

Date 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

With the recent announcement from the Prime Minister that schools will not be returning until 8 March at the earliest, I want to take this opportunity to thank you and your children for all your hard work this term.

I recognise that many of you are feeling the pressure of lockdown, which includes striking the balance of home-schooling, looking after younger children and/or remote working. There are those of you who are also teachers and school support staff, delivering online support to pupils and often going into school too, alongside looking after your own children at home.

I am really grateful for everything you are doing, for bearing with us and helping us all get through; we know it's not easy and is harder the longer children and young people are educated remotely.

Across Leicestershire we are seeing an increasing number of children requiring an onsite school place and, in some places, this is greater than the school's capacity. The key message from government is to keep your child at home if you possibly can, even if you are a critical worker.

To keep both pupils and staff safe, the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Resilience Forum (LIR) have set out a guide for school leaders to ensure that those most in need of a place can access one. If required, the following critical workers can be prioritised (in no particular order): Families with two critical workers or single parent families who are critical workers, critical local authority and public service workers who cannot perform their tasks from home without their children attending school, front line health and social care workers, officers and staff from the police and fire service and Early Years and School staff.

We know that regular attendance at school is good for children's mental health and wellbeing, as well as for their education. Nonetheless, with the current high levels of infection in the community, it is better that there are fewer pupils attending school at this moment.

School leaders and staff are working exceptionally hard and doing a really good job at not only ensuring children have access to good quality remote learning but also in providing on site school places for those children that most need them.

I also know that, as a result of the revised guidance on remote learning, schools are providing far more work for pupils to complete each day and with that comes additional pressure for parents and carers to support this learning. Whilst it is important for children to keep engaged with learning, you are only expected to do your best and the most important thing at the moment is that children are safe, loved and cared for. Please don't let school work put any extra pressure on you when you are trying to do your jobs, earn a living and keep your children safe. Everyone's circumstances are different, and we appreciate that.

Thank you for your ongoing support and everything you have done and continue to do.

Kind regards



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