

23rd July 2021

Dear Families,

I hope that you and your loved ones are all well.

I can't believe that it's the end of what has been a very different kind of year. A year in which everyone has been forced to adapt to a new way of life, a year that has affected everyone in so many different ways. From the start of the pandemic, we wanted to try and make the very best of a very challenging situation. We wanted to try and make life that little bit easier for you and your families and we really hope that we have been able to do this for you.

Like all schools, we have had our fair share of positive COVID cases and we really hope that no one who has had COVID suffers any long-term effects. Since our first case at the beginning of November 2020, we have had 48 positive cases at Riverside School, 37 staff and 11 pupils, which is approximately 9% of our combined pupil and staff population. I am pleased to report that we have had no positive cases in this final week of term, meaning that no pupils have had to miss their last few days due to any school-enforced self-isolation.

The past 16 months have taught us many things. About ourselves, about each other, and about our school community. We have learnt that, together, we are stronger. But as a school, we are never complacent and we are always looking at ways to improve further. We are always looking to learn more. There has been a lot of talk in the media about children needing to "catch up" and you may have heard the phrase "lost learning". However, I don't think that learning can be "lost" as if children have somehow left it somewhere and can't remember where they put it. I think that during COVID, children have just learnt different things. They have learnt to deal with uncertainty and unpredictability, many have experienced loss and changes in family circumstances and these are bigger life lessons than anything that can be planned for. Arguably, the pandemic has created some of the best learning opportunities in living memory and we should all emerge at the other end of this better equipped for what life throws at us.

So, as we end the year, I think we should celebrate how children and young people everywhere, but particularly those with complex needs, have coped with such an unprecedented life-affecting situation. We fail to do them justice if we accentuate the loss and ignore what they have learnt and succeeded in, often against the odds. Rather than talking about the lost year or the lost generation, our children, your children, should be applauded and celebrated for the way they have adapted, coped and in some cases, really flourished. They are an absolute credit to you and please, allow yourselves to take the credit.

It is an honour and a privilege to be part of the Riverside School community and I would like to thank each and every one of you for what you bring. We should be proud of a school community that looks after, and looks out for, one another. A school community that actively promotes

inclusion and celebrates diversity. A school community that has stood together throughout the past year.

On behalf of all the staff at Riverside School, thank you for trusting us with your precious children, for letting us into your lives and for sharing your stories. Thank you for the many, many messages you have sent into school in recent weeks, all of which are proudly displayed in our entrances on all three sites. They really do mean the world to us. And finally, just in case your children haven't had the chance to, or haven't found the words to say thank you to you, for everything you do, day in, day out, I will take the liberty of saying it for them. They may not all have the words to tell you how much they appreciate what you do and how much they love you, but I promise you, they do.

I hope you all have a happy and healthy summer and we can't wait to see you again in September.

With very best wishes,



Steve Solomons
Headteacher