

The school holidays are about to begin and so I wanted to use this column to thank the teachers, assistants, governors and parents who help educate the next generation often under extreme pressure.

I spend a significant amount of time visiting schools across my constituency and I love doing so. Every visit is different and the issues raised with me vary but in return I get to engage with pupils about what it is I do and, depending on their age group, how they can interact with politics. I have had some wonderful visits recently. As I hope you have read elsewhere in this week's paper, St Peter's School in Aylesford took part in a drawing competition to design signs to stop people from dropping litter along the new river towpath. The whole school took part and at the assembly I attended were really engaged with not just the competition but also the messaging behind it.

Holmesdale School have agreed to host my next Pensioners Fair in October and their enthusiasm and creative thinking has led to me believing that this one will be the best to date. But these visits all happen with a backdrop of academic and financial challenges that we in government impose upon them. Hopefully this week's announcement from the Secretary of State regarding additional school funding will help alleviate some of the financial issues but there is always more to be done and my visits to school help me as much as I hope help them.

In these final weeks my impression of the teaching staff I have met is that they are on their knees and very much looking forward to the break. They deserve it enormously and along with the end of year messages of thanks they get from their pupils, I extend mine and say I look forward to seeing and working with you next year.