

December 2022

Dear Families,

When I wrote my end of year letter last December, I noted that we were living in challenging times. I had hoped that as Covid pressures reduced things would become easier but, as you will know only too well, various factors have combined to add to the financial pressures on us all. You will realise that school budgets are also under significant pressure as costs rise and, although we are currently better placed than many schools, we are mindful that we will need to be particularly cautious as we produce the budgets for future years.

The Governing Body has a duty to routinely monitor progress during the year. This is done by a combination of Governors' assessments and by expert external inspections by both the Local Authority and by Head Teachers of partner schools. I am pleased to report that the external views once again strongly support our positive internal assessments. The school sets targets for each year group each September for the overall academic standards to be achieved by the next June. The results in June 2022 were particularly pleasing as they showed that the inevitable negative impact of Covid on learning has largely been redressed. The regular assessment of the performance level of each child is also a key feature and allows individual issues to be identified at an early stage and appropriate support provided as needed.

We have noted, however, that although attendance figures are higher than the national figures, they have not yet returned to pre Covid levels and, as the impact of absences on the children's learning can be significant, I hope that we can improve on the current position in the New Year.

I think you will be aware from the press that Ofsted's grading system has changed and that very few schools are maintaining their Outstanding rating as a result. It remains likely that we will be inspected by Ofsted in the coming months. As a result of the independent assessments, I am confident that we can demonstrate that we are providing a well-balanced programme which meets the needs of all the children in line with our vision. One of the strengths of BFS is that we work well with other schools in a range of ways. This has provided opportunities for staff development, has given our children the opportunities to work with children in other local schools and has also had direct financial benefits. We will continue to extend such beneficial partnership activities.

Families with children in the younger classes may not be fully aware of how much the operation of the school was affected by the pandemic. I am delighted that visits to classrooms and activities such as Christmas and Summer Fetes, the Year 4 residential trip to Malvern and the Christmas performances have now resumed as they are such an important part of school life. The new Tea and Toast initiative has provided a further opportunity for informal contacts between school and families and provided a boost to income.

I should once again like to thank the PFTA for all their various efforts, which have supported the community feel of the school as well as providing very valuable financial contributions. I also want to thank you all again for your efforts in support of both your own children and BFS during the year. Finally, I should like to thank Mrs Moss and all the staff for their truly outstanding efforts throughout the year. We are indeed fortunate to have such dedicated staff.

Season's greetings to you all.

Hugh Evans

Chair of Governors

