



19 March 2020

Dear clergy,

### **Update from the Diocesan Education Team**

I am writing to update you on what is happening in schools across Dudley and Worcestershire. You will have no doubt heard the announcement that schools are to be 'closing' on Friday, but this is really quite far from the reality of the situation. They are being 'repurposed' and continue to have responsibility to be open to care for the children of those categorised as key workers and for children who are designated as being vulnerable. How this will work out in practice remains to be seen but our school staff and leaders are resilient, innovative, creative and dedicated to their communities. They are, in fact, facing a foreseeable future that is uncertain and probably quite relentless as they are expected to stay open through the Easter and possibly even Summer holidays.

I appreciate that you are no doubt already facing many new challenges yourselves as you find new ways of being church in these strange times, but I am writing to ask if you could also include the local schools in your thoughts, prayers and actions over the coming weeks. Visiting may well be off the cards, at least for now, but if you are able to support them in any other ways I can guarantee that you will be bringing hope and light. Video messages, emailed prayers and reflections, assurances of ongoing prayer support and maybe even the occasional delivery of chocolate would be most gratefully received, I am sure.

As a Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) and Education Team, we continue to liaise with our local authority colleagues and we will be working with them in their efforts to help schools to support each other in hubs and local clusters. The government's directive applies equally to Voluntary Controlled (VC), Voluntary Aided (VA), community schools and academies as all are in receipt of public funds to offer a state education. My team and I also continue to work, albeit now from home, and so please do get in touch if you have any questions or if you think we can help in any way. You might find it helpful to follow myself and the Education Team on Twitter using the handles @MargaretRJ93 and @CofEWorcEduTeam respectively.

Thank you for everything that you do in support of schools. Your work and commitment is very much appreciated by us all.

With best wishes,

Dr Margaret James  
**Diocesan Director of Education (DDE)**