

10th July 2020

Dear Pupil, Parent, Carer and Friend of St Thomas More

With one more official week left before the summer break, I would like to inform you that we will be holding some ZOOM assemblies next week as a final chance to get together and in the hope that we can reward some of you for the work and resilience you have shown this year, particularly during these last few months. We also hope to hold a live streamed liturgy on the last day of term (Friday 17th) in our newly reformed Chapel. Further details of these will be posted on showmyhomework with text reminders.

There isn't a summer newsletter this year, in spite of all the fantastic work that has been done. However, we would still like to announce the Attendance House Champions (up to the middle of March), the Credit House Champions and the Sports Day House Champions (based on engagement in the virtual sports events that Mr Gray has posted on the school website.) We will make this announcement at the end of the liturgy on Friday. School for those year 10s who attend on Fridays and the key worker and vulnerable children will finish at mid-day on Friday 17th. We ask that you provide packed lunches on that day, although there will be snacks available for morning break. Please let us know if this causes you a problem.

We should be giving awards for parents too this year. I know they have worked with you, supported you and I suspect kicked you at times to get the work done. I would like to pay tribute to everyone who has helped the school to help you, the pupils keep up to date with your learning.

It still isn't clear what September will look like: logistics are still to be confirmed. I have been working with Mr Redfern and the leadership team to try to plan how things will work. A letter will be posted in the coming weeks with further guidance and specific details.

We have a few members of staff leaving us this year and I just wanted to take this opportunity to say a massive thank you to them.

Mrs Delight has been working in the maths department over the last year to cover Ms Scampion's maternity leave. She has done a fantastic job and has continued to work remotely even with a broken kneecap. I am sure she will return in some capacity over the forthcoming years.

Mr Wild is finishing with us as teaching assistant after 5 years. He slotted in as one of the team and has been a tremendous help to the pupils he has supported.

Mr Kinder came to St Thomas More some 13 years ago as our IT Technician and has adapted and upgraded the system many times during that period. With our recent IT issues, I don't think he ever thought he would have to finish his time here in this way – he has worked tirelessly to keep the network running during this difficult time. He has been a great member of staff and a wonderful support to me and the staff.



Mrs Stephenson has been a teaching assistant at the school for over 20 years and has seen many changes. She has always been positive and a great help to the teachers she has worked with and the pupils she has supported. She has been a wonderful member of staff and she will be greatly missed.

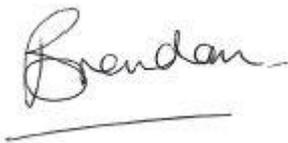
One of the defining characteristics of St Thomas More has been the quality of the art work. Without any hesitation, I can say that this has been second to none in the local authority. This has been down to the passion, dedication and skills of Mr Oates. Mr Oates was a New Mills boy* who started teaching in a tough school in Salford before returning to Buxton to teach at St Thomas More, 24 years ago. When I show people around, I have to remind them that the art work that they are looking at is not degree students' or even A-level work, but work completed by 15 and 16 year olds or even younger. In a world where mental health is clearly a priority, the role of the arts has never been more important. Mr Oates has been able to develop the knowledge and skills in every student he has taught, to enable them to take the subject as far as they wanted to go: whether that has been to university or Art college (for example a student at St Martin's Art College London) or professional photographers (a student based in the US and working all over the world) or doctors, lawyers etc working on their art for mental relaxation. Mr Oates has influenced so many people's lives with the attitude and philosophy that 'everybody can...'. I know that Mr Branch will continue the strong tradition of art within the school but I also know that Mr Oates will be greatly missed.

Well it isn't how I would have liked to have finished the year and certainly not how I would have liked to end my time at St Thomas More after eleven and a half years. I just wanted to emphasise that it isn't eleven years, but eleven and a half years (eleven and two thirds to be precise) and these last two terms have been amongst the hardest, but in some ways the most rewarding times of my career. I have missed the children in particular over these last weeks but their comments to me and positive reactions to the situation have kept me going.

I have had the privilege of working with some of the most talented staff, pupils and governors whilst at the school and I would like to end by saying a massive thank you to them: all the staff, governors, parents and particularly the pupils I have had the honour to work with during my time at St Thomas More. As I say every year at the awards evening, St Thomas More is a special place but it is you, the people who make it so.

Keep safe, look after each other and thank you for making St Thomas More such a wonderful school.

Yours faithfully and with love



**correction on previous version*



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NOTTINGHAM

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