



St Margaret's Academy

ST MARGARETS ACADEMY

Spring Newsletter #11
4th April 2025

Dear Parents,

Today has been my final day with the children at St Margaret's Academy. It is a very bitter sweet moment and I don't think it has quite sunk in yet, but after 29 years in full-time teaching, it's time for me to have a new adventure in my life. I'm not quite sure what that will be just yet but I'm excited to see what will happen next.

Education has changed in so many ways since I began my career as a Year 4 class teacher in Somerset in 1996, back in the days of multiple fat ring-bound folders, hand-written plans, piles of snail mail, black boards and open grounds. Schools then were focussed on teaching lessons. Now we are immersed in the digital age behind our high fences, and schools are the centre of a community, supporting families and children far beyond the classroom, and helping address a massively wider level of societal, health, family and personal needs... as well as focussing on teaching the lessons.

Some things however, don't change. Ofsted, for all its chatter and apparent introspection, is still the punitive force it ever was, ever standing guard to castigate and shame; still fostering a culture of game-playing and taking schools away from being able to focus on their key task of improving children's lives. Successive governments have continued to deliver new educational agendas, initiatives and strategies, each shouting loudly that they will be the ones to raise teachers' expectations; that they will be the ones to finally improve standards. And all the while, they add something extra to what they want schools to do. And each new edict does not come with additional resources or funding (despite all the bluster from politicians that it does); schools are simply expected to absorb it and if not, then be punished.

As such, schools have to rely enormously on the good-will, enterprise, generosity and expertise of so many different people. In education-speak, we call these the *stakeholders*. I have been really fortunate at St Margaret's to work with a fantastic group of stakeholders invested in the education of your children.

You, as a parent group, have been amazing stakeholders. The appreciation many of you show to staff, and the support you give to the school is super valued. Flying the flag is your awesome PTA who provide such fun experiences for your children, advocate their rights with passion and integrity (just look at the fight for the Hearing Support Centre) and raise / cajole / discover an incredible amount of additional funds, without which your children's time at St Margaret's would be so much less fulfilling.



ACTIVE THINKING



RESILIENCE



MOTIVATION



St Margaret's trustees are also an amazing group of individual stakeholders who generously give of their time and skills, working behind the scenes and in school, bringing their areas of expertise to ensure we give the best possible provision for your children. They are always on the lookout for new people so if you might be interested or know someone who might be, please do get in touch. It's a rewarding thing they do – and if you are a parent or a grandparent, you get the bonus of being a fly on the wall and seeing your little ones in action.

We also work with a wide range of external stakeholders including our friends at Dunboyne Court, South Devon College and all sorts of services from the Local Authority (the safeguarding team, the SEND team, the vulnerable pupil team, the admissions team) plus we buy into support from Human Resources, and educational support from Challenge Partners and the South West Institute for Teaching, and also there is collaboration with other local schools on all sorts, from moderation to professional development, to sporting opportunities.

At the core of it all are the staff stakeholders who cover a wide range of roles, all in the interests of helping your children. There are obviously the teachers, who work 50+ hour weeks, as well as the amazing teaching assistants. There is a well-regarded pastoral team working with many families. And there is a fab sites team, admin team and IT team, all working behind the scenes to allow the school to run smoothly.

When I think of St Margaret's, I think of the African proverb: *it takes a village to raise a child*. It's so true. I have been very privileged to work with so many wonderful stakeholders here; so many of whom go above and beyond because they genuinely care about doing the best job possible for your children. It is only their dedication that make it possible to meet the ever-higher expectations from the government and society. It has been a very special thing to work with people like this and I will be forever grateful to them on so many levels.

It's these stakeholders who collectively make St Margaret's such a special place to work in, and learn in, because they put relationships at the heart of everything, making for such a happy school full of laughter. I will never forget opening the gates in the morning to "let the little monsters in"; to see them racing each other to get to class, laughing all the way. I have loved seeing those happy relationships in place across the school, between staff and between staff and children, and between children.

And what has essentially never changed over the last 29 years, is the very rewarding nature of working with children. Seeing them thrive, grow and watching their brand-new curiosity about the world that emerges around them, is a very magical thing. It is still a fantastic profession to be in because it can be so rewarding.

I am going to miss so much about working at St Margaret's. I have had some of the best laughs. Thank you to everybody here who has made my time here so memorable and rewarding and thank you for your very kind words and thoughts. They mean an awful lot.

