



Diocese of Salisbury
Academy Trust
'Beyond expectations for all of God's children'

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Dear Parents/Carers,

I wanted to write primarily to thank you for all your co-operation over the past difficult week. I know how much our staff and leaders have appreciated the messages of thanks and encouragement, as well as your commitment to making this work as well as possible, for all our sakes. I was somewhat amused by the story last week, following the announcements made by the Secretary of State, that rather than receiving lots of complaints about the quality of remote learning, Ofsted were inundated with literally thousands of calls, emails and tweets, praising schools for the work they were doing. If one of those was you, thank you! Obviously, if you do have concerns, please contact your child's school in the first instance, and I am sure they will help you resolve any issues.

My second reason for writing is in relation to the significant attention that has been paid over the last few days to the number of pupils still attending school, and to changes that have been made to guidance over the weekend as a result of that. Whilst we would love to have all our pupils in school as normal, at the moment that is clearly not what is best as far as the spread of the virus is concerned.

As you will be aware, the guidance allows for the on-going attendance of those children with particular needs, as well as children of those on a [defined list of critical workers](#). It is this latter category that has caused the greatest controversy. Over the weekend, [the guidance has been amended](#) to state that even for those people, **YOU SHOULD KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME IF YOU CAN**. Across Wiltshire and Dorset, case rates, hospital admissions and sadly deaths, are all rising significantly. To that end we are asking you, if you are a critical worker and able to keep your child at home to engage in remote learning, that you do so. We believe that the lower the numbers of pupils in school, the better the chances we have of reducing the incidence of the virus in our communities, which will keep children, staff and all our families safe.

Up until Christmas, we were blessed with very few positive cases, but already in the past week, we have had to send some bubbles home to isolate because of cases in pupils and staff. We totally understand the pressures families are under, and the prospect of several more weeks of home learning is a daunting one. However, we are also aware that with a concerted effort on the part of us all, we can make a significant difference. It also follows that the lower the pupil numbers in school, the more our staff are able to focus on delivering quality remote learning.

We are aware that some schools have been imposing limits on the number of pupils they will receive, and that these numbers are often quite low. We do not intend to do that currently but your co-operation and support in keeping numbers as low as possible will be greatly appreciated. We do recognise that many of our parents are involved in absolutely critical roles as we seek to overcome the virus and this letter is in no way designed to cast doubt on that, nor your eligibility for a place in school. We thank you for all you are doing and it is our pleasure to make provision for your children.

With my thanks, as ever, for your on-going support, and be assured of my prayers for you and your families during this difficult time.

Best wishes,

Mark Lacey
Chief Executive