

3 June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

### **Head of Junior School – Trinity Term 2020**

It is hard to know where to begin to mark the key moments of the 2019/2020 academic year. I think 'unforgettable' might be a good place to start; it really has been quite the rollercoaster ride. From moving to our temporary accommodation, to our truly incredible inspection experience, to embarking on a new chapter of remote teaching and learning and finally our preparations for a return to school before it became a reality; it really has been a whirlwind! In true St Dunstan's style, we approached each and every hurdle with an absolute determination to succeed. And success was certainly the outcome!

There are so many highlights that it is impossible to touch upon them all. That said, a personal highlight for me and a moment that I know I will never forget, is seeing the children return to school following such a long lockdown period. The smiles on their faces, the genuine delight to see their teachers and friends and the laughter, so much laughter, have made the past five weeks some of the most special weeks I have ever experienced in school. If we could bottle the happiness, we would be very rich indeed!

In discussions with the teachers, we have all agreed that the strength of our community has really shone through over the last term. There has been the most tremendous sense of collaboration and team spirit from pupils, parents and staff combined that we have all felt has made such an extraordinary difference to us during a challenging period. The approach of the entire community was that we were in this together and it is one of the characteristics of the St Dunstan's family. We are incredibly grateful to you for your ongoing support, words of encouragement and praise over recent weeks; it really has made all the difference and kept our spirits and energy levels high. I kindly request that you do not share with too many people how creative and talented my teaching team are as I feel that their potential as CBBC presenters, comedians or, in Mr Chambers' case, ventriloquism may be spotted and I need to keep them in our classrooms! From using shower cubicles to recreate airport shuttles, to origami experts, to home-grown vegetable success to treasure island lounge scenes, the list of examples I could cite is endless.

Our EYFS pupils have embraced outdoor learning like never before and it has, without a doubt, enriched their curriculum and enhanced the exploratory nature of their lessons even further. The outdoor stage is a particular highlight, so too was the Paddling Pool Project. Pupils designed and created their own paddling pool in our brand new Woodland Classroom, built bug hotels (not yet available on Booking.com I am afraid), became spider experts and learnt about number bonds with snails. Before we have visits from the RSPCA, I can confirm that no snails were harmed in the process. We love our creepy-crawly friends!

I am convinced that our Year 1 pupils must have been key advisors to the education ministers, so great is their love for their new classroom arrangement. Likening having their

own desks to being Kings and Queens makes me question the glamorous life I had imagined for Queen Elizabeth, but how wonderful that they have enjoyed their new environment so much! The Traction Man mysteries continue and it is all Year 1 seem to be interested in at the moment, leading to the most impressive work; from missing posters, the pupils went on to learn about character speech, thought and action before creating their own Traction Man inspired narratives and comics. I knew that we were in dangerous Traction Man territory when I interrupted Mrs Webb sewing Traction Man's new outfit and painting his hair black with a Sharpie before he was spotted. Clearly not being able to make costumes for the cancelled Year 6 Trinity Term performance took its toll on poor Mrs Webb. I am sure the summer break will mean she is sure to make a full recovery.

I have heard quite a few stories about Mr Chambers and his live eating of an entire cucumber to teach Year 2 pupils about the importance of a balanced diet. While I would not necessarily encourage this approach, it certainly has inspired more cucumber eating in the year group. Food themes continued with pupils (and teachers) tasting and describing chocolate in English, as well as learning about how chocolate is made. The creative approach to written tasks whilst also having the excuse to eat snacks in lessons was quite inspirational to other year groups, I am sure!

The Year 3 virtual residential week was an opportunity for the children to take part in their residential activities, but in the comfort of their own homes. In keeping with our food-based approach to remote learning, it started off in the kitchen, making homemade pizzas and soup. The children also practised their packing skills and most importantly, their unpacking skills, making sure to tidy everything away afterwards! The week ended with some fantastic den building. We saw some very cosy-looking dens as well as some carefully constructed, delicate fairy houses. The Year 3 Bake Off had the children creating some delicious goodies in the kitchen whilst also practising their measuring skills for maths. There were too many star bakers to choose!