I wish St Margaret's and you all, a future of many laughs, health and happiness. Take care of each other and help build us a better world.



ACTIVE THINKING

RESILIENCE



Year 6 at Skern Lodge

The absolute highlight of my years teaching has always been the trips and residential. I went on my first residential right at the start of my career and now I'm ending on a residential, and true to form this trip has also been filled with laughs and excitement. The Year 6 have been brilliant, pushing themselves to achieve new things, overcoming fears and just having the best time hanging out with their friends and playing outdoors. It has been a real pleasure to be with them and to thoroughly enjoy my final 3 days. Have a look in our [PSHE Blog](#) to see some of the photos showing big smiles and achievements in body boarding, maze tunnels, high rope challenges, climbing, abseiling, swimming, archery, scavenger hunting and dancing at the disco. Thank you to Mrs Kerswell, Mrs Kennedy, Mrs Westwood and Miss Scaife who gave up their sleep and families to make all this possible.



Inspiring Futures—Achievement in the National Pilot

You might be aware that over the last year or so we have been working on a project in school to help your children be inspired into careers of the future. Led by Mrs Westwood and Mrs Wall, we have been part of a national pilot which successfully concluded this week. In our [PSHE Blog](#) you can read a full write up and see the certificate we have been awarded. A big thanks to Mrs Westwood and Mrs Wall for making this happen to help open children's eyes and imaginations to what might be possible in the future.

Curriculum News

In the Science Blog you can see some super pictures and find out all about how [Year 2](#) enjoyed being Ninja scientists this week.

In the Arts Blog you can see the beautiful volcano collage art created by [Year 5 Birch](#) Class.

In the [Forest School Blog](#) you can enjoy seeing happy little faces mellowing out with marshmallows round the camp fire.

Instagram Top Tips and Advice

Instagram is quite possibly the most nasty of the social media apps out there. While it is rated for ages 13 and above, it probably should be 18+ and I would suggest never allowing your child anywhere near it. On our website under 'Useful Resources for Parents' you can find out everything you need to know to keep your child safe. Quick link [here](#).

Be Tick Aware and Enjoy the Great Outdoors

As more activities take place during the spring and summer it is important to be aware of the risk of ticks to children and adults. Ticks are small, spiderlike creatures that feed on the blood of animals, including people. Ticks live outdoors and are particularly common in grassy and wooded areas. Some ticks can pass on infectious diseases when they bite. You can find out more about how to protect yourself, manage tick bites and prevent the spread of diseases such as Lyme disease. [Tick awareness poster](#) or [Tick awareness A5 leaflet](#)

Ticks can be active all year round but are most active between April and July.

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MOTIVATION



Easter Holiday Clubs

As well as the activities offered below, check out this link for a full range of holiday clubs happening across the Bay:

[Holiday activity and food programme \(HAF\) - Torbay Council](#)



Our Amazon Book Wish List

https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/FOD16NCSLQOX?ref_=wl_share

Help with Rising Costs -Reminders

- Riviera Life Church Food and Baby Bank – [link here](#). We can make a referral for you or phone 07486 402493
- **Household Support Fund** – if you are on a welfare benefit / tax credit or have a disposable income of less than £50 per week:
- [Household Support Fund - Torbay Council](#)
- Do you need help with child care? If so, try this website: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>
- Help for households – very useful government website: <https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/>
- This community kitchen has some very affordable meal options and is well worth a look: <https://www.turningheads.org.uk/community-kitchen/>
- The PTA has lots of quality school uniform for a small donation – see their FB page
- Martin Lewis: <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/>
- Free uniform and help with rising costs: <https://www.punkagainstopoverty.org/>
- Try here for cheaper broadband: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/costs-and-billing/social-tariffs>

I wish everyone a happy and healthy future in whatever direction life takes you and your families.

Signing off,

Tim Hughes (Headteacher)

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Diary Dates

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| W/C 7th April 2025 | Easter Holidays |
| Tuesday 22nd April 2025 | First day back for children |
| 5th May 2025 | Bank Holiday |
| W/C 26th May 2025 | Half Term |
| Tuesday 3rd June 2025 | First day back for children |
| 16th June 2025 | 09.30—12.00 KS1 Sports Day |
| 16th June 2025 | 13.25—15.00 EYFS Sports Day |
| 19th June 2025 | 09.30—12.00 KS2 Sports Day |
| 24th July 2025 | Final day for the children |