

21<sup>st</sup> January 2021

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to express my admiration for all you are doing to secure the safety of your pupils and colleagues during this pandemic. At the forefront of the public's attention are those working in the NHS, but of equal concern are those who teach and serve in our schools. You too are in the front line.

Over and above the careful preparation of school premises for receiving pupils, track, tracing and testing regimes have had to be rolled out and huge efforts made to ensure that pupils on free school meals or who are otherwise disadvantaged are adequately supported. Many staff are now doing two jobs at once: teaching in school pupils of key workers or who are vulnerable in any way, plus delivering online lessons for those who are at home.

Requirements of Government policy seem to chop and change with head-spinning frequency. In spite of this, education professionals are demonstrating a level of commitment to the children and young people in your care that is truly inspiring. Cumulatively, this pandemic will have a huge effect on their development. Teachers and those who work with you in our schools are making a significant difference to their life chances. I thank God for your resilience.

In support of you, I am calling on people across Devon to join me in a **Diocesan Day of Prayer for our Schools** on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> February. In the Church's calendar, that day is Candlemas, the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. We recall how two elderly people recognised the light and glory of God in the child Jesus and proclaimed him the hope of the world. I pray that we too find in Christ the hope and courage we need to persevere with joy in these challenging days.

Finally, because of the pandemic restrictions, I have decided to postpone the appointment process for a new Diocesan Director of Education to September when it is hoped that candidates may be able to travel for interview in person. In the meantime, I am grateful to Sue Lockwood, the Deputy DDE, for her willingness to continue as Acting Diocesan Director. Archdeacon Douglas, on behalf of the Diocesan Board of Education, joins me in expressing our immense appreciation to Sue and to the entire diocesan team for their hard work and dedication in support of education in the Diocese.

With my thanks for our partnership in the Gospel and the assurance of my prayers,

