

4 Jan 2021

Dear parents and carers

Happy New Year! I hope that you managed to find some peace, fun and happiness over the break and have been refreshed by it. It is unlikely that it was a replica of 2019, though. I don't think many of us will be sorry to be moving into 2021, where there is every promise of better days: vaccination, disease control and some resumption of normality. We must hope and work for this.

Things have moved rapidly from day to day and week to week, as we are all aware. This letter is to reassure you that our schools are **open** to students this week, following our 4 January INSET day, which was pre-planned, and the exception of Ralph Allen School where the return is phased, with Years 11 & 13 in from 11 Jan, and all the following week.

We are really looking forward to welcoming learners back tomorrow in all primary schools. As always, absence will be categorised as 'unauthorised' if an acceptable reason is not provided. If a family chooses to keep their child at home because of the perceived risk, this will be unauthorised absence. At this stage, no further action would be taken. Schools will continue to follow national guidelines for authorising absence.

Our schools are setting the highest standards in hygiene, health and safety; I have personally visited each site several times to ensure this, and to understand some of the challenges being faced which are site-specific. With high levels of infection in many parts of the country, pressure on the NHS, and the new variant forms of Covid19, we are also refreshing and revisiting our risk assessments for every school, and have excellent professional support in this. Work on this has been ongoing even in the last 24 hours.

We will keep all parents informed with as much advance notice as possible if this situation were to change, and some pupils learn from home. Staffing availability is one possible cause here, and there can be volatility here, as with, for example, a positive test. It is possible that before Easter some schools will be partially open, with some learning from home. Where the school has taken the decision for some learners to be home-based, materials and resources will be provided. **Where a parent chooses for their child to remain at home, no materials or resources will be provided by the school.**

There are now many excellent online resources, including those posted by the Government-sponsored Oak Academy (actually a combination of several trusts). If there is, for any reason, a hiatus in learning, then please make use of them, for example in a transition day where a positive case has been identified.

In the meantime, have a happy and safe New Year.

With every good wish,



Tim Withers

**Chief Executive Officer
Palladian Academy Trust**