

New Year's Message.

May I wish you a Happy New Year and an untroubled year ahead. I was delighted that in the New Year's Honours, my parliamentary colleague and neighbouring MP received a knighthood. Congratulations to Sir Richard, thirty four years of service to constituents and working in the public interest.

In my Christmas message I referred to the events at Sandy Hook School. Everyone was moved by the amazing acts of the teachers at that School. And from the evidence I have seen around Walsall South there are teachers and assistants who go over and above their normal duties for the children who come through the school doors.

So it was disconcerting to read that Walsall Primary Schools have dropped from 77 to 147 in Key Stage 2 SATs results. This year I have many seen examples of good practice around the schools. This good practise and dedication does not go unnoticed.

Delves Infants and Whitehall Juniors thought about children around the world and visited No 10 with a message for the Prime Minister for the Global Campaign for Education.

At Palfrey Juniors the talent of every leaver from Year 6 was recognized in an end of year presentation. And Palfrey represented the West Midlands in the IT competition Make IT HAPPY. Many schools have visited Parliament to learn about democracy. I asked Bentley West Juniors to debate a motion and the children were disciplined and debated with style. Moorcroft Wood who achieved 94% significantly above the national average in their KS2 SATS has their own Writer in Residence, a new Library and an annual visit to Lladudno. These changes have clearly inspired the pupils.

League tables are but one measure. Learning is not a spectator sport. And so we should all ensure that the message that goes out is that education is a collaborative partnership with parents and the schools. It is an ongoing process that never ends. As WB Yeats said, "Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire."

Valerie Vaz MP