

And so this is Christmas - and what have we done?

We've laughed, we've cried, we've anti-bacced until our hands were dry, we've Zoomed, we've clapped, we've baked, we've bumped elbows and realised just how much we all mean to each other. And throughout it all, we've loved and cherished the time with family that we have managed to grab.



This Christmas will look different for a lot of people. The Draper Family is used to tables groaning under the weight of food for upwards of 16 guests. This year it is just the four of us, with a family Zoom session in the afternoon. Our boys are sad not to see their grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins but it is only for one year; this time next year, things WILL be different.

Despite the vastly different way in which we have had to work this year, the staff of Yoxall St Peter's have gone above and beyond to make the school as nurturing and safe as they possibly could. It has been exhausting at times, but they have continued to smile, to encourage, to teach with the windows open and the smell of the anti-bac forever present. We've updated our curriculum, we've continued to make improvements to our teaching and learning. Most importantly, we've continued to have fun.

I want to thank the Governors of the school and our colleagues in the Trust who have supported both the school and myself throughout these troubled times. Most of all, I'd like to thank the wonderful teachers, learning support assistants, office staff and cleaning staff for their dedication, professionalism, and love. We also have to say thank you to the children too; they have risen to the challenge of being the 'Covid Generation' and they have shone.

A little story for you.

My grandmother had a Nativity scene. It was carved by my Grandfather out of cork and was rather basic but we loved it. Sadly, when they both passed away, it somehow got lost. Of all the things in that Wonderful House - the Round Tuit plate, the Dick Whittington porcelain cat, the china lady with the enormous skirt (who was secretly a bell!), the Royal Doulton plate with Shakespeare's heroes and heroines and of course the cheeky garden gnome who use to persuade the fairies to leave sweets underneath him - the Cork Nativity scene was my most sacred object. I remember Grandma stroking the figures lovingly, long after Grandad had passed away and telling me that one day my children would see what their Great Grandfather had made and love it too. It was not to be.

When we had children, we talked about getting a Nativity scene to bring out each year, but somehow it wasn't the same. It wasn't the Cork Nativity. So it never came to pass. This morning, I was given a Christmas bag, 'A gift from a parent.' Inside, alongside a lovely card was the most beautiful, hand-painted Nativity scene, with all the figures carefully painted on pebbles. It was the perfect replacement for the Cork Nativity. I could instantly smell that Wonderful House, roses, baking and Jeyes Fluid, and I could hear my grandmothers' voice, "And one day your children's children will love this too."

Of all the gifts I have ever received doing this incredible and blessed job, this gift touched me the most at a time when I really needed a bit of Christmas Magic in my morning. Thank you.

Thank you to ALL the parents and carers for their support and understanding over the past term. And thank you to the lovely lady who replaced my Grandmother's Cork Nativity and placed joy and hope in my heart, not only for my children, but their children's children.

God bless you all, have a wonderful calm, peaceful and JOYFUL Christmas.

Things can and WILL only get better.

Christmas Blessing

Mr Draper

