

12th January 2021

Dear parents and carers

I hope you and your families are settling into the new routines of the latest lockdown. I am conscious that yet again the situation has evolved significantly in a relatively short period of time and I wanted to write with a further update. Headteachers and staff across the trust had to adapt quickly both during and directly after the holidays and we are adjusting once again to a constantly changing situation.

Since the first lockdown we have had time to develop the teaching and learning offer and to refine our systems and processes. In line with government expectations our secondary schools are now set up to test staff and students who are attending school with lateral flow tests.

We also have more IT devices available to students who need them and I would like to say a specific thank you to those parents and carers who donated laptops and tablet devices before Christmas. These have now been repurposed and distributed to children across the trust who would otherwise be unable to access remote learning. Thank you for your kindness and support - it is very much appreciated. If anyone else has additional devices they wish to donate then please do not hesitate to contact us on: enquiries@cathedralschoolstrust.org .

We all fully appreciate that the current situation puts significant additional burdens on parents and carers to support their children, alongside the existing pressures of work and home life. If you have any specific questions or need further advice then please do get in touch with your child's school. We will be able to navigate this current lockdown much more successfully if there is positive communication between children, parents and carers and school staff. I know that everyone is conscious of the importance of working together to prioritise our children's needs and support them effectively at this time.

It is also important to note the pressures that schools are under at this point in time. Not only are they having to adapt to remote learning but also to maintain provision for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. Numbers of children accessing school on this basis have risen significantly when compared with the first national lockdown and primary schools are operating very near their capacity with up to 50% of children on site not uncommon across the city and country. Given the emphasis on reducing transmission levels and the increased pressure that schools are under, the DfE has advised that you should keep your child at home if

you can. I would therefore ask parents to consider if it is absolutely necessary for your child to be in school while the current lockdown restrictions are in place. It is a real challenge for schools to manage the needs of the children working in school and those working from home with the additional burden of testing, track and trace and managing staff absence. We will of course do everything we can to support the national effort by providing a quality experience for all.

Thank you for all your messages of support, we are very grateful and look forward to a not too distant future when we can get back to seeing all of our children and staff in person every day.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neil Blundell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "N".

Neil Blundell
Executive Principal, Cathedral Schools Trust