

5 January 2021

Dear parent/carers

You will be aware that, over the last day or so, there have been seismic changes in the country's approach to tackling Covid-19. One of these has seen the partial closure of schools (to all but vulnerable pupils and children of critical workers). This is obviously a situation nobody wanted but, as a Trust, we are determined to navigate our way through it and ensure that your son/daughter gets the education that he/she deserves.

This news obviously overtook all our work over the Christmas period (when we were preparing for mass testing), and so I can only apologise for the fact that some communications have literally become out-of-date on the same day that they were sent! I do want to sincerely thank you for your understanding, and I would also like to take the opportunity to express gratitude for the numerous positive messages that I know have come into our schools. They do make a difference and our staff (teaching and support alike) really appreciate it.

Since the announcement, school leaders have been working to identify those pupils eligible to stay in school, as well as ensuring that the educational experience (for all) is as good as it can possibly be. As schools we are, wherever possible, continuing as normal. Our staff will attend work as usual (note we have far fewer pupils in school and so social distancing is much easier to achieve), either teaching the pupils in school or delivering lessons to those not. As a Trust, we can ensure all facilities and resources are available, the quality of lessons can be assured and any issues e.g. potential glitches relating to live streaming lessons at home, are removed.

One of the positive things about repeated lockdowns (if I can say that!) is that you get better at it. We felt as if we were 'thrown into' the initial one, from March 2020, at short notice. Whilst we did our best, there were gaps. An example is remote learning – it was the first time we had done such a thing for a high number of pupils and again, whilst there were some real success stories, we have worked to improve it considerably in the intervening period. It now includes recorded lessons, high-quality resources, live 'drop ins', live streaming and quality assurance processes as standard. We have also managed to source additional IT devices for our pupils, as well as delivering training to all staff – it has been a steep learning curve. Nonetheless, we are better for it and are well placed to ensure your child's education – whilst admittedly not as good compared to him/her being in school each day, every day – can continue without interruption. For this, as usual, we will need your support.

Further information will be forthcoming from your child's school regarding the detail of what this looks like, including length of day, expectations, monitoring and so on, but I wanted to offer an overview of our position in order to keep parents/carers informed. If there are any specific questions that you may have at this time, please do not hesitate to contact your school using the usual channels.

#### **Important – Year 11 and Year 13 message**

As an examination year group, Y11 and Y13 students were initially being prioritised by the government with regard to attendance. The lockdown announcement states that the government does not think *'it is possible for exams to go ahead fairly this summer. The Secretary of State for Education will be asking Ofqual to consult rapidly on an approach for alternative arrangements that will allow students to progress fairly'* (more information to follow when we have it).

**Whatever the alternative arrangements are, it is imperative that these students realise that the work they complete between now and the end of their course will be all important.** It is essential that they participate fully with our remote offering and ensure that we have the evidence to award them the grades that their ability and endeavor deserve. This cannot be overstated and will be emphasised repeatedly in our communications.

Finally, I wish you and your family good health and happiness as we move into the New Year and hopefully see things slowly start to improve for us all.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Gosling', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Gosling  
CEO – Trinity MAT