinikiwe, not only because of the diversity amongst its families but through the faith the children and their parents share. "Zoleka and Zama's ethnic background is not unique in the Academy so they never felt out of place, but most importantly, many of the families share a strong Christian belief so we have at least that in common. There are many reasons why I feel very fortunate that my daughters were given the chance to attend Sacred Heart but this is probably the one that means the most to me – the fact that it has given us the ability to maintain and demonstrate our faith."



Children say

Zoleka: "I enjoy being at Sacred Heart because I feel like I'm part of a big family."

Zama: "I've made lots of friends and enjoy all that I've learned so far."

Curriculum: *developing the whole person*



Living life to the full

We believe that our mission in educating children, is not simply to impart information. It is about forming the human person, equipping him or her to live life to the full...and is most importantly about imparting wisdom!

All teaching and learning is focussed on the uniqueness of each person made in God's image and likeness. Here is the development of understanding that God has placed a desire for happiness in every human person, and by God's gifts of reason and free will, human beings are capable of knowing and choosing good and rejecting all that is wrong.

Learning

The curriculum is divided into three stages:

1. **Early Years Foundation Stage:** ages 0-5
2. **Key Stage 1:** from ages 5-7
3. **Key Stage 2:** from ages 7-11

Reception

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum is based on seven areas of learning:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Key Stages 1-2

Areas of the curriculum are:

- Mathematics
- Literacy
- Science
- Information and Design Technology
- History
- Geography
- Art
- Music
- Physical Education
- Religious Education
- Health
- Citizenship
- Personal and Social Education.



Renata expected something very different from Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy – but found something even more valuable

Renata Jenkins lives in Leicester with her son, Azaine, who is 10 years old.

First choice

Renata already knew a lot about the Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy before she had Azaine having worked there as a Lunchtime Supervisor, but she has come to know and appreciate it even more since her son became a pupil there. Azaine is on the autistic spectrum and there have, says Renata, been a great deal of ups and downs during the last few years.

“I always wanted to get Azaine into Sacred Heart because I knew what a lovely school it was. I enjoyed working there and liked the staff and the atmosphere, and it would have been my first choice in any situation. However, when it turned out that Azaine had some problems I wasn’t sure he would be able to stay there after Nursery.”

Bending over backwards to help

Renata need not have worried. As it became evident that Azaine would need extra support the school did everything possible to provide it. “We eventually got a diagnosis when Azaine was six and the school staff did a great deal to help with that,” Renata says. “They arranged for professionals to assess him and for one-to-one classroom assistance, and at the same time kept me completely in the loop. They have made many allowances for him, such as enabling him to leave the room when he finds it hard to cope and needs the chance to calm down, and have adapted his studies so that he can learn in his own way, at his own pace. They have bent over backwards for him and he has made a lot of progress because of the way he’s been cared for.”

Strong commitment

Sacred Heart has a very strong commitment to every one of its pupils, however challenging they might be, and although Azaine can present difficult behaviour at times, measures are in place to

address this. The sensitive approach adopted by his teachers has helped him to realise what is expected of him, to understand and accept boundaries and to keep him on track as far as his classwork is concerned. His teachers have seen him make big strides in every way and Renata could not appreciate more the support both she and her son have been offered.

Recognising strengths

One thing in particular which has made a positive difference to Azaine is the way in which he has been given specific responsibilities within the school. “Despite his other difficulties, Azaine can be sensible and trustworthy and his teachers recognise that these traits should be celebrated,” Renata explains. “He is entrusted to supervise in the Infant playground at lunchtime and he takes the task very seriously, making sure the younger children are safe and happy, and that there is no bullying or poor behaviour. It means a lot to him to be given something useful to do, and he does it well.”

A new insight

In common with most parents of autistic children, Renata had little experience of the condition before she had Azaine. Wanting to find out as much as possible about how best to help her son, she has attended several courses designed to help her understand the condition. “The Autism Awareness courses have been very useful and given me an insight into how Azaine’s mind works, and how I can help him, but it can all be quite overwhelming. I really appreciated that the teacher he had at the time was prepared to learn alongside me, and then this year, his new class teacher has also gone above and beyond anything I could have asked for, and it is important to me that this dedication is recognised. No-one could have done more and I have never had to feel alone in coping with this, thanks to Sacred Heart.”



Collective worship: *spiritual, physical, social and the intellectual*



Praise

We believe that Christian worship in a Catholic School is concerned with giving glory, honour, praise and thanks to God. It is our loving response, in word and action, to God's invitation to enter into a relationship with Him. All Acts of Worship in this school will:

- Give glory and honour to God.
- Give children positive liturgical experiences, appropriate to their age, aptitude and family backgrounds, in order to prepare them for the Liturgical Life of the Church.
- Be simple, including a range of experiences offered in a variety of groupings and in a variety of settings.

