

# Highworth Combined School & Nursery

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17<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear all

I must confess to breathing a big sigh of relief today at the fact that the final weeks of term at Highworth have not seen wide spread disruption due to Covid 19. Whilst it is clear from the media that we need to be really careful over the holiday period, I hope that this good fortune will allow you to enjoy some happy family time.

A reminder that there is some exciting festive viewing on the school website. It is hard to access this content on a mobile phone; best watched via a tablet or laptop if possible:

Winter Displays:

[https://www.highworth.bucks.sch.uk/web/winter\\_displays/527510](https://www.highworth.bucks.sch.uk/web/winter_displays/527510)

Christmas performances:

[https://www.highworth.bucks.sch.uk/web/christmas\\_2020/295423](https://www.highworth.bucks.sch.uk/web/christmas_2020/295423)

End of term celebration song: Merry Christmas Everyone:

[https://www.highworth.bucks.sch.uk/web/christmas\\_2020/295423](https://www.highworth.bucks.sch.uk/web/christmas_2020/295423)

After a year like no other, many families will have significant financial worries. Buckinghamshire Council are providing support for those in need. The details are available using this link:

<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/get-support-food-and-energy-bills-over-winter/>

Whilst reflecting on recent experiences, I found a letter to parents written by a Head Teacher from a school in Sussex and have pasted it for you below. Forgive the copying (Mr Tidd writes better than I do); please know I too thank you sincerely for your trust and support.

I send you my love and best wishes for some peace and happiness this Christmas.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clare Pankhania".

Clare Pankhania

Dear parents,

As we approach the end of the calendar year, tradition would have it that heads write a letter thanking parents for their support in general, and also for any generous gifts given to staff to celebrate Christmas.

This year, we owe you our thanks considerably more than ever, so please let me offer it now.

We always recognise that, in sending your children to our school, you are putting great trust in us, both to care for and to educate them. This year, this couldn't be more true. So thank you for continuing to trust in us through this tumultuous time, particularly when there must have been times of real worry for you, as there have been for all of us.

Thank you for your patience at the start of this whole business, when we all found out that schools would be closing just days later. We had a challenge on our hands working out what school closure would look like, but we were also very aware that every delay in us sharing information with you was adding to the challenges you faced in changing work plans and arranging childcare.

Thank you to those of you who continued to serve in frontline roles, while entrusting your children to our care. You must have worried that you were putting them at risk to allow you to go to work; know that we were grateful both for your faith and your contribution to tackling the pandemic in its most worrying phase.

Thank you, too, to those of you who, with little warning, made arrangements to keep your children at home. Very few school teachers would opt to home-educate their own children: we know what a challenge that is. Thank you for your tolerance while we sorted out remote learning, tried to balance the needs of everyone, whether enthusiastic for more work or struggling to access any.

Thank you for listening to our messages, reading our emails, and watching our videos, while all around us was contradictory information in the press and on social media.

Often, we found out about big announcements at the same time as you, watching the prime minister and his experts on the evening broadcasts. Too often, we then had to wait on detail to help us – and you – to understand what it meant in practice.

To those who were confused by too much communication, or disappointed with the decisions we took, we apologise. As always with schools – and any organisation – sometimes we get things wrong. On this occasion, the urgency with which we had to make decisions meant that sometimes we had to go back and change decisions. Hopefully each change improved things for you and your children, but it was another adaptation to have to make, all the same.

Thank you for all your support in returning the children to school in September. Every headteacher in the land worried in late August as we prepared classrooms, corridors,

playgrounds and dining halls for the return of the pupils, but we also relied on your support to make it all work.

Lastly, thank you for working with us through these straitened months, without traditional events like welcome meetings, parents' evenings or even the school nativity.

In some ways, it's felt harder than ever to be together as a school community but, in other ways, this period of change has highlighted the importance of working together as we do.

Hopefully you'll agree that, throughout 2020, we've worked with you to provide your children with the safest, most enjoyable and most effective education possible. We look forward to doing the same in 2021.