

July 2021

To all parents and carers at all OWN Trust schools,

As we reach the end of term, whatever final day that may be, I'm sure we all know this is not the end of 'just another' year. Nonetheless, it is a year our schools can still look back on with a sense of pride.

Children returned last autumn, full of high hopes of being more settled and back to normal, but those hopes were relatively short-lived. Staff in all of the schools tried their hardest to create some sense of normality and routine despite enormous challenges, and we can be very proud of what they have achieved. The occasional, but unavoidable, need to close 'bubbles' created problems for all those concerned, especially parents. However, whatever the circumstances there was definitely a feeling of being 'in this together', and rallying around to provide support in whatever way possible. The images of Orton Wistow staff running a packed lunch production line, creating 200 meals with just a couple of hours' notice being a prime example.

As Chief Executive Officer of OWN Trust, I am privileged to see and hear what goes on behind the scenes in all of our schools, and the above example is just one of many that prove to me how much our schools, and the staff within them, care for all of our children and their families. Not all schools or Trusts are so lucky and for that I have huge appreciation and admiration.

In addition, I have been party to the discussions about learning provision and how schools are responding so effectively to assessments of children's progress. At a recent standards meeting it was clear from internal data that children have very much held their own; particularly in the key areas of reading and phonics. This is in no small part to the efforts of staff combined with the fantastic support of parents at home.

Add to this the very carefully considered activities that have helped ensure our children don't completely miss out. They have to vary between schools due to different contexts, but maintaining events where possible (all carefully risk assessed) has been a primary focus of staff. Whether it's visiting artists at Orton Wistow, a Year 6 residential at Nene Valley or a full sports day at Woodston, considerable thought and effort have been given to providing for the children's wider experiences and wellbeing. There have clearly been limitations and restrictions, but OWN Trust schools have not simply resigned themselves to seeing everything as too difficult and not worth the effort.

As we face an uncertain summer, we can be sure that when our children return in September, the schools and staff of OWN Trust will be ready to 'build back better' and continue with their 100% commitment to our values of 'Opportunity, Work together, Nurture'.

Here's to a safe and relaxing break.

Stuart Mansell
Chief Executive Officer