



Battle Abbey School
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Headmaster: David Clark, BA, M Phil (Cantab)

10th July 2020

Letter to parents 10th July 2020 – with Janet Dunn

Dear Parents,

As we come to the end of a truly extraordinary term, this final letter is jointly written with Janet Dunn, our Chair of Governors, as she is keen to communicate with you before we break up for the summer holidays.

As you receive this letter, I anticipate that you will have had time to look at our films for **Mark Reading** and **Speech Day** – both events signifying the formal end of the academic year 2019-2020. In my Mark Reading talk I explained that this was actually the 3rd time that Battle Abbey School has been closed in its history. The first time was in 1931, following a devastating fire in the Abbots Hall and the second was in 1940 when the school community was evacuated to Killerton Park in Devon. So, the Abbey and its pupils have experienced fire, war and pandemic – and it would be fair to say that enough is enough! We hope (and expect) therefore that we return in September to near normality and I am confident that a national lock-down is very unlikely to be repeated again in the future.

As a history teacher, certain events in my lifetime are really seared into the memory banks. I powerfully remember the Berlin Wall coming down in 1989, the outpouring of grief following the death of Diana and then a sense of foreboding following the fateful events that saw the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York. I suspect that the Covid Pandemic will have equal billing with these events and, like 9/11, our world is unlikely to be the same again. 2020 will therefore not easily be forgotten by us or our students. 2020 will be the year that everything changed. 2020 will become synonymous with disruption, with lock-down, with social distancing, with Zoom. But I hope, too, that it will be remembered for the amazing way in which the whole Battle Abbey community responded and rallied. During these past weeks we have experienced a range of emotions – fear, anger, exhaustion and frustration – but, on reflection, the principal and overwhelming emotions felt have been of gratitude and pride. We cannot be prouder of our students and staff and we also cannot express sufficiently our appreciation for the support that you, as parents, have given us throughout this period of virtual learning and home schooling.

As we look ahead to a vaccine and our Post Covid reality, we will plan some sort of 'Festival of Thanksgiving' – to mark the completion of the battle against this invisible foe and the resumption of normality and freedom. It will also be a time when we will bring the whole Battle Abbey family together to celebrate the successes of these past months and to honour our lock-down heroes.

As part of that 'Festival' we will no doubt look back and pay tribute to the many staff and students who produced interesting and creative postings for our social media feeds. One of the great ideas that emerged on that front was the Battle Abbey Flower Show in photographs. The standard of entry was fantastic and 140 photographs were submitted in total. Miss Mal and Mr Dennett have worked tirelessly in putting together the online booklets and they are determined to produce a calendar featuring the winning images... and it will be available in all good retail outlets in late autumn!

As we wind down, I daresay that both you and your children are looking forward to switching off devices and enjoying some well-deserved time off. As a School, we will be open throughout the summer holidays and the Bursary will operate as usual. However, I expect most staff to deactivate their email inboxes, at least for the remainder of July. From Monday 3rd August, the senior and middle leadership of Battle Abbey will be back in business preparing for A Level and GCSE results and getting the site ready to welcome back boarders and then the whole school community in late August, early September. There are likely to be changes to Government guidance over the summer and, rest assured, that we will endeavor to communicate with you on a weekly basis to update you on any relevant developments and to outline our planning for the re-opening of the School. We are already very organized for the year ahead, made easier by the fact that we have very little staff turn-over in the coming months. We are, however, welcoming Matt Woodward to the School for the autumn term as he takes on the new post of Director of STEM. This is a crucial whole school role and Matt is looking forward to the challenges ahead – not least in reviving our exciting project to build a new STEM facility at the Prep School.

Throughout the Covid crisis, Battle Abbey School has been incredibly well supported by a dedicated team of governors. The Finance Committee of the Governing Body has met regularly with the Senior Leadership Team to offer guidance and support and, collectively, they have done a brilliant job in stewarding the School's finances. During their many deliberations, they have been very conscious of the demands made on parents and of the anxieties caused by financial uncertainty. In a previous letter, parents were informed that there would be no increase in fees for the autumn term 2020 and, we are delighted to report that the governors have agreed to freeze fees for the duration of next academic year. Despite the recent difficulties and due to the wonderful loyalty, generosity and goodwill of our parent body, the School's financial position remains robust and we were very keen to pass on this good news to parents as a meaningful gesture of reciprocation.

That leaves us to thank you all, once again, for your support and for the belief that you continue to place in us. The Battle Abbey family remains as strong and as united as ever and we very much look forward to celebrating its successes with you once we are able to. In the meantime, have a wonderful summer break and, where ever you are in the world, we send you our very best wishes.

David Clark

Headmaster

Janet Dunn

Chair of Governors

[Link to Mark Reading, July 2020](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=598463267769273>

[Link to Speech Day, July 2020](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/BattleAbbeySchool/videos/1948400248630386/>