



11th December 2020

Dear Parent

We have nearly made it to the end of the most extraordinary term we have ever seen in schools. Thank-you for your support through these difficult months. It has not always been easy but pupils, parents and staff have risen to the challenge brilliantly. In many of our schools, 'live' lessons, streamed over MS Teams have become common practice and pupils have been really respectful of our safety measures, such as staying in their 'bubble'. It is amazing how quickly we have got used to these new words and phrases.

I do hope COVID and the economic impact of lockdown has not affected you and your family too seriously. I know, however, that many of you will have found life hard. We will continue to offer as much support as we can and please get in touch with your child's school if we can help.

There is some good news. We will soon be distributing vouchers to the families of children eligible to receive free school meals. They should help cover the costs of food over the Christmas holidays. Again, please get in touch with each school if you think you might be eligible but we do not know about it.

You might have seen that the government have said that schools can take the final Friday of term as a training day or change our term dates. **We do not plan to do this.** The government have suggested it because they say it will mean school staff do not have to help out with the track & trace system from Christmas Eve onwards. We think the risk of this is small. We also think it is unfair to ask parents to arrange childcare with such little notice. You can help us to avoid this by booking any COVID test as soon as possible if anybody in your household develops symptoms.

It is great news about the vaccine. I hope it can be rolled out quickly but I think it could be next September before we start getting back to normal in schools. In the meantime, we will keep all our current systems in place, to help try to keep everybody safe.

There will be a lot to share with you next term, particularly if your son or daughter is due to sit an examination. There are different views about this but there are no good choices. At least this approach gives students a little more control over their results. Overall, we are pleased with the way pupils have caught up on missing work but we know there is still a lot to do. We will make sure everybody is as well prepared for examinations as possible.



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Pupils have behaved really well this term and seem pleased to be in school. Many have, perhaps, developed a new appreciation for school. I certainly know that some pupils have been really upset when we have had to ask them to isolate. I am sorry we have had to do this but we obviously cannot take chances with the virus and have followed the advice of the public health authorities throughout. I am keeping my fingers crossed that we will not have to send as many home next term.

The end of term will be strange this year, in fact it already is. We would normally be preparing for awards evenings and assemblies, nativity plays, concerts and other events. It is a shame children and students have missed out on these things this year but I have been impressed by how imaginative staff have still helped to keep the spirit of the season alive.

I hope you have a great Christmas break and get the chance to recharge your batteries. I also wish you a very happy New Year – it has to be better than 2020 – doesn't it?!

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John McNally". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John McNally
CEO