

3rd January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

First of all, I do very much hope that this communication finds you well and having enjoyed the festive season. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you all the best for the coming year.

As you will undoubtedly be aware, there has been an ongoing discussion between the Government, teaching professionals and unions regards the arrangements for the opening of primary schools from the 4th of January. I write to inform you that this discussion has now progressed beyond words and that unions are now united in challenging the current Government instructions.

The National Association of Head Teachers has taken preliminary steps in legal proceedings against the Department for Education (DfE). The Association of School and College Leaders Union has also joined the action, and the DfE has until 4pm on Monday to respond to the legal challenge.

The largest teachers union, the National Education Union, is calling upon Government to move learning online in all primary schools for at least 2 weeks. It has also issued advice to all members informing them of their legal rights not to have to work in an unsafe environment and provided them with a template letter to send to headteachers that informs that they are exercising their contractual right not to attend an unsafe place of work.

The net result of the above actions is a situation where we cannot guarantee having enough staff to be able to operate our schools safely or at full capacity.

Our intention is to continue to open on the 5th of January as planned, to risk assess the situation and then to take the appropriate actions once a position has been established. Given the situation could differ from school to school, I cannot speculate regards exactly what these actions may be. However, I can guarantee that all Waterton schools will continue to follow agreed risk assessments and health and safety protocols. Unfortunately, I cannot rule out the possibility of some children being sent home and having to access remote education. I would therefore ask that parents and carers plan for every eventuality.

I apologise for the short notice regards this communication, however the union announcements were only made late yesterday afternoon. We will endeavour to work through this as quickly as possible and communicate future arrangements at the earliest opportunity.

Yours Sincerely



Mr D Dickinson OBE
CEO
Waterton Academy Trust