Spiritual, physical, social and intellectual

At our school, the growth and development of the whole child is considered paramount, as human life is a blend of the spiritual, physical, social and the intellectual. We believe prayer, worship and liturgy should be valued experiences, which are an integral part of the daily life of the school. The school will not function in isolation and will endeavour to forge strong links with homes, parishes and the wider community.

In desperation, Maria turned to Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy for help and found nothing but the best possible care and compassion

Maria and her children live in Leicester. Jack is nine and Jennie is six years old.

Desperate times

Pastoral care is taken very seriously at the Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy, and no-one knows this better than Maria. Financial hardship and family breakdown had caused her and her children a great deal of distress through no fault of their own and Maria has nothing but gratitude for the support so generously given by the school staff.

Mental and physical abuse by her partner left her no option but to move out of the family home but with no financial support and an expired passport, she was in a desperate position. The emergency accommodation in which she and the children were obliged to live was dirty and dilapidated, and adjacent flats were occupied by people who presented potential danger. Maria and the children lived in constant fear, but with no means of getting a job because of her immigration status and her limited English, Maria was at a complete loss.

Nowhere else to turn

Maria is not ashamed to admit that there were occasions when she broke down at school, finally approaching teachers to ask for help. With no family close by and little knowledge of where else to turn, it was only the school she could look to, and she will never forget how it has made all the difference.

Jack in particular was badly affected by the situation at home and this had a very negative effect on his work and behaviour at school. His teachers were quick to realise the situation and arranged for him to see a Social Worker who has close links with Sacred Heart and who was able to help him come to terms with the traumatic events he had experienced. Crucially, she was also in a position to advise Maria about how to apply for the state support she urgently needed in order to find more suitable accommodation, to obtain work and to legalise her residency in

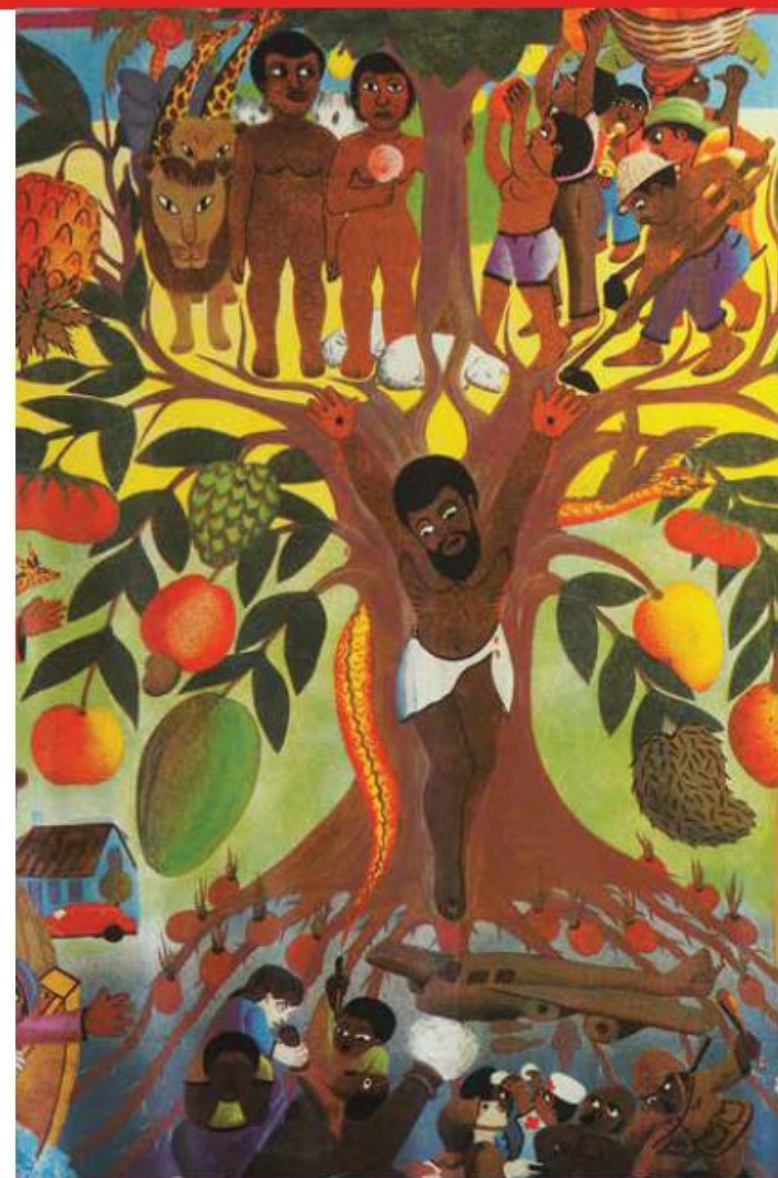
the UK. Whilst Maria's application is still ongoing, she knows that at least she no longer has to cope alone with an unfamiliar and confusing system.

