

St Matthias Church of England Primary School

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Executive Principal: Sian Davies • **Headteacher:** Lucy Blewett

Tuesday 21st November 2023

OPEN LETTER TO STOKE NEWINGTON YOUTH HUB

CC: Cllr Antoinette Bramble

Dear Karlene and Roy,

I'm writing regarding the message that was texted to our school community on Friday 17th November regarding our pupils' safety and wellbeing and the collective meeting you summoned parents to at the Stoke Newington Youth Hub. I first learned of this when you contacted the school office stating that I too should attend as pupils are 'unhappy and being unfairly sanctioned without valid reasons'. Following our conversation today it transpires this was a template message that has in fact gone out to all schools in the community not just St Matthias. In response to this, I have communicated with all parents who make use of the youth club and every parent has expressed that they are, in fact, happy and feel well supported by the school. That their child feels safe and that they are in full support of our behaviour policy. They also feel that they can speak to the school directly about any of their concerns.

The youth hub is an incredibly important part of our community and a key resource for our families. We value the opportunities you offer and the freedom you give our children in a supported and unstructured environment. We recognise that the boundaries and expectations are very different at Youth hub to those at school and sometimes our children struggle with this transition. We are pleased that our children are using their voices and discussing situations that happen at school. There are times that children are unhappy about consequences at school but we know we have the full support of our parents, that children's voices are heard and that situations are dealt with in a restorative way. We have high expectations for our pupils and must have clear boundaries in place in order to keep them safe and ensure they are learning. We will continue to maintain these.

A recent Ofsted inspection, parent surveys and pupil feedback tell us that children's wellbeing is a priority, that the way we manage behaviour is a strength and that pupils feel happy and supported at St Matthias. This does not align to the text message that was shared with parents. We have worked hard to earn the trust of the local community and this letter had the potential to damage relationships. We understand this was well intentioned and may have come from conversations with specific children; but please bring this directly to their parents so they can come to us as a school and we can explore this with them.

We would like to make it clear that although we fully support the work done by the Stoke Newington Youth Hub, we are two entirely separate organisations. We would seek to work together through professional dialogue rather than raising concerns in a public forum.

We will not be in attendance at the meeting on Wednesday as we would expect and encourage any parents with any concerns to directly engage with us on an individual basis.

In your letter you stated that you wish to work together to enhance the well-being and enjoyment of our children and young people. Please contact the office to arrange a time to come into school to discuss how we can best work together moving forwards. As all our families know, my door is always open. We continue to nurture strong relationships with our families and are proud of the journey our school is on. We invite you to be part of our journey and work with us collaboratively.

In October, Cllr Antoinette Bramble came into St Matthias to meet our Pupil Parliament. She talks about how important it is to be **'a strong advocate for your community. You are there to champion their needs and be their voice, and by working as a team alongside your colleagues, you can help improve our local communities'**. We acknowledge that this is what Stoke Newington Youth hub are hoping to do and I have copied Cllr Bramble into this letter so she can support us in finding a way forward.

I look forward to working together in a productive and collaborative way,

Lucy Blewett
Headteacher