



23 October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

In our last letter to you, schools within our trust and all over the country were preparing for a full return to the classroom. This was a colossal task, requiring teachers and staff to plan and prepare over the summer holiday for a very different learning environment. To their great credit, through the careful management of risk, learning in the classroom has successfully resumed and children and young people have been able to engage in many of the aspects of school life which they missed during the period of enforced closure.

With the half term holiday upon us, this is an opportunity to take stock and reflect upon the successes and challenges we have all encountered over the course of the last two months. We begin with a note of thanks to you, parents and carers, who have supported our schools in ensuring that pupils and staff have been able to return safely to the classroom. Thank you for continuing to follow public health guidelines and encouraging your children to do the same. Now, more than ever, it is important that we remain vigilant.

A key factor contributing to the successful return to full-time, school-based education for our pupils has been the quality of home-school communication. At both Ranelagh and Jennett's Park staff have worked hard to keep you regularly informed, often in circumstances in which advice and information has been subject to change. We are grateful to parents for their patience and their support; when anxiety levels are high, maintaining trust in the judgement of staff can be a tall order! We are also grateful to families for embracing new forms of communication at a time when coming onto the school site and engaging face-to-face with teachers is just not possible.

In addition to a commitment to maintaining and developing the academic progress of learners, the trust understands the importance of promoting and developing their mental health and well-being. Teachers and staff have been mindful of the importance of supporting children and young people during this period of readjustment; as part of this process they have had to build up their learning stamina. At the same time, teachers have been acutely aware of the fact that the requirements of the curriculum, particularly for those taking examinations next summer, must be covered and gaps filled. Key to success has been the careful planning which has gone on in both of our schools and, again, we are grateful to parents and carers for the trust they place in teachers to do this well.

It will come as no surprise that one of the other areas in which we continue to face significant challenges as we move forward as a trust relates to school finances. At one point in time there were some very misleading messages in the media about additional funding available to schools in order to offset increased expenditure relating to COVID-19 safety measures.

Unfortunately, additional monies have not materialised. Schools have had to meet the majority of costs associated with the adaptations required to manage health and safety risks themselves. This, together with factors including the loss of income from lettings has left their budgets in a worse position than originally anticipated. We share this in the knowledge that schools will inevitably be turning to parents for voluntary contributions over the course of the year to support our delivery of the curriculum. Whilst we are aware that families are facing financial burdens of their own, we do urge you to consider these contributions and any additional voluntary giving where this is an option. Our PTAs are unable to hold events at school for the foreseeable future, but a number of virtual events are planned and please respond positively to the opportunities available to continue charitable giving in support of your children's school.

Thank you once again for your support in these challenging times. Please remember to follow both the school's and public health guidance to keep everyone learning safely. In the meantime, we remain committed to do all we can to ensure our schools remain open safely and to delivering school-based education.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beverley Stevens". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B' and 'S'.

Mrs Beverley Stevens

CEO, Boniats Multi-Academy Trust