Maria's story

"It all started two years ago when my partner started drinking and being physically and emotionally abusive towards both me and our children. I was going into school crying and I asked to speak to one of the teachers who I knew spoke Italian, as I spoke very little English at the time. Everyone at the school was very kind and keen to help, and after a conversation with the social worker who works at the school I was put in touch with the Safe Project and the local City Council. I had been so afraid that because of my situation at home, with no legal documents or ID, my children would be taken away from me. At Sacred Heart I was treated with great kindness and understanding; no-one ever judged me, only comforted and helped me in many ways, and it was only because of this support that I have been able to make a new life for myself and my children.

"Sadly, our desperate circumstances had a very bad effect upon Jack. He was at a vulnerable age and his behaviour deteriorated, mimicking that of his father and our neighbours. I became even more depressed, feeling I had absolutely no control of any aspect of our lives and I believe it is only through the hard work of Jack's teachers, both within school and in other aspects, that he was able to get back on track and to being my lovely son again.

"Sacred Heart is amazing and I could not ask for a better place for my children. The staff are incredible; they have always been very positive in their attitude and nothing has been too much trouble. No-one could possibly ask for more."



Inclusion: *a curriculum for all*



Special Educational Needs

Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy values the abilities and achievements of all of its pupils and is committed to providing each pupil the best possible environment for learning. We recognise and embrace that good quality teaching for all is vital to unlocking their potential.

Appropriate provision

The Special Educational Needs (SEN) policy of our school outlines the procedures for early identification, continual assessment, appropriate provision, record keeping and the involvement of

outside agencies. In the implementation of the policy resources are allocated to pupils after identifying need and determining priorities.

Additional support

Children progress at different rates and every effort is made within the school to cater for this. Children who have special educational needs may receive additional advice and support from the local authority's Special Needs Support Service and other agencies. All children have access to the full curriculum and work is planned accordingly.

Gifted and talented children

We recognise that all children are individuals with their own specific needs, gifts and talents. Children who are identified as being exceptionally able or talented, are monitored and provided with stimulating and enriching lessons appropriate to their needs. Opportunities are sought for such pupils to meet and work with similarly gifted pupils in the area.

Behaviour and self-development



Honesty and compassion

The mission of the school is based on the teaching of Jesus Christ. Our commitment is to fully develop the individual, with a focus on principles including

- Honesty
- Truth
- Tolerance
- Compassion.



School rules and rewards

We have a few school rules, which are made clear to all the children, referred to in class and in assemblies, and displayed around the school.

Positive behaviour

We have a positive behaviour management code and good behaviour is encouraged, recognised and rewarded. Good effort and achievements are rewarded publicly.



Enriched curriculum: *trips, visits and clubs*

Trips

To further enrich our curriculum, all children are offered a range of visits which are connected with work in the classroom. We make visits locally and further afield and invite visitors into school from the wider community. Parents are encouraged to accompany us on these trips and all children should take part in them. Previous trips have included:

- Space Centre, Leicester
- Stonehurst Farm, Mountsorrel
- Sealife Centre, Hunstanton.

Residential trips and visitors

Older children have the opportunity to go on residential trips during the school year. These experiences can help to develop qualities of self-reliance and tolerance of others. Children learn independence and develop confidence. Additionally, we arrange visits to the school by theatre groups and those with professional expertise such as singers, artists and musicians etc.

Clubs

There is a wide variety of lunchtime and afterschool clubs for children to enjoy. Recent examples include:

- Homework Club
- Maths Booster Classes
- Books Club
- Gymnastics
- Basketball
- Football
- Multi-sport.



Sport

PE is a vital part of the school curriculum. PE is not only about playing sport though, it helps teach the children the importance of healthy lifestyles and improves their learning skills and concentration for lessons.

Some children have greater needs than others, and that is why Hanan wants to say 'thank you' to the Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy for its support for her and her family

Hanan Nour has two children at Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy. Mariam is seven and Adam, six years old.

