
6th January 2021

Dear Parent or Carer,

I recognise that the new year will be raising anxieties and frustrations for many of you as we return to a national lockdown and some of your children have to undertake a period of home learning once more. The government have not taken this decision lightly. However, it is important for all of us that we work together to ensure that our schools, our communities and both yourselves and your children remain safe.

School leaders have been given very clear direction by the Department for Education on how they must manage safety, and for whom they should be providing face to face teaching, and also those children who should be provided with home-based learning. The criteria schools have to use for making these decisions are clear and schools may have to have difficult conversations with parents who wish their children to be in school, but who the government say should be learning at home. I ask for your support and understanding as our schools work through a very difficult period to set up the routines to balance home and face to face working.

Our teachers and school leaders have had to deal with a changing situation over the holiday period, making plans for the return to school, to then alter and rethink them at very short notice in response to sudden changes in government policy. I do not underestimate how frustrating it will have been for you to receive very short notice about the arrangements for the beginning of term. Those frustrations are equally felt by the teachers, governors and leaders who have had to communicate these to you.

We all want to do our best for all children but also recognise that there are challenges in relation to how both home based learning and class based teaching can work. Planning and teaching children face to face throughout the day, whilst also planning a full day's learning for children who are not in school is often not practical for a single person to organise. I know that school leaders and teachers are using all the available resources they have in creative ways to try and meet all pupils' learning needs, both at school or at home. I ask for your support and patience as routines are established over this week and next.

We are very lucky to have a community of schools and academies where teachers and staff have been working tirelessly since the beginning of the pandemic to do all they can to keep children safe whilst also maintaining their learning. Against many pressures they have been able to secure continuity of learning and high levels of school attendance throughout the autumn. Their commitment to continue to do all they can to support your child over the coming weeks, and through this challenging period, remains as strong. I know that they would value your support and understanding as they work to support you and your child over the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely

Paul Wagstaff
Director of Education & Skills