

Important Diocesan Education Team Update #2, Tue 31 March 2020

Dear Headteachers,

I hope that you have had a good weekend and that you managed to find some time to switch off from the new 'normal' school life. Without wishing to fill your inboxes unnecessarily at this difficult time for you, I do want to make sure that you receive up-to-date information.

- **Contact:**

- Education Team members are working from their respective homes and we all remain available at any time for advice, support or just a chat if that would help. The office number will be diverted and picked up if you want to use that one (01905 732821), or you can ring Tim Reid (07919 274194) or myself (07500 559783) on our mobiles at a time that suits you.
- Tim and I have been trying to call each school to check in with how you are, how you are dealing with the current situation and the changes to routine. We haven't been able to get through to some of you as of yet, but we will continue to try.

- **Easter Bank Holidays:**

- We are awaiting guidance from the DfE on whether schools are going to be asked to maintain provision on Good Friday and Easter Monday. From the point of view of the Church of England, the fact that these are 'religious holidays' does not mean that you have to close if your preference is to remain open to serve those in most need. Union advice to date suggests that schools should close on the bank holidays but the most recent communication between the Church of England Education Office (CEEO) and the DfE leads us to believe that they (the DfE) would prefer schools to still make provision to care for the children of key workers who need to be working on those days. It is very likely that this is a decision that will be left to schools to make but as soon as I hear more I will let you know.

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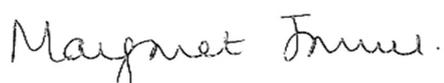
- **Diocesan SLAs:**
 - Just to remind you that both the [Training & Support SLA \(TSSLA\)](#) and the [School Effectiveness Support SLA \(SESSLA\)](#) will run from September 2020 to July 2021, so that you do not miss out.
 - Tim would like to confirm that outstanding hours / days which remain from the current SESSLA will be honoured before your school undertakes the new SESSLA. If you do access Headteacher Performance Appraisal through your SESSLA, please note that any setting of new targets will be completed through the new SLA. Where mid-point appraisal meetings haven't been able to take place in the current academic year, we are happy to offer a half day of bespoke school effectiveness support in its stead.
- **DfE Updates, Sun 29 March and Mon 30 March:**
 - [COVID-19: safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers.](#)
 - [Guidance for schools about temporarily closing \(Q&A\)](#)
 - [Guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#) (inc. Q&A).
 - [School governance](#)
 - [Free School Meals](#)
 - *Please note: these updates clarify and update terminology and do not include substantive policy changes or additional Q&A. We will continue to flag further updates as they are made.*
- **Mental health and wellbeing guidance:**
 - This weekend Public Health England has published [new advice to support mental health](#) during the Coronavirus outbreak. PHE has also updated the [Every Mind Matters platform](#) with specific advice on maintaining good mental wellbeing during the outbreak.
- **Wellbeing support:**
 - The Chartered College is introducing a weekly wellbeing text messaging service for teachers and feedback on the impact that it has had in the areas in which it was piloted appears to be positive. Find out more and sign up [here](#).

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- **Governor re/appointments:**
 - The DBE will continue to consider applications for governor re/appointments but I would ask that all paperwork is submitted [electronically](#) for the foreseeable future. Paper applications may be lost or delayed in the time that the Diocesan Office at the Old Palace is closed.
- **Imaginer's Journey into Easter with Children:**
 - Shahne Vickery (Imaginer) has developed a free resource for children and families to use together as they explore the amazing events of Holy Week and Easter Day. Resources will be uploaded to their [website](#) on Wed 1st April.
- **Prayer:**
 - The Education Team continues to pray for you every day between midday and 1pm. Please do let us have any specific prayer requests for you and / or your school. We would also like to invite you and your school community to join us for virtual collective prayer on Maundy Thursday at 11am. I will share a prayer with you before then and you may like to bring your school 'together' to join with us as we remember each other and the work of all those involved in education at this time of crisis in the world. It would be lovely for the Worcester diocesan family to be able to commune in this way and to bring our own and each other's worries, fears, needs and thanks to God.

Thank you again for all that you are doing and for your flexibility and resilience in the face of such trying circumstances. I am reminded of God's words to Jeremiah: *"For I know the plans I have for you ... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* It is difficult to see the hope at times, and the future that we long for seems to be so far off, but maybe that is when we need to rely on God's faithfulness rather than on anything we are able to find within ourselves.

Best wishes,



Dr Margaret James, Diocesan Director of Education (DDE)