

18<sup>th</sup> September 2017

Dear Families,

Now that we have been back at school for our first full week, it is timely to reflect on the term so far. What struck me immediately was how many children have returned from the Summer break with new skills, and it has been a real joy to witness or hear about one child taking their first independent steps; another child talking for the first time; and other children trying new foods; using the toilet independently; eating out for the first time; having their first friend round to play and demonstrating increased confidence in the community. Such achievements are a real testament to you as parents and carers – your children are truly a credit to you. We understand that the Summer break can sometimes seem like a very long time and, if there are any ways that we can support you as families in the future (such as providing resource ideas or visual supports), please do let us know.

In preparation for this school year, we carried out a number of improvements in the Summer holidays including refurbishing all classrooms at Riverside Beckenham; re-vamping our Common Room with new flooring and seating; improving the acoustics in the Dining Hall with new wall panels; creating a new access corridor to the hydrotherapy pool and refurbishing our Early Years Phase. We are in the process of finalising the design for our external Early Years space and work will start at half term to transform this area into something really special.

Twenty six new children, spanning our Early Years, Primary and Secondary phases, started with us at the beginning of term, and if you are one of our new families, we hope that your first experiences of Riverside School have been positive. Our new children seem to have settled so well in their new environment and we look forward to working closely with you to ensure your child is happy and fulfils their potential. As a school, we will always ensure that their curriculum is profoundly personalised to meet their unique needs and please do not hesitate to contact your child's class teacher or Key Support Teaching Assistant if you have any questions about any aspect of your child's education.

With our new intake, we are now up to 250 children in total and this growth has enabled us to improve facilities at both sites, attract and retain excellent staff and build our reputation both locally and nationally. As we have continued to expand, it has become even more important to retain a close-knit, family feel to Riverside School, where everybody feels truly part of the Riverside community. Our commitment to our existing pupils is always at the forefront of our minds and we will always ensure that all our pupils continue to access everything they need in order to flourish.

We are extremely excited about a number of initiatives in the coming months and are delighted to be working closely with the Local Authority to be in a strong position to offer Nursery Provision at Riverside St Paul's Cray from January 2018. We are passionate about achieving our mission to "transform our children's lives and the lives of their families" and would love to have the opportunity to make a start one year earlier than we have currently been able to. You will be receiving a letter about the Local Authority's formal consultation process and we are hosting three consultation meetings in the coming weeks (details are on the consultation letter). We are hoping for an extremely positive response to the proposal and look forward to receiving any comments you may have through the consultation process.

This really is a very exciting time for everyone associated with Riverside School and we look forward to working in close partnership with you both now and in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Solomons  
Headteacher