

kingston educational trust

29 March 2018

Dear TKA families

Hopefully, all the snow and ice are now firmly behind us and Easter is going to usher sunshine and warmth into the Spring season. I'm certainly looking forward to a little respite as the holiday beckons, as I'm sure you are.

I say that because, as ever, it's been another richly busy term at The Kingston Academy. We've been run off our feet with opportunity and activity from skiing in France and a trip to Madrid, to a very successful STEM careers day, celebrating International Women's Day, lots of wonderful activities during our annual Cultural Week and cookery lessons for year 9.

And, with all of this occupying our attention, another academic year group is now forming to join the school next September. At the beginning of March, 180 families received news that their child would be offered a place at the school; almost all of them had chosen The Kingston Academy as their first choice and the school's catchment area now averages just a few hundred metres. When we set out on this journey and opened our doors for the first time in September 2015, we had a vision of an exceptional local school, created for and by its community. I see good evidence that we are making serious progress towards this aim and believe that we have much to be proud of in the distance we have travelled since we opened in our 'education village' (the temporary buildings we used in 2015/16 – remember those?) two years and two terms ago.

Progress by children in the school is strong, too. The curriculum to which we are bound is very specific in how it measures attainment and the school's pupils perform at a level above the average in almost every single measure we are expected to use. However, we do still need to raise attendance levels and, as ever, I ask you to support the staff of the school in promoting good attendance and punctuality. These are important because they train young people in the disciplines of adulthood as well as making sure they are all immersed in the full wealth and opportunities of the learning created by the school. Please do take responsibility for attendance levels as a family and work with the school to help improve these where possible.

In mentioning the education village, I must also report to you on the progress of the new building at the back of our site. You may well have seen the 3-D fly-through or the plans; these are now all shaping up into reality as the steel structure is now sealed and prepared for use in the Autumn. So, the project is definitely well underway and we are still assured that the parts of it we need for September will be available to us. However, there is also, as ever, plenty of room for doubt and we remain concerned that the timescales are ambitious. To allay this, we have agreed with the ESFA to consider extending the temporary accommodation at the front for the Autumn term just to make sure we don't find ourselves without room for the new year group joining us then. Planning permission will be sought shortly and the Government have agreed to fund this, we will not have to pay for this risk ourselves. I'll keep you posted as this situation progresses, but I suspect it'll play out all through the Summer.

Having mentioned finances, I should also refer to the reports in the press highlighting pressures on schools' budgets nationally. It is very clear that there are significant financial challenges for many schools, but,

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although it is very tough, we are not in that position. Our plan is to finish this year with another small surplus, which is helping us build up a limited reserve to protect us against future risks and to invest as the school develops. We believe this is prudent and I have to commend the school's leadership in managing our limited resources with enormous care. Even with this caution, we continue to attract very high calibre applicants for new jobs at The Kingston Academy and I'm looking forward to you meeting the new generation of staff joining us in September.

But let's not jump too far ahead: it's time for a break and I wish you a happy and relaxed Easter holiday, with a full and stretching Summer term beyond that.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "P. Mayhew-Smith".

Peter Mayhew-Smith
Chair of Trustees