



Diocese of Salisbury

Academy Trust

'Beyond expectations for all of God's children'

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25th February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing, now that the dust has settled from Monday's announcements, to say how much we are looking forward to welcoming the children back to our schools from Monday 8th March. We are all determined to do the very best that we can for your children and for you as families, in the coming weeks. It is clear that there are still many challenges and frustrations ahead for all of us, personally and professionally, but be assured of our best interests at all times.

Your child's school will be in touch with you about the precise arrangements for 8th March, which will likely include a more staggered start than normal to that day, in order to ensure that we get everyone in as safely as possible and so that all children and parents/carers know where to go. It is also likely that your school may operate a staggered start and finish time system for a number of weeks to come, although this will not affect the overall length of the school day. We are also looking to reinstate as much before and after school provision as possible although we may need your patience before getting this fully up to speed.

I am sure you will understand that the virus is still very much active, including in many of our communities, so it is vital that we look to minimise contacts as much as possible. For that reason, we ask you to bear with us if our daily routines are a little different to normal, and if our schools are not quite as open and welcoming as they normally would be. I am sure you will still feel well cared for because I know how far our wonderful staff have been going over and above to accommodate your needs.

With this in mind, one significant anxiety on the part of our school leaders is about adults and children congregating on and around the school site at the beginning and end of the school day. For the time being, we ask adults to continue wearing face coverings on their way to and from school, and we ask you to arrive at the designated time, drop off or pick up and then leave promptly. As you know, the majority of other guidelines remain in place in relation to the virus. If we are to play our part in keeping infection rates low, such that we can all continue in school for the months to come, it is vital that we all abide by these guidelines.

As always, if you have any concerns, please contact your child's school through the office by email or telephone and we will do all we can to make sure that the appropriate person contacts you as soon as possible. Our focus is on ensuring that children are well catered for in terms of their well-being needs, and also on what we need to do to support their educational development moving forward – whatever you have been able to do to help with their learning at home over these last few weeks will have made a huge difference, so thank you for all you have done.

Finally, as we think of the challenges of the current time, I wanted to share a brief thought with you. This past year has been long and hard, and the winter has been a particular challenge. In the Old Testament, Jeremiah was a prophet who faced many difficult days and sometimes got very down with it all. However, as we stand on the cusp of Spring, with longer and brighter days, hopefully we can all lay hold of some of Jeremiah's most well-known words as he speaks in prayer: "Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22,23).

Thank you for all your help and co-operation. Our staff are so appreciative of the many kind words and the great support that you have shown in recent times. We have done this before, and we will do it again! We are certainly all stronger together.

Best wishes,

Mark Lacey, Chief Executive