

An introduction to St Mary's

A Catholic community dedicated to achieving excellence for all

A warm welcome

Thank you for your interest in our school. There are a range of factors that determine the “right fit” when making choices for your child’s schooling and we have endeavoured to shine a light on some of them in this brochure.

Our hope is that it provides a flavour of what we believe makes St Mary’s a natural choice for your child’s education and development.

One fundamental element in your decision will be academic opportunities. We set ourselves ambitious targets and consistently find our academic results to be comparable to those of the top performing UK schools. Indeed, we are enjoying a season of breaking our own records.

Equally, I would emphasise faith as a distinguishing factor here. We are a

Faith school for a reason and the Gospel Values underpin the way we approach life within the St Mary’s community. Whatever particular faith you follow, or none, your child will experience pastoral care, support and the opportunity to explore the spiritual side of life.

Combined together, these two elements go a long way in defining our mission statement as “a Catholic community dedicated to achieving excellence for all.” We consider it our purpose to help young people develop and reach their full potential to become fully equipped members of society. Indeed, in a recent survey, 100% of our staff stated that they believe this school does everything it can to push the pupils to achieve their fullest potential.

I believe that there has never been a more exciting time to join our family. We are in the midst of a significant long term investment programme in the school facilities with plans that stretch out many years ahead. As you journey with us, the excitement and opportunities that lie ahead will become increasingly evident. However, be assured that by far the most important development programme on offer is the one that helps your child to become a caring and positive contributor to society.

On behalf of everyone here, I offer you the warmest of welcomes.

Andrew Celano - Head Teacher



“We are enjoying spectacular academic performances, spiritual growth and huge investment in the school. Because of that, I’d say there’s never been a better time to join our community.”

Adding value to your education

“Value added” is one measure of academic achievement. Often called ‘progress’, it’s the difference between the GCSE or A Level grades that a student achieves at St Mary’s compared to those that children of the same ability get on average across the nation.

Naturally, the ambition is to see a positive comparison and in the last few years we have enjoyed the best “value added” results in the school’s history, maintaining a long standing trend.

