

# Growing Courageous Advocates for Change

## Living your vision into being 'Let your light shine...'

If the purpose of education is the promotion of life in all its fullness and human flourishing then we here at St Mary's must seek to develop people who: - learn to flourish in every aspect of their lives and can work for the flourishing of others and the planet we share and - look beyond themselves and seek to bring hope and be a blessing to others, locally, nationally and globally.

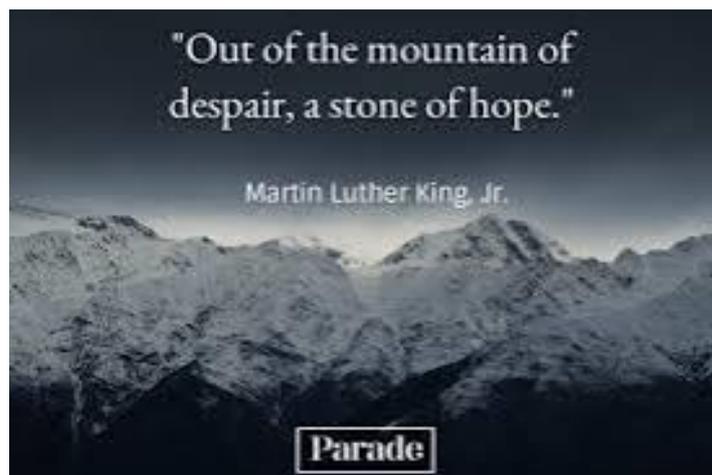
Living Christ's vision; 'Let your light shine...

At St Mary's we hope that In educating for wisdom, hope, community and dignity we are living Christ's way in building God's kingdom here on earth and work to bring about a fairer and more joyful world.

**What is 'courageous advocacy'?** The act of speaking out against an issue of injustice, often on behalf of those whose voice is not heard. Speaking out, at whatever level this takes place, requires an element (and sometimes a great deal) of courage! Becoming a courageous advocate for change means being informed about an issue but moving beyond simply knowing, to saying and doing.

The thread running through the Bible is of a loving God, willing people to love each other in order to bring the Kingdom to earth. We aim at St Mary's to teach our children this message, that they as Christians are advocates for God and that at times this means they need to be courageous. They need to speak out for those that are poor, or weak, those who cannot speak or act for themselves. We use the terms 'courageous advocacy' and 'global citizenship' interchangeably as for us they both convey an approach to education that embodies an ethos of action taking, challenging injustice and becoming agents of change in the transformation of ourselves, our relationships and our communities from local level to the global.

Every child at St Mary's is a **courageous advocate and a global citizen**. We work hard to empower our children with the message that everyone can make a difference. We support charities chosen by our school, highlighting their work and supporting them with fundraising and activities. We also ensure each term every class at St Mary's ensures that it is working as global citizens through planned activities linked to our wider curriculum. We also encourage our children to be responsive, to act where they see injustice, and where they see need.



## Courageous advocacy at St Mary's:

Taking action should be a deeply educational and empowering experience involving reflection and critical thinking

- Pupils should be involved in decision-making and have a sense of ownership and understanding of why they are taking a particular action

- Pupils should be encouraged to think critically through the full range of options and how they help address the causes and symptoms of a particular situation
- Pupils should be supported to think through the possible consequences of their actions and to take account of the law, school policies and ethical and safety considerations
- Pupils should reflect on what has been learned through taking action

## Our Spring term actions have included:

### Reception Courageous Advocacy Spring 24

#### **Matthew 6:26 NKJV**

**'Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?'**

In Reception, we have been thinking about how we can make our world a better place. The children were concerned, after a really cold spell, that the birds were not able to get food from the ground.

After a discussion, we agreed that we would like to help them. We spoke about how we could provide food for them and it was lovely to see the children showing concern for this worthy cause. The children were very excited about making a difference.

We went into the woods and made fat balls for the birds and sprinkled bird seed on them. We hung them in the woods so that we could watch the birds enjoying their tasty treat.

Our aim for this act of Courageous Advocacy was to help preserve our beautiful birds and to support them during their time of need. As a result, we hope that our children become kinder, more compassionate people who work together to solve important issues and take ownership for nature and preservation.



## Year 1

**We are seeking to empower our pupils and to help them know, they have a voice and are able to speak up and speak out about important issues.** "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice." (Proverbs 31.8-9)

In Year One, The Curious Case of the Missing Mammoth has been our literacy text for this half term and through it we have been introduced to different animals e.g. those that are extinct and those that are endangered. We have also been studying animals including humans through our science topic. So we have been able to combine our learning and ideas to focus upon endangered animals as our inspiration for our Courageous Advocacy work this half term.

