



Christmas Message from the Head of School

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well as we approach the Christmas break. However, it must not be forgotten that families from our school have lost loved ones to the pandemic and I offer my deepest sympathy to all those family members affected.

It is difficult to summarise the autumn term at Toot Hill School, such has been the extent and pace of change during this most challenging of years. However, I can confidently report that following the introduction of stringent safety protocols to minimise COVID-19, backed by wellbeing mechanisms to support both children and staff, we have maintained our focus on delivering high quality teaching in the classroom.

Our preparation for school opening in August, combined with detailed communication with both families and staff, set the tone for rest of the year. By ensuring all students and staff were aware of the rationale for our COVID-19 safety measures and their importance to their wellbeing, students have been able to focus on learning and the teaching staff have been able to focus on lesson planning and delivery.

Our students have proven once again that whenever we raise the bar, they will meet the new level of expectation. Their maturity, kindness and cooperation when faced with strict new safety measures have been highly impressive. Furthermore, attendance figures much higher than those seen nationally provide further evidence that as well as feeling safe in our school, our students embrace learning.

Inevitably, we have dealt with positive cases in both the student and staff domains, with the college seeing the largest number of student cases. Our contingency planning for remote learning provision has enabled the facile delivery of live-streaming lessons in the college and 24 hours-a-day access to remote learning resources for all students via the school website and MS Teams.

More recently, the test and trace system reduced our teaching staff compliment dramatically, leading to a partial school closure for the week commencing 23rd November. Our staff adapted quickly to live-stream high quality lessons in to the homes of our students as scheduled per the timetable. Student engagement with live-streaming of lessons has been very high thanks to the support of parents and carers when a child has been working at home. I thank you immeasurably for your support with remote learning when it can prove a considerable challenge dealing with your own work commitments and possible electronic device accessibility issues for a child.

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Our students and staff have epitomised our 'Work Hard, Be Kind, Take Pride' ethos this term. In addition, the teamwork, creativity, resilience and commitment to improve displayed by our students and staff has given me the utmost confidence for the future. It is typical of the spirit at Toot Hill School that rather than focus on how the pandemic has affected us negatively, we can be proud of the growth we have collectively experienced.

I look forward to the New Year with renewed optimism that we will gradually return to 'normal' school life and enable all of our students to experience the school enrichment opportunities beyond the classroom they are so accustomed to. I do hope you spend quality family time with loved ones over Christmas and you enjoy a well-deserved break.

Happy Christmas and a happy new year,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Eardley', written in a cursive style.

Dr C Eardley
Head of School