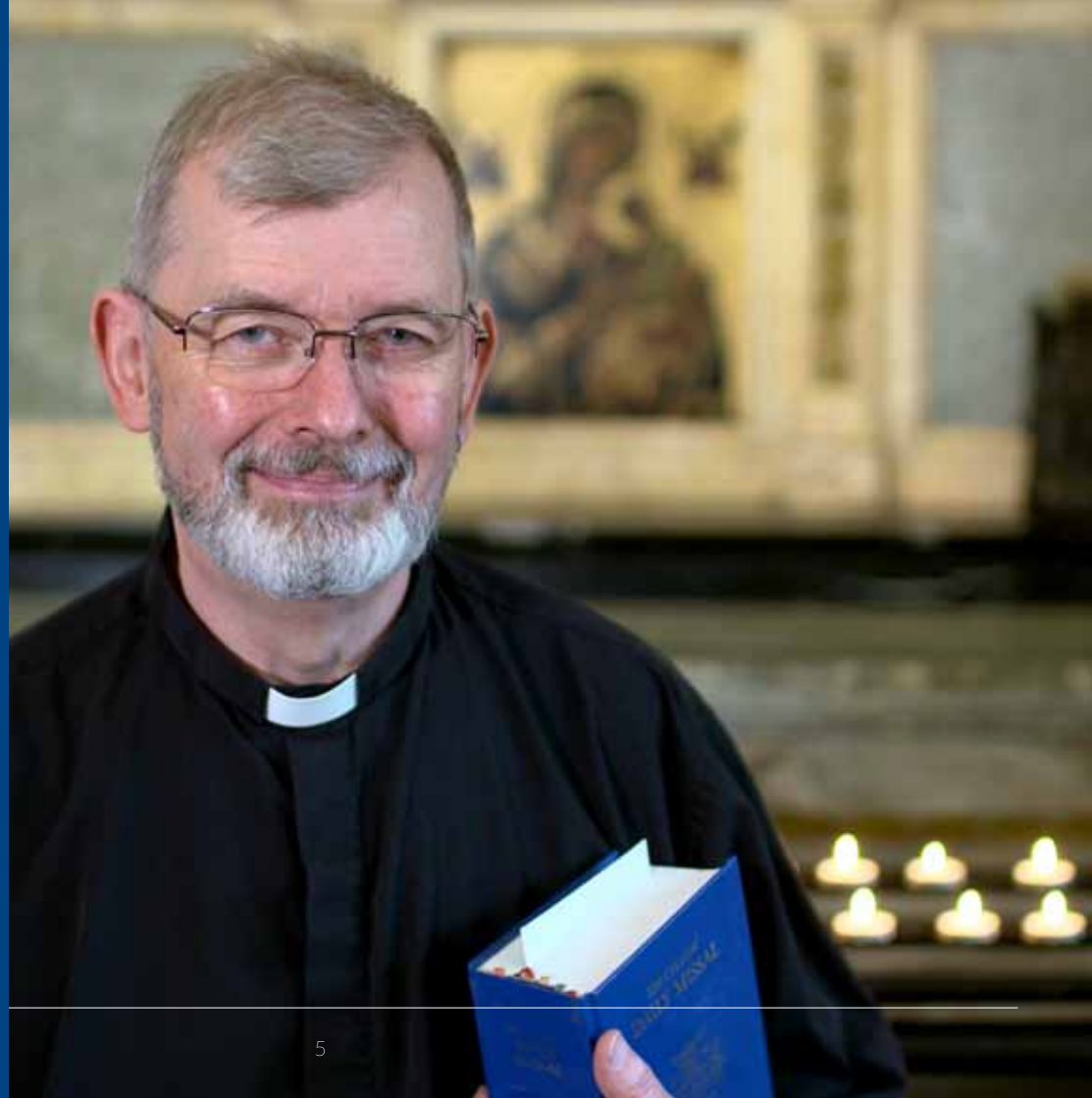
Academic results matter but we have similar ambitions for each and every student as rounded members of our school community and wider society. We consider that to be another crucial element of a student’s education. We aim to see “value added” in terms of their social, moral and cultural development just as evidently and measurably as their ability to achieve exam grades.

Faith in St Mary's

“Faith is the glue that holds the school together. Big questions arise as we grow and discover the world around us – where do we come from, where are we headed and what does it mean to be truly human?”

We believe that Jesus Christ offers answers to those questions and at St Mary's we will support you in exploring those questions yourself. You will learn about faith, the world and its problems, the contribution that you might make and what it means to choose to be good and choose to be kind.”

Father Peter - Parish Priest,
Dean of the Lea Valley and
Foundation Governor



A young woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a dark blue school blazer over a light blue shirt, is smiling warmly at the camera. She is standing outdoors in front of a brick building with a window. The background is slightly blurred, showing greenery and a paved area.

My first week

“The biggest surprise for me is that I have made lots of new friends already. I imagined it would take a long time but everyone has been so kind. There’s always been someone to help me if I have got confused or got lost in such a big place. I can’t wait to try out the new subjects on my timetable and I think I’m going to enjoy myself as I expand my knowledge.” **Amy**

Your first year

At St Mary's you will experience lots of new things. We run a Freshers' Fair where you can sign up to all kinds of clubs ranging from Dodgeball to music, Library clubs to drama in our fully equipped theatre.

In the first term you will go on a day's retreat where you can build friendships and reflect on the journey ahead. You will join the whole school community in our Charity Week, where we put the "fun" in fund raising for a worthy cause.

You can look forward to a diverse, challenging and exciting first year with us.



Part of a team

“You are part of a community, a member of the St Mary’s team. No-one expects you to be perfect, just as long as you try your best. Everyone wants you to succeed and is cheering you on. Come and join in. Oh, and try the pasta in the canteen- it’s great!” **Year 7 Student**, Week One.





