



24th March 2021

Dear Parent

With the end of another highly eventful term approaching, I want to thank you for your support since Christmas. It has been a challenging time for many families. I know how hard it is to maintain children's and teenagers' concentration levels when they are learning remotely and I am also aware many of you will have been nervous when schools re-opened a couple of weeks ago. In that context, we achieved a great deal together. Attendance to remote lessons was remarkably high, with nearly all pupils turning up for lesson after lesson, day after day. Similarly, attendance since schools re-opened has been much higher than usual. I am extremely grateful for your continuing support.

The lateral flow tests in secondary schools have now come to an end. I am in awe of the staff who organised these. It was a hugely impressive process in all our secondary academies. We are grateful for the very high levels of support with the tests, which will have helped reduce the transmission of the disease. I encourage you to keep taking the tests at home. We must remember the disease is still far from over and there is still a long way to go before we can go back to normal. We will keep encouraging pupils, particularly our older students, to keep following government guidance, to keep themselves and others safe.

There is still a lot for us to do. Our staff are helping pupils settle in to good learning routines and our teachers continue to deliver a challenging curriculum. At the same time, they are assessing where there might be gaps in learning and planning how best to fill them. We do not underestimate the amount of catching up we need to do but we are also mindful that it may not be anywhere near as bad as some sections of the press would lead us to believe. The high levels of engagement with remote learning have helped enormously and it is important we do not let pupils think they are too far behind. We can and will help them catch up with any lost learning.

Secondary teachers are also preparing assessments and curriculum plans for students entering qualifications this year. Unfortunately, the examination boards and the Joint Council for Qualifications have not issued more detailed guidance about assessments yet. We suspect it will not be issued until 31st March. I can assure you school leaders will be meeting during the break to discuss this guidance and fine tune our plans for next half-term. We will share more complete plans as soon as they are ready.

A small number of pupils have visibly struggled with the return to school, although I am conscious anxiety and stress can materialise in many different ways. In some ways, the Easter break comes at a bad time for us – just as pupils are getting back into the routine of going to bed at a consistent time and getting up earlier for their journey to school. These routines can really support good mental health but there is



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obviously much more to be aware of. I do not want to overload you with advice and our academy websites can provide this. You may also find the government guidance a useful starting point:

[COVID-19: guidance on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing)

Support will always be made available if you need it. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with school if you are worried about your son or daughter.

I hope you have a wonderful Easter break. The options available to us may be limited but at least there will be some lifting of restrictions and let's hope the weather becomes more like it was this time last year.

Once again, thank-you for your support.

Yours sincerely



John McNally
CEO

