

19th December 2023

Dear All,

Here we are at the end of, what I hope for your family has been, another happy and successful term. There is something special about being together in community so close to the celebration of the Feast of Christmas and it is a real blessing to be sharing the tangible sense of excitement with the children in our schools. Having said that, everyone is now ready for a well-earned break, and I'm sure, like us, you are looking forward to the holiday.

There is always an endless list of people to thank at the end of term. Firstly, the Headteachers, staff and governors in our schools who have once again gone above and beyond what might be required in any other school to ensure that the children and young people are afforded the very best of Catholic education. I said to staff earlier today that in an age where fewer and fewer people are willing to dedicate themselves to the humble service of others, particularly if it involves leaving the house to do it, the efforts our staff persistently make on behalf of the children are highly admirable, greatly appreciated and deeply impactful.

One member of staff who deserves particular thanks is Janet McInerney of Cardinal Newman School, Hersham, who retires this week after 46 years' service at the school as a lunchtime supervisor. Janet is 81 years of age, she started working at the school in 1977, and she still rides her bike to and from work every day. What an incredible example she provides of the dedicated service I mention above. We are incredibly grateful to Janet for all the kindness she has shown to the thousands of children she has cared for over the years.

Secondly, to the children and students who, for the vast majority of the time, continue to be a delight. I know I am biased but I do think we are blessed with particularly charming, engaging and brilliant youngsters in our schools, I'm sure it's all in the genes!

Last, but certainly not least, I should like to thank you the parents, carers and families. In order to achieve the great things that they do, our schools rely on high expectations, not just for the children but for everyone involved, including you the parents and I know that this can be challenging at times. Despite this, on the whole, we continue to enjoy the full support and advocacy of parents. When parents send a clear message to their children that they support the school, it not only means that staff can focus their energies solely on ensuring those children get a great deal, it also does wonders for their resilience. To the 99.5% of you whose whole-hearted support we enjoy, please know how grateful we are to you and what a positive impact this has on the education the children receive.

I am sure that you will have been afforded an opportunity to engage with the season of Advent through the school this month. We give thanks for all the work that has gone into putting on nativity plays, carol concerts and Advent services and are grateful to all those who have prepared the children to share the important message of Jesus' arrival into the world at Christmas. Parishioners in one of our parishes were offered a profound and striking take on the nativity through [Jesus in the rubble](#), a short video from Gaza. The priest in the video offers a poignant message for all of us as we prepare for the coming of Our Lord and consider how we may make room for Jesus in our own lives. Those wishing to take practical steps to allow Jesus in where He is most needed may wish to consider making a donation to a family in need via one of the [CAFOD Appeals](#) aimed at supporting one of the many humanitarian crises going on in the world this Christmas.

In this 3rd week of Advent, we focus on the theme of joy, and are reminded that ultimately, we are preparing for Christ's return which will see an end to all injustice and suffering in our world. I appreciate that this may seem like a distant reality for some families this Christmas but we mustn't forget that, as someone said to me this week, "The best is yet to come!". Nothing better represents this sense of hope than all the good that is bound to come from the generation of young people whom we have the pleasure and privilege of educating in our schools today. On behalf of everyone at Xavier, we thank you for entrusting that generation, and specifically your child, to us.

With best wishes to you and your families for a happy, holy, and peaceful Christmas and every blessing in 2024.

God bless,

James Kibble
CEO