



Norton St Nicholas CofE (VA) Primary School

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APCM Report

The year 2023 was a significant one for Norton St Nicholas School as it marked 150 years since the school first opened. This has provided an opportunity to look back and see God's faithfulness to this community over so many years, as well as an opportunity to look forward knowing that God will continue to be faithful.

I have really enjoyed taking time to learn a lot more about the school's history and the reasons for the school first being built¹. In 1873, Norton was a small farming community and the early visionaries for a school in the community – much like Saint Nicholas himself – had a passion for the poor of the parish, who did not previously have an opportunity to receive a school education, to attend school and to learn about God and his love for all.

This anniversary has provided an opportunity for us to reflect on why we are here and what our priorities should be now. We are now nearly 2000 years after the life of Saint Nicholas and 150 years on from the foundation of Norton St Nicholas School, but we recognise that we are here to serve our current local community. We seek to do this – with a continued heart for those most in need – through an excellent education and the opportunity to learn about and experience God's love for all.

The governing body have taken this opportunity to renew our school vision, which is now: *Guided by God's love, we educate and nurture each unique child, inspiring them to reach their full potential, and enabling them to flourish as caring and successful citizens who make a difference in their communities*².

We took the opportunity to celebrate our 150th anniversary in a range of different ways:

- We had a celebratory service on our school field, which was attended by all children and staff, as well as many parents, friends in the community and former staff. We were delighted to be joined by Bishop Richard, who shared a blessing for the school community.
- All children visited the British Schools Museum in Hitchin to learn more about what it was like to go to school during Victorian times.
- We invited a brilliant artist to make a mosaic to commemorate our anniversary. Children were invited to design this and one of our year 2 children came up with the design at the top of this page. All children and staff had the opportunity to place tiles on the design, which can now be seen at the front of our school. All children also made an individual owl mosaic to take home.
- We took the opportunity to have a whole school photograph – last done for the school's 140th anniversary.
- Two iSingPop concerts at St George's Church. It was a joy to have so many parents join us to hear their children singing about God's love for them and God's love for our world.

Alongside this has been the normal day-to-day workings of our school and community life. As I look back over the past year, I am incredibly grateful for all the ongoing hard work from the brilliant staff team we have, as well as the fantastic support we have from our families and the wider community.

We are always looking at how we can further develop as a school and a key part of this is through our termly visits from our Improvement Advisor. We have hugely valued this support again this year and were delighted to be especially praised for our provision for children with Special Educational Needs and those who are deemed to be most vulnerable. This reflects the school's original reason for being here and our ongoing vision as a school.

Over the past year we have developed two new pupil-led committees to support our understanding of what it means to be a Christian community that has an impact on a local, national and global scale – children being courageous advocates. Our Eco Committee focuses on how we can best care for the world that God has given us, with a focus on how we care for our immediate environment but also how we can reduce our impact on climate change. Our Care Committee focus on how we can care for people, recognising that we believe all people should have the basics they need in order to live. Their work has included beginning our Toilet Twinning project – where we aim to twin all of our toilets with communities around the world that do not yet have a safe toilet – as well as leading our support with Letchworth Food Bank. These have provided great leadership opportunities for many children and – more importantly – help to fulfil our vision of children who will be *'caring and successful citizens who make a difference in their communities'*.

In our Collective Worship last year it was great to look at the 'Big Story of the Bible', giving the children the opportunity to see God's big rescue plan through the narrative of the whole Bible. Since September we have begun to reflect on some of our school values again – so far focussing on love, forgiveness and wisdom. We have valued having visits from Paul and Laura Sutton from Grange Baptist Church, Christopher Baker from Christian Initiative to Schools and Angela and Steph from Bridgebuilders.

We have missed the support and input that having a vicar provides the school, and we look forward to Reverend Eugene joining the parish and supporting us as a school when he joins the community.

Thank you for your continued support and prayers over the past year. May the Lord bless the whole community in the year ahead.

Andrew Brown

¹For those who are interested, I highly recommend the book 'St Nicholas' school Norton 1873-1923,' which includes a fascinating introduction about the history of Norton village and the establishment of the school, and then a transcription of the school log books from 1873-1923. This was written and published by Norton Community Archaeology Group.

²You can see more about our school's Vision, Mission, Values and underpinning theology on our website: <https://www.nortonstnicholas.co.uk/mission-vision-and-values/>