

## **Our Journey**

Over many years the majority of parents of children at Hatherley Infant School had chosen St James' Church of England Junior School as the natural school for their sons and daughters to transfer at the end of Year 2.

In the Autumn of 2020, when both schools were looking to appoint new headteachers, their Governing Boards recognised that, since they serve the same neighbourhood and families, there was a unique opportunity to provide a stronger school experience for their children and families by working together. It was felt that such an arrangement would ensure that both schools could retain their individuality and small school family atmosphere, whilst being enabled to:

- Better meet the needs of the families and children within their community through building a whole new educational experience.
- Provide continuity from a child's perspective of the headteacher as a familiar face throughout their primary years and thereby making transition less daunting.
- Address the needs of families facing challenging circumstances in a consistent manner.
- Increase pupil numbers by creating a more attractive primary stage for parents.
- Improve transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 using similar schemes of work for teaching and learning across both schools.
- Provide staff with greater opportunities for professional development as well as carer progression.

In the Spring of 2021, governors of Hatherley Infant School and St James' CE Junior school reached a collaboration agreement to appoint an executive head teacher to lead both schools and, following a National advertisement, Simon Millington was duly appointed to that post with effect from the beginning of Term 6 in 2021.

As part of the collaboration agreement, a joint committee was set up to monitor the relationship between the two schools and to help drive improved provision and standards by promoting continuity and the sharing of best practice.

The degree and quality of collaboration between the two schools evolved so quickly that by the end of the Summer term in 2021 there were already tangible benefits that were laying the foundations to improve the educational experience for children:

- Regular joint INSET had taken place for the staff of both schools.
- Continuity of expectations for standards of teaching and learning had been set across both schools based on the same pedagogy, e.g. Rosenshine's principles.
- Continuity of teaching and learning programmes had been implemented in both schools for phonics, reading, writing and maths.

- Subject leaders from each school were working in close partnerships, as were the SENDCos and Pupil Premium co-ordinators.
- An EAL co-ordinator had been appointed to work across both schools.
- In September 2022, transition between Key Stage 1 and 2 was enhanced greatly.
- Attendance managers were working in partnership.
- The Business Manager of Hatherley covered a vacancy for a business manager at St James' and subsequently provided on-going support and advice to the new SBM at St James'.

In September 2022, a consultation was launched on a proposal to federate the two schools to become The Hatherley St James' Federation and a favourable response was received from stakeholders.

Although both schools were graded as Requires Improvement by Ofsted when they were inspected in the Autumn term of 2021, (at a point when the collaboration had just started), governors firmly believed that their decision to pursue a collaboration and then a federation of the two schools had been vindicated by the increases in the Number on Roll of both schools as a consequence of parents in the community recognising the benefits their children were receiving and would continue to receive as the strong foundation that had been laid was built upon and developed.

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, The Hatherley St James' Federation finally came into being with one governing board made up of a number of former governors of both schools as well as several new governors who all felt strongly that by laying the foundation for the provision of a primary school experience across Hatherley Infant and St James' CE Junior schools both schools would be not only viable but sustainable.

A strong focus on the quality of education and enriching the experience of school has brought about real improvements for children in both schools which Ofsted recognised when it rated Hatherley Infant School Good when the school was inspected in January 2024.

On 1st May 2024, Hatherley Infant and St James' CE Junior schools converted to academy status as part of DGAT (Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust). DGAT is governed by a Board of Trustees which is responsible for the governance of all schools within the Trust. A Local Governing Board (LGB) was inaugurated with delegated responsibility for the work of both Hatherley Infant and St James' CE Junior schools. Initially, the LGB was largely made up of those who were governors of the Hatherley St James' Federation, although of course the membership has changed since then.

Governors, senior leaders and indeed all staff continue to be focused on improving the quality of education and enriching the experience of school to ensure that all children from the day they first step into Hatherley Infant school until the day they leave St James' CE Junior School grow together to develop a love for life and learning.

Roger Slater

Clerk to Governors