



CEO Briefing

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Happy New Year to all our pupils, families, staff and governors! The return of schools on Monday 4 January happened amidst one of the most challenging 72 hour periods that school leaders and governors have faced, and I'm incredibly proud of how much our academies did, and have done, to ensure pupils and families have an offer that meets their needs, especially in the face of such short notice changes. All we can do is respond to Government announcements at the point they're made - we have no prior notice about what's coming before the televised broadcasts, and we are only able to manage our way through these challenges by working together. Add in a snow day like today, and this has certainly made for an eventful start to 2021.

It is being mindful of our capacity to depend on one another in challenging times that I - with much sadness - share the tragic news that one of our pupils, Oliver Groom, died in his sleep on 10 December. Oli was 7 years old and a much loved pupil in John Wilkinson's class at Heatherwood. Our thoughts and prayers have been with the school community and Oli's family throughout this incredibly difficult time.

In mid December 2020, one our Directors - Naveen Judah - hit the airwaves to champion teachers and TAs efforts on the LBC radio station. I'd like to extend a big thank you to Naveen for continuing his personal campaign to raise awareness of the exceptional contribution of our workforce through these unprecedented times: we can never have enough advocacy!

Speaking of advocacy, as a Trust, we support in the **strongest possible terms** the schools workforce being a priority for the COVID-19 vaccination programme. We have made this clear to the Department for Education and also to our Trade Union partners. We welcome the Secretary of State's advocacy for this in his testimony to the Education Select Committee on 13 January 2021, and we wait with (cautious) optimism that an announcement to confirm this will be made soon. Whilst we are doing all we can to maintain safe schools, priority access to the COVID-19 vaccination programme would do so much to further assure so many of our staff and our families, as the risks of COVID-19 would be, for the most part, negated. In the autumn, the Trust invested in an Influenza vaccination programme for all of our workforce, so I know we have and will continue to do as much as we can to prevent risks, as well as manage them when they arise.

With a third vaccine now approved and millions already vaccinated, I choose to believe that the darkness of 2020 and early 2021 is starkly contrasted with the shining light of hope we see climbing over the horizon. Whilst we have a way to go yet to return to the world we knew, pre-March 2020, I believe we can and will continue to make it through these days, **together**, by doing what we've done so well, so far: trusting in one another and never losing sight of the value of the public service we provide.

Things are changing quickly and regularly, so please ensure you all stay safe and follow the Government advice! 2 weeks down, 4 to go! As Einstein once said: "Learn from yesterday; live for today; hope for tomorrow".

Learning together, to be the best we can be Warren Carratt

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