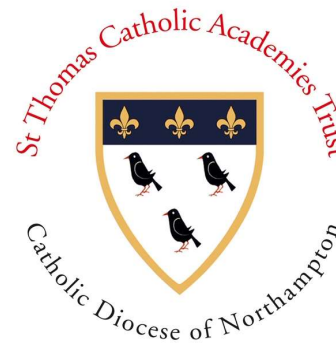


6 January 2021



AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE STRATEGIC EXECUTIVE LEADER, JOE RICHARDSON

“The glory of God is a human being fully alive!”

Dear parents and carers

Over the course of the last 48 hours you will have been working with your child’s school in order to determine arrangements for your child’s education over the course of this next period of national lockdown. I sincerely hope that by the time you receive this letter your child’s learning - whether at school or at home - is well underway.

The turbulence over the return to school for primary age students this week was deeply unhelpful and placed parents, carers, school staff and school leaders in a very difficult position. Fortunately, the majority of our schools had training day on Monday 4th January that meant the impact was not as great as it might have been. As the executive leader of our Trust, I will not pretend that the decision to keep schools open was easy for any of our school leaders. The decision to do so was rooted in the assurance by government that schools remained safe for students and staff and our own experience that shows very little evidence of transmission of the virus within our schools – possibly just one case across 6 schools during the 4 months of the Autumn term. It is very important that schools continue to follow the advice and guidance of government and given that commitment it is incredibly important that the guidance we are given in future is timely and consistent with the evidence at hand.

Looking ahead we must be positive and support one another as we meet the health, social, emotional and educational challenges that lie ahead. Across our primary schools we are welcoming significant numbers of students each day and there is a strong provision at each of our secondary schools too. We are blessed with great teachers and support staff and great leaders who are working incredibly hard to implement the plans we had to manage this eventuality.

Every day, be like the Sower:

A while ago one of our Trust Headteachers asked me who I was in the parable of the Sower. He made the point that in our work each day we need to be like the Sower. In the parable we hear that the seed that falls on the good soil brings great success, but we also hear about that seed that falls on rocky ground and among thorns that does not succeed. So, what about that seed that falls on rocky ground or among thorns? Does the Sower turn around and pick up the seed that they have spread, or do they keep moving forward, spreading more seeds in the hope that they will grow too? Of course, it is the latter.

No two days over the course of the lockdown that follows will be the same and for you and your family some days will be harder than others. There will be some days when your child really struggles with their work, days when everyone needs a computer at the same time, days when the internet plays up. If you have one of those days all you can do is be like the sower - keep moving forward doing the work that is in front of you and doing the best you can.

What I am saying above all else is to be kind to yourselves. Be ambitious in what you think you can achieve and do not fret if any one lesson or any one day does not go as planned. Just keep positive and keep moving forward.

Finally, I wish you and your family every blessing and pray that you are kept safe and are able to do the best that is possible each day.

St Thomas, PRAY FOR US!

Your sincerely,

Joe Richardson

Joe Richardson
Strategic Executive Leader, St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust

The Parable of the Sower (Mt 13: 1-9)

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat there; and the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.

Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they had not much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away. Other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."