Year 4 enjoyed their IPC entry point for *Feel the Force* which had the children constructing complex Rube Goldberg machines from the items in their homes to carry out mundane tasks. The intricate and complicated constructions completed tasks such as delivering bon-bons, turning a page of a book and rolling a dice. In maths, the children worked hard to use all of their learning this year and solved the Great St Dunstan's Maths Murder Mystery! The children had to solve maths problems which led them to clues and eventually crack the case!

In Year 5, the theme of remote learning was to get out and about in gardens and parks near home to explore the local wildlife and plants as part of their IPC topic *Existing Endangered Extinct*. The children made some stunning nature journals and we even had some home-made wildlife documentaries in full camouflage gear – David Attenborough would be quite envious. In form time the children have been taking it in turns to make and host quizzes, even dressing up to adopt the role of the quiz show host.

The last five weeks have very much been focused on us celebrating with Year 6 their time in the Junior School. Alongside designing a theme park on the moon (why not?!) for their maths project to calculate costs of running a business (we finished the project when all their theme park staff had to be Furloughed as a result of a global pandemic) and engaging in some complex philosophical debates, they have found time to reminisce, looking through photographs from Nursery, past performance videos and endless rehearsals of the 'Cup Song', it really has been

quite the end of year send off! It has made it a little tricky in Microsoft Teams meetings to explain what the noise is all about as children take their cup song incredibly seriously.

I should also take the opportunity to mention the numerous whole Junior School events that have taken place this term. I have been absolutely blown away by the House projects; creative writing that left me on the edge of my seat desperate for a chapter 2, art masterpieces to House Fun Day tasks, the sense of House camaraderie continues despite lockdown. Sports Day was another great cause of celebration and whether remote or in school, everyone took it seriously. Following our dramatic performance in the Sports Day launch video, I will be at the East Gate with the PE team on the last day of term, prepared to sign autographs in preparation for our Oscar nominations.

It is with sadness that we bid farewell to Mrs Compton, Mrs deCordova, Miss Jones, Mrs Dickenson, Mrs Shaw and Mr Quast. I would like to thank them for their invaluable contribution to the College. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with them and I am sure you would agree they have given so much within their individual departments to ensure that our pupils are happy, making excellent progress and encouraged to do their very best. We wish them well in their future endeavours and hope they will join us in the future at one of our many events. We thank them in full in the *valete* sent in Mr Hewlett's communications today. You will also find a full list of staff we welcome to the College in the *salvete*.

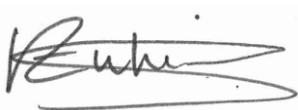
To have achieved so much in such a strange term is quite remarkable and we could not have achieved it without the positivity, hard work and relentless dedication of the Junior School staff. I must use this opportunity to thank them for all they have done and I am sure you will appreciate, they are due a very well-deserved rest over the summer holidays. I have received some requests for advice about what should be done with pupils over the holiday. My advice is for pupils to rest too! We must not underestimate the importance of using the holidays to have socially distanced play dates and also creating a separation from home and school so that the home is no longer a classroom. The benefits of this will be significant and rest assured in an academic sense, we are ready to hit the ground running in September.

Please be aware that should your child need any additional support over the summer holidays, Julia Gray will be continuing counselling sessions if needed. She can be contacted directly at: [jgray@sdmail.org.uk](mailto:jgray@sdmail.org.uk) if you would like to organise a remote counselling session during August.

Now that we have made it to the end of the Trinity Term 2020, I am absolutely positive the move to our new building will be a walk in the park next summer!

I wish you a restful summer break and very much look forward to seeing you again in September.

Best wishes



Miss L Whitwood  
**Head of Junior School**