A loving and caring atmosphere

The most crucial aspect of the Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy as far as Hanan is concerned is probably the loving and caring atmosphere she describes, and how that has been such a great support to her and her children. "As both Mariam and Adam have some learning and developmental problems, it was important to me that they should be in the right education environment. I knew that they should be in a mainstream school but there were few that could address my children's needs. It was only Sacred Heart that I felt was able to take care of them as I would wish."

Complete understanding

Mariam is on the autism spectrum with associated speech and language problems, and although Adam is bright and perceptive in many ways, he has been influenced by his sister's condition. "Adam also has some difficulties with his speech and behaviour, probably because of Mariam's example," says Hanan. "I really appreciate the fact that the school has done a huge amount to help both of them, and made sure they have been supported individually. Sacred Heart fully understands what my children need, and have gone out of the way to make sure they get it."

Friendly and family-focussed

Mariam has had one-to-one classroom assistance since she started in Year 1 and as a result is more or less at the academic standard expected for her age. Her speech problems have been supported not only through her GP but with a therapist at school, and this has also helped her social skills and enabled her to form close friendships. "Sacred Heart is such a friendly and family-orientated place and that has really helped Mariam to socialise," says Hanan. "In a bigger or less accepting school she might have struggled to cope but now she is so happy and she loves being there."

Massive progress

Adam's problems are perhaps more complex but, again, Hanan is very pleased with how Sacred Heart has addressed these. His teachers are also impressed with his improvement and have seen how he has changed. "Adam has benefited hugely from the small-group teaching that we thought it appropriate to provide and has made massive progress. For a while he found it very difficult to accept the school environment and was uninterested in learning but he is now completely engaged with education – a total transformation!"

Support through stressful times

It is not just its pupils that Sacred Heart looks to support but their families, too. Hanan knows from experience just how caring the school is. "When Mariam had to go to hospital, and when I have needed to get to a doctor, someone has come with me if I needed it. I have been through some very stressful times but always, Sacred Heart has been there for me. And it's not just me – I have seen how other parents, in other circumstances, are supported, too."

Nowhere better

Hanan has family elsewhere in the country and would like to move to be closer to them but whilst Mariam and Adam are at the Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy that will not happen: "I could not move my children, however much I would like to be with my family. There is no other school which could do what Sacred Heart is doing for Mariam and Adam – and for me."

Not miracles but promises

Sacred Heart cannot perform miracles, but it has without doubt been a factor in helping children to make the most of their potential, despite any disadvantages they might have, and promises to do everything possible to achieve that: "The amazing teaching methods, wonderful staff and lovely environment mean everything to me," says Hanan. "I am so very lucky that my children have been able to benefit from such a school as this."



Admissions



Admission into Reception

Admission arrangements are co-ordinated by your Local Education Authority. This will be either Leicestershire or Leicester City, depending on where you live. It is important that you complete the Local Authority Admission Application Form AND the Supplementary Form when applying for a place.

Admission into other year groups

If you are considering Sacred Heart for your child, you may find it helpful to arrange an informal visit to the school. Please contact the office to arrange an appointment where we will be very happy to show around our school.

Applications

Please ask about applications at the school office. Forms can be downloaded via the relevant local authority website.

Leicester City:

www.leicester.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/school-and-colleges/school-admissions

Telephone: 0116 454 1009

Leicestershire County Council:

www.leicestershire.gov.uk/popular-now/school-admissions/applying-for-a-school-place

Telephone: 0116 305 6684

Getting involved: *being part of our community*



Parent Staff Association (PSA)

We have an active PSA, which raises additional funds for the children. Every parent is automatically a member; its function is to develop closer links between the parents, teachers and local community and to provide financial support towards educational resources and equipment. The events that are organised vary from year to year and are well supported by our parent community.

Voluntary helpers

We value the contribution of parents and families and actively encourage your help during the school day. Parents and families help with a variety of activities including reading with our children and as extra pairs of hands on educational visits. We accept all help gratefully. All volunteers must have a DBS check before they commence work in school.

Governorship

We have a full and active Governing Body, which includes parent governors as well as representatives from staff, the local authority and the local community. The governing body has range of duties and powers and a general responsibility for the conduct of the school, with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement. This includes setting targets for pupil achievement, managing the school's finances, making sure the curriculum is balanced and broadly based, appointing staff, and reviewing staff performance and pay.

Vacancies for Parent Governors are advertised as they arise.

Do you want to be a Governor?

Our Parent Governors give parents a voice in decision making. They are elected by parents through a ballot. If you are interested in becoming a Governor, please contact the school office.

Our Mission Statement

We believe that God's Spirit is at work in everyone in our community.

We will provide an environment of hope, joy and fulfilment in which the skills to fulfil God's desires for us, as unique individuals, are cultivated.

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