

20th December 2024

Dear Riverside families,

I hope that you are all well.

Today marks the final day of term and what a term it has been! There have been so many highlights and we feel privileged to have been there when your child has said their first word, or taken their first step; made their first friend or tried their first new food; found their voice for the first time or read their first sentence; completed their first work experience or believed in themselves for the first time. All of these things, and so many more, really matter.

At a whole school level, we were delighted to open our fourth classroom at Riverside Phoenix at the start of the year and it has been a joy to welcome a new class of pupils and their families to the Riverside family. For those of you who have just finished your first term with us, we hope that we have provided you, and your child, with what you, and they need. As always, please do not hesitate to contact your child's class teacher or a member of the Leadership Team should you require any additional support.

We were awarded Artsmark Platinum for the third time in recognition of our work in the Expressive Arts and in addition to our in-house offer, we have been spreading our wings and establishing new partnerships with a number of high-profile organisations. We have worked in close collaboration with The Royal Ballet and Opera House this term to produce a series of teaching films to empower classroom teachers (without a SEND or Dance specialism) to feel confident in teaching Dance in their classrooms. Not only do the films provide invaluable training opportunities for colleagues working in different settings, they capture our pupils' uniqueness, their strengths and their qualities and I am delighted to share these with you [HERE](#).

You will be aware that we were inspected by Ofsted on 5th and 6th November. This was an ungraded inspection and focussed on determining whether the school has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection. We were graded outstanding in all areas in our previous inspection and, for reference, inspectors evaluate schools against the following key judgements: quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; leadership and management; early years provision; and sixth-form provision. I am delighted to say that the inspection team concluded that we have indeed taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection. The full report can be found [HERE](#).

It is also important to note that, since our previous outstanding inspection, we have increased from two sites to four sites, and increased our pupil population and staff team by 30%. There is always a risk that as schools increase in size, the quality of provision or opportunity can be affected and I am delighted to say that this is not what the evidence suggests. In fact, I am delighted to share that the inspection team did not identify any areas for development or improvement, and this is not only extremely rare in any school inspection, but is a real testament to all of the efforts of everyone involved, not just during the inspection, but day in day out. As a school community, we should feel extremely proud of this outcome – it really was a team effort.

This does not, however, mean that we will ever be complacent and we are always looking to learn more and improve further. We have never been a school to rest on our laurels and remain committed to continual improvement to ensure that we serve you, and your wonderful children as best we can. We also know that there are real challenges for families of children with additional needs, both locally and nationally, in finding the right educational provision for their child and many of you may know other families in this position. In the same way that we have worked in partnership with the local authority over many years to expand our provision and offer additional places, we remain committed to supporting families who may need it, in the same way that we remain fiercely committed to ensuring that our existing families, namely you, and your children, continue to receive what you and they deserve ... the very best. This will never change.

Thank you to those of you who completed the Ofsted survey on Parent View and for your overwhelmingly positive feedback – we really appreciate you taking the time to share your views as we know how precious your time is. In addition to taking on board the comments on Parent View, we are finalising all the actions we will be taking in response to our latest Family Survey and we will share these with you in the Spring Term.

Over the past month, every Primary class has had the opportunity to enjoy The Magical Ice Kingdom Adventure and if you were able to join your child for the experience, I really hope you enjoyed it. We have pleasure in sharing the film [HERE](#). For our Secondary-aged pupils, showtime will soon come around and we have some exciting plans to share with you on our return in January.

We have ended the term with an understandably festive focus, although we would like to think that such seasonal spirit and joy is part of everyday life at Riverside School. We also acknowledge that at this time of year, we talk about celebrations and family get-togethers but we feel it is important to recognise that Christmas means different things to different people and brings a range of different emotions, for a range of different reasons. So, whatever the next fortnight brings for you, I hope it includes moments of magic, connection and affection, in all manner of ways.

To end today's letter, we are delighted to share this year's staff Makaton Sing and Sign ["What Christmas Means to Me"](#), and we hope you enjoy it.

There are so many things to look forward to in 2025 and beyond but in the meantime, wishing you all a safe, happy and healthy Christmas and we look forward to seeing your child again on 6th January.

With very best wishes,



Steve Solomons
Headteacher