9th May 2016

Dear Parent / Carer

**Assessment and Testing**

I am sure you will be aware of the national day of action organised by groups of parents last week in protest at the government’s approach to assessment and in particular the Y2 and Y6 ‘SATs’. Several of our parents took the decision to remove their children from school on Tuesday and a number of others wrote to me to express their concerns about the impact of SATs test on their children. As this is such an important issue for pupils, parents and schools I wanted to make our position at St Oswald’s clear to all our parents.

This has been a particularly challenging year for all primary teachers and pupils, with the introduction of a new curriculum with raised expectations, coinciding with significant changes and ongoing uncertainty in government policy towards statutory assessment. In such a turbulent situation we as a school remain driven by our vision and values, including our aims that “*Everyone has opportunities to develop, achieve and contribute in different ways to be the best they can be,* ” “*Everything we do contributes to children’s personal, spiritual, moral and cultural development”* and that “*Children are happy and confident”.*

We are absolutely committed to enabling our children to achieve the highest standards. The ability to communicate effectively through reading, writing, speaking and listening as well as being numerate are vital life skills. But we also believe firmly that a broad and balanced curriculum, with learning which is motivating and meaningful for children, is the best way to ensure that they develop these skills. In a rapidly-changing world it is vital that children also develop good learning habits and attitudes (hence our focus on “super-learner” skills.) We will not allow this approach to be compromised or narrowed by an over-emphasis on preparing children to pass tests.

Ongoing assessment is an essential part of good teaching. This includes the use of tests to help teachers, pupils and parents to assess what children have learned and what they need to do next. Unfortunately the way that results in the Y2 and Y6 SATs are reported will not on its own provide parents with this sort of information. You will only be told whether or not your child has achieved an expected ‘pass mark’ in the tests. We are currently reviewing the format of our end of year reports to ensure that they will give you a better understanding of your child’s progress and a wider picture of their individual strengths and achievements.

It is our statutory duty to administer SATs test for all pupils in Y2 and Y6 in the coming weeks. We want our pupils to be well-prepared so that they can cope confidently and perform to the best of their abilities. However, we are doing everything we can to avoid putting them under unnecessary pressure.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. If you have any thoughts or comments about this issue, I would be delighted to hear from you.

Yours sincerely,

Rupert Griffiths