

Dear students, dear parents, ladies and gentlemen,

it is my great pleasure to welcome you at this event on behalf of Governors of the English College in Prague. This welcome speech is typically given by our Chairman Ann Lewis but - as you know - it is still quite challenging to travel from the UK to the Czech Republic and back, which unfortunately means that Ann, as well as other governors from the UK, cannot be with us today.

This event is certainly not the place to describe the corporate governance of the English College but I would like to remind you that governors, though less visible than the Headmaster and his colleagues, participate on all strategic decisions regarding the direction of the school. Similarly to students and teachers, we had to find a new way how to operate under severe restrictions. We have also found a way how to work remotely and held our regular Board and Committee meetings.

I would like to use this opportunity to appreciate the effort of teachers and students. This abrupt change brought about an enormous challenge for all of them and they had coped with it very well. I have observed substantial differences across schools, as some of them were not able to continue to provide education and were losing contact with their students, other managed to adjust. In my view, the English College belongs to the latter. I must highlight the role of the Headmaster, Nigel Brown. The line between chaos and order is quite thin and we could have easily ended up in a turmoil without his management skills and endeavor.

I do not want to forget the importance of parental support, which was also extremely needed during this time. I am aware that the situation caused by COVID-19 caused strain in many aspects of our lives and that it is not easy to manage all economic and logistic complications. To put it into a nutshell, the resilience is the outcome of all - as we economists say - "agents" and I would like to thank all of you once more, students, teachers, parents, and fellow governors. My special thanks go to the Governor Jan Kovařovic, who decided to leave our Board after many years. Jan's valuable contributions were always appreciated in the Board and I would like to thank him for his long service to the English College.

Before moving forward in today's agenda, it is my honour to pass along the message from our Chairman, Ann Lewis:

"I am extremely sorry to be prevented by the dreaded virus from joining you today. This will be the first time since the College opened that I have missed Graduation and Prize-giving, which is always an inspiring and moving occasion. I hope you all have a wonderful time.

I would very much like to have met your honoured guest, who has based his whole life on the very principles on which the English College was founded. I look forward to seeing Mr Bratinka's remarks in the ECP Newsletter.

I have seen the usual impressive list of prize-winners. Some of you I have met and remember with pleasure. My congratulations to you all. A particular word for Karolina Zvonickova, winner of the Chairman of Governors' Prize for academic achievement. I always like to have a longer chat with the winner of this prize. That will not happen on this occasion but I hope to see you in the UK, Karolina. And indeed, to meet all those students who will be heading to British universities in the autumn.

May I wish all you graduating students health, happiness, and a long and fulfilling life."

Let me join Ann's wishes and congratulate you all on your graduation; I believe you will succeed in your university studies and in your future professional and personal life as well.