

## **St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School**

### **Year 6 Pupil Exit Interviews – held 16<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

#### **Feedback/Overall Summary**

Maria Hatley (Parent Governor) and Jerry Walsh (Foundation Governor) undertook the interviews of all sixteen Year 6 pupils on 16th July 2021 in the assembly hall at St Thomas’.

#### **Format of interviews**

Two groups of 8 were formed with a Governor leading the discussions through a series of questions and the pupils providing lively, thoughtful and considered responses. The discussions and feedback from each group are outlined below as is the Overall Summary from both Governors.

#### **Group 1- Discussion led by MH**

- Favourite subjects

The pupils had a broad range of preferred subjects between the eight of them. They mentioned science, music, art, PE and history being their favourites. When asked about the particular rationale for the preference science was linked to the experiments they got to carry out. The pupils were clearly engaged with the lessons that they referred to having a clear idea of why they liked the subject they mentioned.

The children also highlighted forest school as being a particular feature for them – although they did not refer to it as a subject per se but it did come up in a number of contexts.

- Memories from their time at St Thomas

When asked about their memorable experiences of the St Thomas there were a number of things mentioned including a science day which they took part in at St Edmunds school, the choir trip to sing in the school choirs event.

When asked what they would take with them in terms of lesson learned they considered friendship to be high on that list.

School lunches were also generally approved of with most having school lunches at least some days per week.

- Learning in Lockdown and impact of lockdown

It was clear that although they were all aware of the impact of lockdown and clearly were able to identify things that they had enjoyed through lockdown (for example being able to spend more time with their family) they also appreciated that it meant that they had missed out on things (such as time with their friends and their trip to Kingswood and not being able to take part in choir). However, they did not dwell on the missed elements focusing more on the alternatives, such as the camp in the forest school, and the elements of home learning.

They perceived an improvement when they were able to log in through Teams and see their teachers and friends and liked that Mr Booth was available to ask questions of.

Mr Booth's storytelling was mentioned as something they particularly liked.

- Things they felt could be improved / more of

The children said that there were some elements such as DT, drama and more music lessons which they would like more of. They also said it would be good if they could have netball nets to use of lunchtimes (although they currently improvise) and perhaps a wider variety of extracurricular clubs (although there was acknowledgement that Covid had impacted on clubs generally).

## **Group 2- Discussion led by JW**

- Camp Event/Forest School

On the eve of the school's first Camp Event, the pupils were looking forward to the adventure (six out of eight were attending). When asked if *'Forest School helped them prepare for the event and how'*, the pupils responses focused on the skills they learned eg lighting fires, use of tools, awareness of risks and follow rules so that tasks are carried out safely particularly when working as a group and when supporting each other. Forest School is a favourite activity. Pupils were very positive about the recent Science Week which was centred on Forest School. The pupils were in agreement that Forest School was one of the 'most missed' school activities during lockdown periods .

- Volunteering & Catholic Life of the School

When asked *'what does volunteering mean?'* the pupils replies included *'doing things to help others'* *'doing things because you wanted to help not because you were told to'*. The pupils gave examples of their volunteering activities:

Chaplaincy Team: six of this group were members with roles covering: prayer group, publicity, fundraising, saints, thought for the week and Wednesday word co-ordinators. The pupils were aware that circumstances this year did not allow them to do more but reading to Yrs 1 & 2 was a highlight.

School Council and Sports Committee were also mentioned by pupils as opportunities for volunteering but with activities curtailed due to Covid again pupils felt they could not participate as much as in a normal year.

St Thomas' has a strong Catholic Ethos. On its website it emphasizes the centrality of volunteering to catholic social teaching. The school follows through on this through successfully encouraging its pupils to partake in volunteering and thus contribute to serving the whole school community

- Remote Learning

When asked *'what was the best thing about remote learning?'*, pupils thought the *'live lessons with Mr Booth was the best' form of learning*. *What was not so good part was summed up by one of the pupils 'as a lot of others activities going on at home at the same time'* so not always easy to learn. What they missed most was *'not seeing friends', 'the teachers', 'doings things together' 'the open spaces at school, 'PE' and 'not going to Kingswood'*. However the pupils seemed quite resilient, did not dwell on what they might have 'missed out' on but instead were happy to be back at school with friends and their teachers.

- If writing an advert for St Thomas' School – what would you highlight?  
Pupils were very keen to contribute to the 'advert'. Each gave considered answers and avoided repeating what others had said. The selling points were as follows:
  1. Forest School activities for all pupils
  2. Kind and helpful teachers
  3. Science experiments
  4. PSHE classes -everyone learns to respect one another
  5. After school activities
  6. Open spaces of the school - astro turf, wood, large school field
  7. PE
  8. Good food from the canteen

### Overall Summary

The pupils were engaging and thoughtful and gave considered responses during our lively discussions. They were confident in their opinions. Given the challenges of this school year, Year 6's resilience and optimism impressed us both. The pupils are very positive about their time at St Thomas', what they have achieved and are appreciative of the pastoral care received from staff. The Catholic Ethos of the school is strengthened by the school's commitment to encourage pupils in their volunteering efforts to serve the whole school community.

The children felt ready for secondary school and appeared to be excited about the new opportunities that would present on moving.