

Lyon, 8 December 2016

Dear Parents,

On this day when we celebrate Mary, we are pleased to be able to send you this message.

It was 18 months ago that Sainte-Marie Lyon had the joy of welcoming Christian refugee families from the Near and Middle East.

For the most part, these families have had to flee their homeland to escape the horrors of conflict, leaving behind their homes, their dear ones and their work.

Today, 13 families from Iraq, Syria and Egypt have been welcomed into Sainte-Marie, which means that 21 of their children have been able to start traditional schooling: 5 in the primary school, 8 in the secondary school, and 8 in the sixth form college.

The needs of these families are first and foremost emotional: to rebuild their lives, to start to make new plans; secondly, there are linguistic needs: to learn the alphabet and to speak French; and finally, there is an academic need to find an appropriate level which will ultimately enable them to take public examinations in France.

It is within this context that parents have come together in solidarity with the headteacher, the year heads, the teachers and educators in Sainte-Marie Lyon, assisted by a young man whose period of civic service is devoted to this project.

At this time, more than 40 parents, 30 students and about 10 teachers are working, both inside and outside the school, to help these families:

- in their childrens' schooling (daily educational support at every level, help with reading and comprehension, and playing games to enhance verbal fluency)
- integrate into French society by welcoming them as warmly as possible (conversations with the parents twice a week, home visits and help with specific needs, such as filling in documents, the search for work etc)

A committee of the TPA is now at your service for all information about this project: APE chrétiens d'orient ape.chretiensdorient.sml@gmail.com.

What an enriching experience for the school and what a wonderful project that brings us all together!

The parents' association, APE Chrétiens d'Orient