

18 January 2021

OPEN LETTER TO THE PARENTS AND CARERS OF ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Dear Parent or Carer

The national lockdown announced by the Prime minister on the 4 January 2021 has not been the start to the New Year that we all wanted. We know how challenging 2020 was for you and your family and hope that you are keeping safe and well.

We are writing to reiterate the national direction that the single most important action we can all take at the current time is to stay at home to protect the NHS and save lives. In the spirit of this guidance we are writing to remind you that your child should stay at home and access remote learning where it is safe for them to do so. This will help to lower the number of households that are mixing and reduce transmission of the virus.

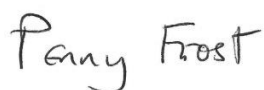
The national lockdown has brought significant challenges to our schools. The government has announced that vulnerable children and the children of critical workers can return to school and that a place will be available for them. If a child cannot safely remain at home, critical workers are able to request a place for their child directly with their school. Our headteachers are committed to welcoming children into school where this is **essential** for their safety or if their parents' work is critical to the COVID-19 response or the EU transition. Please consider keeping your child at home if you can, even though the government guidance is that only one parent or carer needs to be a critical worker to be eligible for a place for their child in school.

Schools are delivering remote learning alongside face-to-face learning for larger numbers of pupils in schools, especially where their workforce is reduced through illness or self-isolation. This situation may require headteachers, as a last resort, to prioritise those children who are able to have a place in school based on need and safety. We know you will continue to show the same patience and consideration to staff in schools that you have shown throughout this national emergency as they put these arrangements in place.

Schools are testing their staff and those pupils attending secondary schools. They have also put in place the protective measures recommended by Public Health England to reduce the risk of transmission. These include social distancing, hand washing, good ventilation, face coverings (where these are appropriate) and ensuring those with COVID-19 symptoms do not attend. These remain the most effective ways to reduce the spread of the virus. If your child or a member of your household is unwell, has symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19, you must follow the national guidance to stay at home to reduce further transmission.

Finally, thank you for your continued support to the headteachers, teachers and other staff in our schools. We are confident that, by continuing to work together, we can ensure that all our children can access learning and the support they need for their development, wellbeing and a successful future.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Penny Frost
Lead Member for Children's Services and Education



Ian Dodds
Director of Children's Services