



July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **End of term message from the Chair of the Trust Board**

As we approach the end of another academic year I am writing my end of term message in unprecedented times. At the beginning of the year no-one would have anticipated how the world as we know it would have changed.

We started the year welcoming two new schools to our Trust; Sherburn High School and Brayton CE Primary School. Both schools have settled in really well and have quickly become integral parts of our organisation.

The Trust central team moved into their premises at Rose Cottage in the grounds of Tadcaster Grammar School and have worked hard to make the offices as habitable as possible. It has certainly made things easier for the team to be in one location and the Trust Board now have most of their meetings in Rose Cottage.

During this year we have welcomed a new Trust Estates Manager, Mr Holah, who has been a great addition to our team. Mr Holah has already made great strides in identifying essential works in all of our schools and is starting to oversee over £2 million of work to ensure all of our schools are as safe and hospitable as possible for our young people and staff.

As always, finance has been an important part of the work of the Trust Board. Money is always tight in education, but has been particularly difficult this year as we strive to provide high-quality education on a challenging budget. Great credit must go to our Headteachers and our school business and admin teams, along with Mrs Boyes, our Chief Operating Officer, to ensure that the books balance.

Obviously the second half of this academic year has been dominated by the COVID-19 crisis and I want to pay a huge tribute and give thanks to every one of our wonderful Headteachers, teachers, support staff, cleaners, catering teams and everyone else who has been involved in keeping our children safe and educated in these very difficult circumstances.

I know from the feedback I have received, that our schools have benefited hugely from being part of the Trust during these difficult weeks and the support that everyone has given each other has been phenomenal. The true power of collaboration has been evident during this time and whilst I am sure that these last few months will stay with us all for a long time, hopefully it has strengthened the collaborative work that goes on between our schools and across the Trust.

We were very fortunate, just before the lockdown, to have appointed our interim CEO, Mr Yapp, to replace Mr Sibley when he retires this summer. They have worked really effectively together during these last few months, and I want to thank Mr Yapp particularly for taking the reins when both Mr Sibley and Mrs Boyes were ill with the virus at the same time. Without his leadership during that period and the massive contribution he has continued to make since, life would have been very much more difficult. We are all really looking forward to working with Mr Yapp during the next academic year to further strengthen the development of the Trust.

On that note I would like to finish my newsletter by saying a few words about Mr Sibley on his retirement. He has been an integral part of the STAR MAT from the very beginning. He has worked tirelessly and unselfishly throughout to help us form the Trust and to take it through its infancy into the growing organisation that it is today. Martyn has been an inspirational leader throughout his time as our CEO. He has kept everyone together and working towards the same goal of providing high-quality education for all of our children and making sure that each child flourishes and achieves the best they can. He has led the way with our school leaders and kept a relentless focus on the children being at the heart of everything we do. He will be greatly missed as a CEO, but we hope that he will continue to be involved with the Trust in a voluntary capacity so that we can continue to benefit from his wisdom and kindness. Best wishes to you for your retirement from everyone on the Trust Board.

Hopefully next year will see us return to a more normal academic year and the key focus of supporting our schools to ensure that our pupils and students can catch up on the learning they have missed this year.

I wish everyone a happy and healthy summer break and look forward to welcoming the majority of pupils and students back to our schools in September.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C Thornton-Eckford  
Chair of the Trust Board

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