



Bishop Wilkinson
Catholic Education Trust

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Tuesday 26 January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

The Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust Board Directors met on Friday 22 January 2021, to discuss the ever-changing requirements for schools; our staff; children and their families, since the Prime Minister's announcement of the third national lockdown and resulting 'stay at home' message.

You may have seen the publication from Ofsted, which I wish to refer you to if I may. Their opening paragraph stated:

"As we move into a third national lockdown, with remote education for most pupils once again the default, we are of course very aware of the heroic efforts of leaders, teachers and staff in developing remote education."

The Ofsted publication goes some way to explain how the Trust Board and I wish to recognise (quoting our Ofsted colleagues) the absolutely heroic efforts of our Headteachers and staff teams across our Trust in developing remote education for our children at such a pace, but also Directors asked me to write to publicly thank our staff for all of their fantastic achievements in keeping our children as safe as possible during this unprecedented year of change.

Following the Christmas and New Year break, we have all seen how the last-minute changes announced by the government (without any immediate guidance for schools being published) have been effectively and painstakingly implemented to the letter of the subsequent DfE and Government guidance. Our Headteachers and their staff across all our schools have painstakingly planned the return to school for Critical Worker and Vulnerable children to the most immense level of detail, as well as ensuring their commitment to the children who are unable to return to school is developed in the form of remote learning. The care and education

being provided to all of our children is to be congratulated. All of our staff are stringently adhering to the risk assessments in place in each of our schools.

Whilst our parents will be aware of the inspirational leadership being shown by our Headteachers during this time, of course you do not see the immense amount of additional work being placed upon our school teams behind the scenes. Our parents have been overwhelmingly grateful for the frequent communications issued, pace of decision-making in uncertain times and the commitment shown by our staff in responding to the changing nature of each day. Our schools have had numerous messages of support, and I wish to thank our parents for sending in their kind words that are greatly appreciated by our Headteachers and their staff.

Similarly, I also wanted to express thanks to the parents and carers of our children. It is absolutely understood that there are many difficulties in adapting to remote learning and supporting your children with their schoolwork, if they are not able to attend school. We acknowledge the key role our parents and carers play in ensuring pupils can access remote learning resources, alongside ensuring engagement with and completion of activities provided by the school. Our schools are happy to hear from you and indeed that is why they are undertaking a regular programme of daily contact with children and ensure they have regular contact with parents/carers, to reassure and provide help where necessary.

The government's definition of 'Critical Worker' encompasses a wide and varied range of roles, including those working from home, and our Trust serves a high number of eligible Critical Worker families. Regrettably, whilst the 2 metre distancing rules remain in place in schools, it means we **must** limit the numbers able to attend our schools to ensure that we adhere to Health and Safety requirements which are included within each school's Risk Assessment.

The Trust Directors and I recognise the immense pressure that is placed upon our families and our school staff at every level at this time and we wished to thank you all for your dedication to the wellbeing of our Trust community.

I would urge all of our parents to offer their support and thanks to our excellent staff in our schools during these very difficult circumstances. The significant challenges being faced by our whole school community will be overcome without doubt if we can all support each other at this unprecedented time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'N. Hurn', with a horizontal line underneath.

Nick Hurn OBE
Chief Executive Officer