

11th February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to you all half way through what has been a really difficult school year for everyone. I don't think any of us expected to be in the position we are in now back in September.

I wanted to personally thank all of you for what you are doing to support your children and your schools. I know some of you are frontline critical workers, supporting the national effort against Covid-19; others are working hard supporting children with learning at home, often with other childcare duties; or working from home yourself too. On top of this, many will have their own personal issues to also deal with. We understand how hard it is, but are extremely grateful for everything you are doing.

At Victoria Academies Trust we appreciate everyone 'doing their best' under such unprecedented circumstances. I am in regular contact with Head Teachers and Chairs of Academy Councils to understand our schools, and ensure that we are supporting as much as we possibly can. I love hearing about everything happening both in schools and at home, and enjoy celebrating and sharing through our Twitter account @VicAcademies

What I am certain of is the hard work and determination shown by all staff at Northfield Manor. They truly are going above and beyond to make sure that they support learning throughout this time. I have spoken to Mrs Pennington over the past week to thank them personally and pass on my thanks and appreciation to every member of the team. I am sure you will agree that your child is fortunate to be at a school where so much care and attention goes into everything that they do. My office base is in a school in Smethwick and so I see first-hand, day in day out, how hard everyone is working.

The future is still unknown, we have all heard the date 8th March spoken about by government, but we all wait for further guidance and direction; indeed I hear the news at the same time as you. Leaders have been tremendous this term in reacting to ever changing guidance and circumstances, and I know we will continue to work together as a trust as and when new guidance is released, to make the right decisions about next steps in terms of a wider opening of schools. We all want children back in our schools, but we also want it to be as safe as possible for everyone; children, communities and staff.

I want to try to communicate with you directly as parents at key points during the year, so that you can understand us more as Victoria Academies Trust and as parents and carers of children at Northfield Manor, feel part of the wider trust.

As you may be aware, we currently are a Trust of nine primary schools across the West Midlands. We are currently working on plans to open Elm Tree Academy, a new special free school for autistic children in Sandwell in September 2022. We were also delighted that the Department for Education has approved our bid to open another free school- Austin Park Primary in the Cofton Park area on the Birmingham/Worcestershire border. This will be a two-form entry primary school with a specialist resource base for children with autism. The school will provide much needed places in a rapidly growing community.

This year, we continue to work on our Trust priorities in order to meet our aim to make all of our people 'the best they can be'. We are supporting staff to access individualised training to develop their own practises;

focusing on ensuring our provision is the best it can be for all children; and also continue to develop our curriculum, including work around diversity.

I welcome any feedback you have, and will be speaking with Kathryn Morgan, your Chair of Academy Council to find the most appropriate ways to involve our parents, carers and community more in the work we do as a Trust.

For now, please take care, stay safe, and just 'do the best that you can'. Everything you do is truly appreciated by myself and the team at Victoria Academies Trust.

Kind Regards,



Sharron Philpot
CEO
Victoria Academies Trust