The children also had a trip to Chester Zoo, which provided a wonderful opportunity to investigate and identify endangered animals. We looked through a power-point showing which are the most common species of animals being affected and what is causing animals to be endangered. The children were very concerned that we should try to help make people aware, so it was decided we would make posters.



The children had to consider concepts like, how do we protect and conserve these animals. We linked this to the work we had covered in art by David Shepherd, who had been inspired to become an artist when he was unable to become a game keeper. He also was active in protecting and conserving animals when he discovered a large number of zebra had been poisoned at a watering hole. The children in Year One wanted their posters to be displayed around school so the other children could learn to talk about these important issues and raise peoples' awareness.

**"The action should be a deeply educational and an empowering experience involving reflection and critical thinking. Pupils should be involved in decision-making and have a sense of ownership and understanding of why they are taking a particular action."** As a result of our learning and work carried out on this theme, the children also wanted to go home and share their learning with their families. They feel it is important to pass on the message and encourage others to be aware too, which could lead to further action in the future and more people knowing about these important global issues.

The thread running through the Bible is of a loving God willing people to love each other and care for His creation, in order to bring His Kingdom to earth. The children were given time to reflect and think upon what they had learned.

## Year 2



**Fairtrade Assembly - 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2024**

### Courageous Advocacy

**Year 2 led a family assembly about Fairtrade. They explained the importance of buying Fairtrade products and shared this important message with the school and parents.**

**'Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.'**

**1 John3:18**

**'The wicked don't care about the rights of the poor, but good people do.' Proverbs 29:7**



## Year 3 -

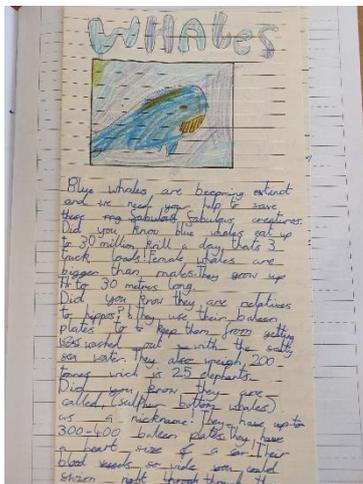
In Year 3 we have been reading 'This morning I met a whale' by Michael Morpurgo, and spending time thinking carefully about the message that the whale brings. This links to previous work about the sea and to our Pathways writing book Big Blue Whale. As part of our work on Courageous Advocacy in curriculum writing we have discussed the problems that whales and other sea animals are facing. After watching Sir David Attenborough clips about whales, we realised what magnificent animals they are and have become even more incensed at the problems being faced. An obvious problem was the rubbish and plastic waste that is evident in our rivers and oceans. We looked deeper and realised that some countries are causing even more problems by the way they are fishing.

The children were astonished to realise that at one time whales faced extinction due to human activity and that only recently, laws have been passed to stop this. The children did understand that in some countries the people do need to exploit the seas, as they have no social care system and if they don't catch fish they may not eat. This conflicting problem was discussed at length.

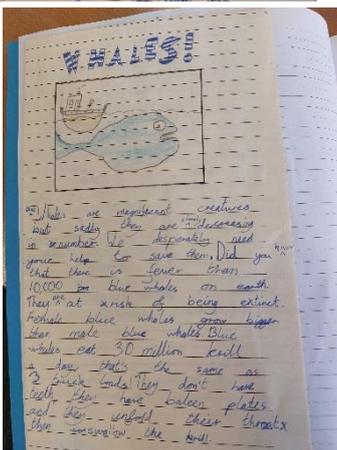
Before the children could really be advocates, they needed to understand the deeper issues involved in the fishing industry, they learnt about longlines and trawler nets. They understood that it not a case of asking people to fish less but that we can be more careful about the way we fish.

The children planned a range of different ways in that they would be advocates, some made posters for litter picking and some children investigated fishing in greater depth and then wrote leaflets to relevant countries highlighting the problems with longlines and trawler nets, trying to persuade them to change their laws.

Here is an example of some of their work:



Psalm 24:1-2 "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters."



## Year 4 - Courageous Advocacy – Raising Awareness and campaigning

In response to UN World Water Day on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, year 4 learned about the theme for this year of 'Water for Peace'. Having done some research, the children recognised the unfairness of water distribution around the world. They decided that they could use several methods to make a difference themselves about water equality.

The children decided to create a display informing viewers about the issue. They chose to make sure that their parents came to look at their display and they spoke to parents with passion about the issue. They spoke about how important it was to value and respect the water we have and made pledges about how they would act to do this.

Some children made the step to write to the headteacher about water use in school. They had noticed that the taps do not turn off properly in the bathrooms that they use and wanted to raise this so that a practical change can be made. As a result, Mrs Tainsh asked them to speak in assembly to the rest of the school about turning the taps off.

