



Dear Colleagues,

As the festive season envelops us in its warmth and joy, I am writing my annual Christmas letter to extend my gratitude to each and every one of you for your exceptional dedication and hard work throughout this year. As we continue to gather together to celebrate the spirit of Christmas, let us reflect on the cherished traditions that bind us as families and communities.

Christmas is a time when families gather around time-honoured traditions, passing down Christmas experiences, and creating memories that last a lifetime. Just like the beloved Christmas films that transport us to magical worlds, our school community is a tapestry of diverse traditions and experiences that enrich the lives of our students and make our school truly special. Whether it is Home Alone, Die Hard, Elf or Love Actually, films are part of our Christmas memories and traditions. The films, like the Nativity story itself remind us of the challenges we face in life but also that there is also hope.

This year has been marked by significant achievements, including our impressive Ofsted results, which underscore the exceptional curriculum, opportunities, and ethos that define our school. It is your collective effort that has propelled us to this level of excellence, and I am immensely proud to lead a team that consistently goes above and beyond to provide the best for our students.

Visitors to our school frequently comment on the dedication of our staff and the extra mile you go to ensure a positive and nurturing learning environment. Your commitment to balancing special days with the curriculum, creating enriching opportunities, and consistently delivering exceptional teaching is truly commendable. Recently, a visitor noted the engagement with singing was so impressive and how active and engaging staff were – some of many examples of the quality education and noticeable positives that comes from a dedicated team. I am also impressed with your commitment to professional development and your capacity to seek out training yourselves and I also commit to continue to supporting professional development with all of our staff as we move into the new year. I am exceptionally grateful to the staff of Breakfast, After School and other clubs who add an essential dimension to our school provision. Please do keep being creative, energetic and dynamic.

Some Governors pointed out to me this week that this year has seen five key figures in our school move on and start different phases of their lives. We have welcomed some superb staff in school who are making a positive mark at St Mary's. Looking at the big picture, this is a time of change in the life of the school and I hope we will continue to work as a team embracing the talents and experience of our new staff as we form a new and exciting team together.

In the midst of our professional responsibilities, it is essential to acknowledge that each of you has personal circumstances at home. The juggling act of managing both personal and professional aspects of life requires resilience, and I appreciate the effort you put into maintaining this delicate balance. Your well-being is of utmost importance, and we are committed to supporting you in every possible way. Thank you for effort you make to come to school, keeping the school machine functioning whilst dealing and facing various challenges at home.

Our school is not just a place of learning; it is a community built on camaraderie, kindness, and tolerance. Although there are the occasional and inevitable differences in perspectives, I am proud of the professionalism displayed by our staff. Your good planning, organisation, communication and dedication, lie at the heart of our teaching, ensuring that children receive a high-quality education and

enabling the smooth functioning of the school. Thank you and let us keep going forward in unity and professionalism.

The majority of our children will have fun and magical Christmas. Inevitably, there will be families who may struggle and children who may not look forward to the Christmas holiday. Please think of those in your class who may need extra encouragement, attentive discussions about Christmas and listen and support those in most potential need. Your proactive and thoughtful words before they depart could make a huge difference as they return in the New Year. I am so pleased we have able to offer food parcels and funding this Christmas to families which may help practically in some way. Please be mindful of those who might value a quiet word of encouragement in the noise and bustle of our final few days of Christmas.

Having been at the recent Panto attended by various staff this weekend, I am mindful of the value of laughter. It is wonderful to hear the laughter with our children in the corridors too and in the staffroom. However, I also know that being the best you can be in your working role is also exceptionally important to you and it is valued and respected by me and others. Thank you that I am able to work with a team that take their role seriously and also with good humour. I often and (without apology) continue to challenge staff to 'spark joy' and although you may not feel like sparking joy at present, at the end of a long term, I continue to hope that you will do so on your return in the New Year. I hope you find the Christmas break rejuvenating and a space to enjoy those who are with you this Christmas. I also look forward to working with you in the New Year, motivated and sparking joy for our children.

As we celebrate this festive season, let us continue to foster a spirit of unity and understanding. May the joy of Christmas infuse our school with warmth, and may the coming year bring new opportunities for growth and success. Enjoy the various films this Christmas and the many opportunities to be with friends and family.

Thank you once again for your exceptional contributions to our school this year. Wishing you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Warmest regards,

Brian