Creative Opportunities

“It has been an amazing experience with the Drama department and I have created many memories that have helped me to become the person I am today. It takes a bit of courage to say ‘yes’ to different opportunities but my advice is to do just that.” - **Lucy** (Playing Liesl in the Sound of Music production, far left.)



A passion for teaching

**“I believe language is powerful
and can change people’s lives.**

I have taught here for more than ten years and have always found students ready and willing to learn and, importantly, support each other in learning. It’s that community spirit that sets the school apart; everyone makes progress on their individual journey and every student matters.

Personally, I take great inspiration from colleagues and students as I see them strike the balance between “learning” and “community.” We develop pupils into independent learners, people who can make a difference in their community now and in the future.” **Gillian Heslop**



Best of Friends

The Friends of St Mary's help connect parents of students with the development of the school buildings and facilities.

Over the last 20 years, more than one million pounds has been raised to create entirely new buildings such as the Drama studio and the Sports hall. We have also been able to finance extensions and refurbishments and the Science labs are one of the most recent additions.

We are also looking forward to all kinds of projects that are going to enhance the educational opportunities and spiritual

welfare of students for generations to come. Every student and every staff member deserves the best possible facilities to help them fulfil their potential.

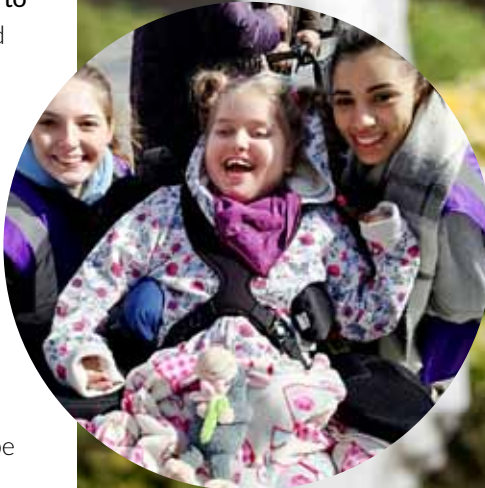
Countless families choose to make voluntary contributions, meaning that the success of the Friends is a true team effort. My children were here twenty years ago and had a fabulous education and in gratitude for that, it is my pleasure to give something back. There is room for everyone to be involved in the team.

Tony Davies - Chair, Friends of St Mary's



A life changing journey

“One of the highlights of my school career was being able to support a group of amazing people with special needs on a ten day trip to Lourdes. Although they needed constant physical care, they actually did more for me than I could ever do for them. Despite their disabilities, their strength and happiness taught me about self-respect and to value the life, talents and blessings that I often take for granted. The love and respect I have for each VIP and leader is the reason why I will be volunteering again.” **Ellie**





Looking back

“When we started at St Mary’s, the Sixth Form seemed a long, long way away but looking back, time does go quite quickly. The majority of students stay on and continue their studies, making it a seven year education experience.

Our advice to you is to really get stuck in during your time here. There are so many opportunities-more than you can imagine right now. We would also encourage you to appreciate the teaching and support staff. They all care deeply about every student and really want everyone to fulfil their potential. There will be times when you will rely on their guidance.

We think the greatest strength of the school is its sense of community and have both learnt how special St Mary’s is. You’ll love it here.” **Amy and Felix**

Life beyond the school gates

James was a student with us from 2010-2017 and we invited him to tell us something of how his journey has continued beyond St Mary's...

“When I think back to my first day at St Mary’s, I am reminded that I’ve achieved more than I could have ever imagined.

It seemed to me, at first, that I was destined for a career in Science but it was when I began to study Humanities that I discovered a passion for the value of people and justice. I began to plot a different course and now I am studying for a Law degree, fulfilling my dreams of becoming a barrister. I want to be an approachable one, to look out for the needs of people who really need

my help. Perhaps the most valuable lesson I learnt at school was the importance of using my capabilities to serve others. What difference can I make to other people’s lives?

I am grateful for my academic qualifications but it’s more important to me that the school helped shape me into the person I am today. The care and support I was shown at every stage helped me enormously; I never felt alone.”

James – Student 2010-2017

Below - James on his first day of school in 2010.





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