Equality is of great importance to Christians. The Bible says '...you are all one in Christ Jesus.' (Galatians 3:28). God shows no partiality and Christians recognise the need to do what is right: Peter said, 'Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.' (Acts 10:34-35). In fact, Jesus said: "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."



## Year 5

### Year 5 Courageous Advocacy – International Women's Day 8.3.24

#### 1 Timothy 5:2

"Treat older women like your mother, and treat younger women like your sisters with appropriate respect."

Following a collective worship centred around IWD24, Year 5 felt empowered to find out more about some of the courageous women fighting for change today.

They were already very knowledgeable on historical figures such as, Rosa Parks, but couldn't explain more about women affecting their future. We looked



at Gitanjali Rao and how she had won TIME's Kid of the Year award in 2020.

Here is what some of the children found out.

She has created a code which looks at what people post online and it tries to stop bullying. It is called Kindly.

Her thought process for change is to, "Observe, brainstorm, research, build and communicate."



"So I really want to put out that message: If I can do it, you can do it, and anyone can do it."

## Year 6

### Courageous Advocacy 2023-24

As part of our Science topic on the human body and systems, the children researched independently what the impact of diet, exercise and drugs can have.

They aimed to educate themselves and others.

**'I have come that you might have life, life in all its fullness' (John 10.10)**

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024

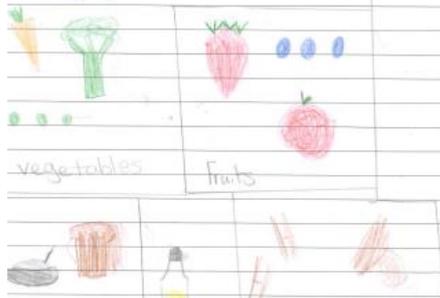
Friday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2024

What is the impact on the body of a healthy lifestyle (healthy diet and exercise)?

Healthy diet

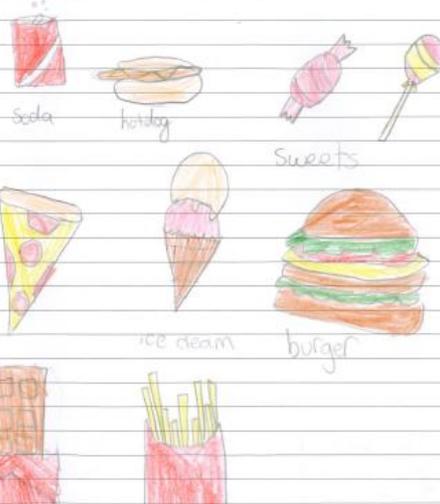
They are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants and an endless variety of trace nutrients that science has just begun to uncover. In observational studies, eating vegetables is associated with improved health and lower risk of disease.

Healthy foods



Unhealthy food

Consuming unhealthy food and beverages, such as sugar-sweetened beverages and highly processed food, can lead to weight gain, obesity and other chronic conditions that put people at higher risk of at least 13 types of cancer, including endometrial (uterine) cancer, breast cancer in postmenopausal women, and colorectal.



## School council

Spring Term 24

Courageous Advocacy - School Council

During one of our weekly meetings, one particular boy on our School Council began expressing his concerns about the 'cost of living crisis'. As he spoke, others listened and began to contribute their concerns and opinions to the conversation too. As the conversation went on, the children realised that they all shared the same views and felt that they needed to do something about it!

They decided to write a letter to Derek Twigg, our local MP, to ask their help to try to solve the matter of rising prices and the pressure this puts on their families.

Our children show courageous advocacy by trying to make a change for their families and the community.

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9

Below is a copy of the letter that the children have sent to our local MP...

Dear Derek Twigg,

We know you must get lots of letters, but please don't skip over this. We are the children on our School Council at St Mary's C of E Primary School in Runcorn. We are writing to you today to express our concerns about the rising prices of food and all the essentials that people need to live.

The poor people of our community are really struggling and suffering because the prices of everything have gone up and they can't afford to live properly.

We understand that you are not in the highest power and don't make all of the decisions but we would like you to put massive pressure on the government to speak to companies and ask them to lower the prices now, just as quickly as they put them up!

We are feeling very worried because we are watching our parents get stressed because the prices are so high, which shouldn't be our concern as children. We have had to cut down so much now. Our families are worried that we are not getting the best food and childhood that we need and deserve.

Please can you accept this and urgently try to do something to help. Please speak to the government and stress this issue.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read our letter. You are very welcome to visit us at our school to discuss the matter further. Please respond to us if you get the time.

Thank you

St Mary's School Council (Ages 6-11)