



## Abbey Gate College

May 2022

Dear Parents

Over a number of years at Abbey Gate College, I have had conversations with many of you about what a delightful and positive learning environment we have at school, and how encouraging our ethos is in the way we nurture and develop all children as individuals. I have also had a number of discussions about the fact that we don't shout about this at Abbey Gate (and that we probably should). One issue of working at this wonderful establishment, as part of an incredibly close-knit and dedicated staff team, is that so much of this work becomes the norm to us all. When I visit other schools or talk to other school leaders and school staff, I am suddenly reminded that what we expect of ourselves as a College is definitely not the norm. Our passion and drive to deliver an outstanding, broad and balanced curriculum, to prepare our children to go forward into the world with courage and compassion, is really something quite exceptional.

At our Infant and Junior School over the past two years (and despite COVID trying to regularly scupper our plans) we have been exploring our curriculum and looking at how we can make it even stronger. As Abbey Gate always does, we wanted to challenge our usual way of working and see if we could find better and different ways of doing things, to help our children develop not only their confidence and wellbeing, but also to develop their learning in a cohesive learning journey, from Foundation to Junior 6, and give pupils all the skills they need to tackle the challenges into Key Stage 3 and beyond.

For anyone with a child at the Infant and Junior School, or for anyone who knows a child here, I am very sure you will now have heard all about 'Project'! This is something we have carefully developed in a way to enhance the Abbey Gate experience. From discussions with individual teachers, to subject coordinator meetings, to research across the staff team exploring different curriculum experts' approaches, to whole staff INSET, to discussions with Houses and Pupil Parliament, to trials in Junior 5 and 6, to taking a deep breath, linking with Gluu Education and going 'whole school', we have thoroughly explored what works for us as a school and for our pupils. As a result, our pupils are loving their newly developed curriculum, and so are we as a staff.

So successful has our curriculum journey been, that I was invited by Hodder Education and Gluu to speak at a national panel event. Hodder Education are one of the largest school publishers in the UK, they support the curriculum in almost every subject area and at every level, selling to over 140 countries worldwide. This was quite a step for me personally, and despite the fact that (as many of you will know) I'm quite a keen talker, having this broadcast live to teachers and school leaders and subsequently made into a podcast was definitely out of my comfort zone! However, we know how important it is to

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challenge children within safe boundaries, so I took my own advice, agreed and threw myself into the experience.

Discussions with the other three school leaders involved in the panel was enriching, and professional links have been forged with schools on equally innovative and exciting curriculum journeys. I am sure these links can only help further enhance our knowledge and understanding of our curriculum and continue to develop and innovate. As we know in education, we never want to stay still and can always try to do more and be even stronger, and that is what we continue to do as a team.

Feedback from Hodder and teachers who joined the event was incredibly positive and I believe further events may be in the pipeline for the future. Due to these new challenges and experiences, I can continue to talk with the children about lifelong learning with complete authenticity, both through the development of our pioneering curriculum and through new professional experiences. It also helps us as a school recognise and acknowledge all that we are: a school that innovates, challenges itself to develop, and ensures that the children and their learning are at the centre of all we do. It allows us to let others know this is who we are too.

At the Infant and Junior School, we still feel we are evolving and enriching our curriculum and we still want to do more. But we also know, under the leadership of Mr Jenkinson and Mrs Hickey, we are given professional freedom to be creative and inventive in our teaching and curriculum design. In a society where schools are arguably so controlled by government initiatives and pressures from inspection, this professional trust and belief is sadly rare, I believe. But at Abbey Gate we know our job is to ensure all children experience a rich curriculum, that not only gives a full, broad and balanced curriculum, but enables children to explore themselves as individuals, to develop independent learning skills and to enable all our pupils to become the best that they can be. This enriching learning journey is designed to instil in our pupils the self-belief to go forward into this changeable world with courage and with compassion.

As I talked about our curriculum, I kept coming back to the enthusiasm and love of learning our children express on a daily basis. Children take their learning into their play, designing games based on project themes. Older children have been setting up clubs and playtime activities to encourage younger children to care for and understand the environment we get to share and enjoy. Pupils have been running competitions for each other to develop areas of interest, such as ICT and Library competitions, and our Pupil Parliament has been exploring what feedback and marking they find works best for them as pupils. The importance we place in working collaboratively with all invested in our school community is so important as we move forward on our curriculum journey. As we continue to develop, learn, evolve and innovate as a school, I am excited and enthralled about what else we can do to support our pupils and ensure all can progress and excel within our curriculum.

Mrs Corinna Travis  
Assistant Head of Infant and Junior School