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Tuesday 16th February 2021

Dear parents, staff and children

This is not a letter to ask anything of you, it is not a reminder about reducing risk(!) and it does not demand a response, so please do read on! It is simply a letter to say thank you!

On this beautiful sunny February morning, I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect for a moment on the past term. It has been a challenge, there is no doubt of that, and there is not a single one of us, I suspect, who has found the past weeks easy. But looking back now on what has been achieved, and with the hope of a return to school looking more likely now, I feel just a little bit more positive about what might be around the corner.

You parents have been truly remarkable in the way you have responded to schools being closed. For you, just as for us, it must have come as the most enormous shock, the reality of once more having the children away from school just when we had thought that 2021 might bring something altogether a little more promising. Many of you have had to cope with juggling supporting your child's, or even children's education with managing your own demanding work commitments as well, of course, as running a family and a household. I know full well it has been exhausting for you, and every one of you will have felt at times a sense of frustration, of anger, of sadness and perhaps of failure. But I really do hope that you have also felt a sense of pride – not just in your children, and the magnificent way they have approached these last weeks, but in yourselves and the way you have risen to the challenge of this new and very demanding role in your job description! Every single child has been turning up to their online meetings, handing in their learning and trying as hard as they can to complete their learning to the best of their ability. That would not have happened without your support, your encouragement, your patience and your commitment and for that I say a huge thank you.

Staff, too, have been exceptional. With a change of plan on the 4th January, requiring a complete about-turn for the start of the term, the staff just picked themselves up and got on with it. Any sense of despair and sadness, and also of fear, was overruled by a sense of determination to make it work, as best as they could, for the children in their care. Staff have worked exceptionally hard in these last few weeks, planning, preparing and feeding back on the children's learning. They have been committed to supporting the children, both academically and emotionally and have tweaked and adapted, as the term has gone, responding to feedback from parents and mindful, always, of trying to make this manageable for parents and children. It won't have been perfect, we know that, and it can certainly never have matched the education the children receive in school; however I know, as many of you have taken the time to tell me, that the staff have done an amazing job in the most

difficult of circumstances. The learning curve has been steep, for us all, and perhaps there will be some aspects of this different way of doing things that will be kept long after children are back in school.

The children never fail to amaze me. This is quite simply not how school should be, but the children have been incredible and I have seen so many examples of resilience, and so much positivity, enthusiasm and commitment in the most challenging of circumstances. I have absolutely loved seeing them on a Friday morning for our Star of the Week assembly, keen to see their friends and their teachers, sharing in each other's successes and feeling, in as much as is possible, as if we are together as a community. It is certainly not perfect, but it's so much better than nothing, and their smiles on the screen will be cherished, and long remembered by me as a symbol of positivity from this period of school closure.

I know from speaking with many other headteachers in local schools that people are feeling the strain, and that's parents and staff in particular. They are missing their school communities, the camaraderie, friendship and sense of belonging which perhaps we can sometimes take for granted. Our little school is a hub, I think we now realise that more than ever, and I suspect we are all feeling a lack of connection and a longing to return to some sort of normality. It is for this reason that the warmth of the community following our oil theft a couple of weeks ago was truly overwhelming. For me, the kind words and the offers of heaters and oil collections were just as warming as the money that came in, enabling us to fill the tank, improve security and install CCTV. I am pleased to tell you that "Oil-Cam" was installed yesterday and I have to confess to being slightly addicted to a quick fix of remote monitoring every hour or two! We definitely have a black and white cat making itself very much at home in the school grounds... *while the children are away, the cat will play...* and I've even been watching the birds checking out their nesting opportunities! It may be a while before I forgive Leona for sending the story to the BBC, but I agreed to be interviewed not to further my budding TV career or for any sense of self-importance but as a little way of saying thank you to all of you for your wonderful response.

This term, more than ever, you have earned your half term so please do take time to relax, to enjoy your families and your children, and to recharge. We will look forward to seeing you again after half term, and hope, very much, that it will not be long before the school gates are opened wide again and those little smiling faces return.

With very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucy Miles." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mrs Lucy Miles