

29 November 2018

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: School Leadership Updates

Mrs Homer

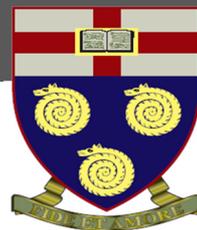
Mrs Homer has formally confirmed to the Governing Board that she will retire at the end of this term. We are enormously grateful for her long and excellent service for St Hilda's and most recently the way she has led the school through a very pleasing Ofsted inspection. Having originally planned to retire at the end of August, we have really appreciated her willingness to stay in post for one extra term before retiring to allow the governors to address the school's future leadership. We hope you will be able to join the school's Christmas service at church, on Thursday 20 December at 9.30am, where we will have the opportunity to say thank you and wish her a very happy retirement.

School Leadership from January

The Governing Board met on Monday to confirm arrangements from January. We are delighted that with the help of Trafford and Manchester Diocese we have been able to put in place first rate support arrangements for school leadership. For the next two terms Simon Bramwell OBE, who is CEO of Vantage Multi Academy Trust and a National Leader in Education, will provide extensive hands-on leadership support to the school, including drawing in other members of his team. We are really excited about this prospect as he has such a well proven track record of developing schools.

As you know, in May this year St Hilda's started discussions with St James's & Emmanuel Multi Academy Trust in Didsbury with the view to joining it. Despite the Trust seeing much in what our school had to offer them, their trustees' 'due diligence' process nevertheless concluded that our funding position was too far away from their other schools' positions to make it a workable fit at this stage in their own development, with one of their schools still in special measures. They felt it risked stretching their leadership too far to support our leadership properly. (You may be interested to know that there is a significant difference in funding between Manchester and Trafford, which played a large part in this decision. For example, the lowest funded school in their Trust receives £651 per pupil more than we do).

Having initially thought this move was likely to go forward, we have therefore had to move quickly to establish alternative arrangements. We have agreed an arrangement for Simon Bramwell to give the leadership support we need after Mrs Homer's retirement. We will also move as quickly as possible to explore whether seeking to join Vantage Multi Academy Trust might be a way forward for the school. This is because it seems to offer very similar opportunities to those we saw for joining with St James & Emmanuel. In the meantime, we need to put in place the



leadership structure for the next two terms while this support and exploration takes place. We will appoint internally a temporary headteacher and two assistant

headteachers. The assistant headteachers will have whole school responsibility but one will focus more on KS2 focus and the other on KS1 and Early Years. We have strong and capable staff, well positioned to work within this model. With the assurance of Simon Bramwell's support, and Trafford and the Diocese keeping a watching brief, we know the school will continue to advance strongly in 2019.

Mrs Homer and Miss McCoy have brought a real focus to improving consistency of teaching and learning and ensuring all children are making the progress they should. This is showing in very good results across school. Some of our results last year were excellent, but also some of our key data was not as strong as we would want. So, we are pleased that this has been robustly addressed this term. Nevertheless, it will be invaluable to have fresh eyes looking at all we do. With the experience that Simon Bramwell can bring to bear, we would anticipate that 2019 will see a further strengthening of our performance along with other initiatives to enrich the school.

The due diligence process we have already undertaken was very helpful to governors and the Senior Leadership team. It has shown us that St Hilda's could indeed prosper and be stronger as part of a Multi-Academy Trust. The opportunities appear to far outweigh the concerns that may exist. There would be greater opportunity to develop and share best practice and excellence in teaching and learning, and our children would have increased access to learning support. Therefore, the Governing Board remain keen to find a viable option for St Hilda's to join a MAT – as long as that MAT's ethos and values are in keeping with our own. If that does not prove possible as quickly as we would like, then we would instead look to return to advertising for a permanent headteacher appointment. We will consider this nearer to Easter, once the support of Simon Bramwell has had time to have an impact and we have been able to look with him and his team at whether Vantage could be the right MAT for us to join.

Once our new structure is in place next term, and the school's new leadership team have had a chance to work with Simon Bramwell and his team, we would like to hold an open forum where parents can hear and ask about the work underway. We would like our school leadership and Simon Bramwell to share about the impact his work is able to have and for him to give some insights from his extensive experience of what could most effectively further improve the school. Depending on whether joining Vantage Multi Academy Trust remains a credible way forward for the school, this would also offer parents a chance to learn more about what that might mean and contribute to our evaluation of this as a possible step for the school.

Yours faithfully,

The Governing Board.