



# The Consortium Trust

*Where together excellence and pupils thrive*

18<sup>th</sup> December 2020

## CEO's Christmas Letter

Dear Families

Season's greetings to you all! It has certainly been an unusual year in education. As with other key sectors, we have faced challenges negotiating the perils of Covid-19, but what has shone through despite the very many and varying difficulties is the commitment, tenacity and love of learning displayed right across our Trust.

What has truly been amazing to me is the children's resilience in uncertain times. During the first lockdown, we asked them to learn at home, in a completely different environment to what they are used to. The delivery of education through our digital learning platform was so far removed to the norm, and yet they adjusted and engaged enthusiastically, overcoming their own challenges in doing so. I am incredibly proud of each and every one of our pupils across the Trust, together with their families who have supported us in ensuring their children's education continued. Thank you to you all.

The most recent lockdown demonstrated again how resilient and adaptable our children are... returning to school where mixing with friends and other class mates is restricted, classrooms sometimes rearranged and sadly no collective school dinners or assemblies paused. And yet they remain buoyant, happy and engaged in their learning which has been incredibly reassuring to the schools and the central Trust staff.

Our pupil attendance across the Trust has been excellent, and has exceeded national averages, demonstrating that families have been reassured at the measures our school staff have and continue to take to ensure the pupils and staff are safe. As expected, we have had some incidents of class isolations across the Trust; whilst regretful, these have worked well to stop any further spread of the virus in our communities.

Whilst I have thanked our staff many times, I would like to thank them again for supporting this monumental effort. The response from our school staff in supporting our Education Centres for children of Key Workers demonstrated the levels of commitment to our pupils and schools, as well as their integrity as public servants. Staff who were unable to be deployed to our education centres physically but keen to support in any way they could were deployed to the digital learning platform where they could work safely from home. Our central team worked throughout to develop the online educational provision as quickly as possible, supporting our schools and stepping in when needed, as well as offering pastoral support to families in crisis. I am proud of each and every one of them and thank them again for their sterling work.

As well as the operational and personal effects of Covid, it has also left us with an educational dilemma of how we return our children to their prior educational position? This has been a controversial debate and one for which there is no proven answer, but as educationalists we have to try to find a solution and we hope that through the launch of the Trust's Build Back Better strategy, it will be achieved.

I feel very excited about the Build Back Better strategy and the positive impact it will have for our pupils. Covid aside, work behind the scenes has continued at a pace and I am pleased to share some of our Trust news with you...



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Again, we've had a very successful start to the academic year - our school community continues to grow, with new children and families joining schools across the Trust all the time. We have also welcomed Kirkley Nursery into the fold, it is a truly fabulous provision and is now our Early Years Centre of Excellence where we are able to deploy our dedicated early years practitioners for further development opportunities.

Our Swimming Pool at Yoxford & Peasenhall will also be opening in the New Year. It is an amazing all weather, temperature controlled, fully accessible facility with warm changing rooms and hot showers and I hope that many of our children will be swimming there very soon! The pool will also be available for private hire to community groups and the public, so please keep it in mind if you fancy a family swim or pool party (Covid permitting of course)!

Our new school websites were also launched over the summer and have really enhanced the Trust as one family. I hope you have enjoyed navigating around your school's website, where you can find links to news articles, key dates and information as well as social media. The next phase of the Trust's infrastructure will be the development of the automated booking systems for our pool at Yoxford & Peasenhall Primary, the Field Study Centre at Winterton and ESCape Holiday School for Summer 2021.

Our past Ofsted inspections highlighted that our provision for children who require additional support as 'exceptional', something which I am extremely proud of as inclusion is at the heart of the ethos and values of our Trust. We continue to invest in people so that the outcomes of our pupils continue to be 'exceptional'.

This year we have expanded our Inclusion Team and have welcomed Gemma Buckley, a Specialist HLTA who has significant experience in speech and language as well as other social, emotional and mental health needs of children and young people. Cherri Ward has also joined the central team, supporting children in our schools as a Pastoral Support Worker, and I know their collective efforts are proving invaluable.

Another significant development to ensure the engagement of our school communities is the launch of Parent Parliament which will represent the collective parents of our schools, supporting the development of key areas including your child's learning, community engagement, policy development, homework, uniform, catering and educational opportunities etc. Further information will be circulated via the schools in the New Year and we hope to hear from lots of enthusiastic parents and carers who are able to commit some time and have a voice to be heard.

I recognise as CEO of The Consortium Trust that we may not always get things right, as much as we try. However, I have faith that as parents and carers you know that the best interests of your children and our communities is always at the forefront of our minds. I came into the teaching profession just over 20 years ago with a vision to contribute positively to the lives of children, to enable them to be the best that they can be, to have the best that I could give. I remain committed to that vision.

If I now take a look forward to 2021 and beyond, we can be assured that it will continue to be uncertain and for some a worrying time. The landscape is shifting quickly and it is hard to keep up with the developments. Over the Christmas period



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if you have any concerns please do email me at [principal@consortiumacademy.org](mailto:principal@consortiumacademy.org) I will be monitoring emails (maybe not on the 25<sup>th</sup>!!) and will get back to you as soon as possible.

Please remember that Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January is a staff professional development day and **we look forward to welcome children back on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January**. You may have seen in the media, government announcements for the staggered opening of secondary schools and for schools to provide rapid covid-testing facilities for staff and pupils. Currently neither of these announcements appear to affect our schools. Should that change over the holiday period I will advise parents as soon as possible.

Thank you for continuing to share this exciting journey with us; I wish you all a very happy, healthy and peaceful Christmas and very much hope that 2021 brings us all peace and some return to normality.

Best wishes,

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne  
CEO & Principal