

14th December 2020

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Dear Parents / Carers

As we come to the end of a very difficult term and head in to the Christmas break, I would like to thank you all for your support and patience. It cannot have been easy trying to juggle your own lives and work commitments, with all the childcare issues that may have arisen from various class closures, or periods of individual self-isolations that have been required. I think overall both UKAT academies have managed well, compared with some other local schools who had to shut completely. Our procedures that were put into place at the beginning of term, together with regular fogging of the building certainly have helped. However our safety procedures remain under review, and there will likely be some adjustments next term.

I think your children have done a remarkable job this term of dealing with all of the changes of lesson delivery – it is not easy for many of them being confined to a bubble area, and not being able to associate with a wider spectrum of friends from other year groups. The combination of blended learning – face to face at school, and through digital learning is likely to continue for a while after the break. We still have a number of months ahead operating most likely in the same way until the national vaccine programme is fully implemented.

I am also writing to tell you that after 18 years - first as Principal of New Brompton College (now Brompton Academy) and later as CEO of the University of Kent Academies Trust, I am now retiring at the end of this term. I count myself as having been so privileged to have worked in our community and seen the growth and development of our wonderful academies. I cannot tell you how proud I am of the students, their families and the staff – past and present, who together over many years have built our schools - through their loyal support, their ambition, their feedback, their contribution and their belief, to get them to the position they are in today. Our holistic approach to educating your children – through constantly trying to nurture and promote a caring, supportive and vibrant ethos, where their wellbeing is placed equal to their academic needs, is key to their success. Chatham Grammar has seen a dramatic improvement in standards in the last few years and is well on its way, since joining UKAT, to establishing itself as one of the best grammar schools in Medway. Brompton Academy is now one of the top ten hardest schools to get into within Kent and Medway – its popularity testament to the happy, successful, vibrant, ambitious, academically successful and positive school it is today. I would also like to thank the University of Kent for their unique sponsorship of our two academies. This sponsorship has been key to our ability to enhance our curriculums and provide excellent additional learning opportunities to our UKAT students – something which no other school can offer in the same way.

I am pleased to report that the vision and values, under the leadership of the University of Kent, will not change as the UKAT Trustees have appointed Philip Storey, as my successor as CEO. He has been with the Trust since its inception and has worked at both Brompton Academy and Chatham Grammar previously. Phil, together with Jennie Best, who takes up the role of Deputy CEO and Executive Principal, leading Brompton Academy from January, and Wendy Walters who continues as Principal of Chatham Grammar will, with the UKAT Trustees, and under the guidance of the sponsor, strategically lead UKAT into the future, ably supported by the strong UKAT leadership team and staffing complements. Phil, Jennie and Wendy all have extensive experience of transformational leadership over many years and will provide strong continuity going forward. I have no doubt UKAT will thrive and continue to develop with already ambitious plans for the future in the making.

As I retire, I am full of emotion, and full of admiration for all the students, parents, carers and staff that have graced our academies over the years and made our schools what they are today. Schools are never perfect places, despite our many wonderful and continuous achievements, and we here at UKAT are always seeking to be better – to meet our students and parents and carers needs. I cannot thank you all enough for your thoughts and suggestions over the years, which have provided excellent feedback to me and my team to help us better respond to our students and our community. This model of partnership working, and openness will continue under the new leadership team.

I wish you and your families all the best for the future, and also wish you all a very Merry Christmas, and a very happy (and hopefully a Covid free) New Year.

Best wishes



Judy Rider
CEO
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