

DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD
Bishop's Office



Cathedral House
Ingrave Road
Brentwood Essex
CM15 8AT

Tel: 01277 232266

8th December 2020
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

Dear Headteacher.

We live and work in extraordinary times and as we journey through Advent and towards Christmas I wanted to write to you to express my personal gratitude and support for you as you lead our Catholic Schools.

A Headteacher working in the diocese wrote recently-
'We are in the middle of a global pandemic, which has meant a variety of extra challenges for my staff and me - and unforeseen anxieties for all the whole school community'.

Lockdown, illness and Government regulations have forced you to re-imagine how you set up and run your schools safely. I am very grateful for the way that you have worked in support of each other and how you do the best you can for the children and young people in our Catholic schools. Many of our certainties and securities appear to have vanished and I know that, for some, joy and energy may have given way to despair and exhaustion.

I am so grateful for the sheer hard work, along with your courage and creativity that has enabled our schools to remain open, albeit under such very difficult circumstances. You have had to face so much- no easy words from me can change the situation, consolations and comforts may seem to lie in an unknown future.

Despite all this difficulty and challenge we are beginning to see some light at the end of this particular tunnel. It looks as if significant progress is being made in relation to a vaccine. In time some of the pressures of preparing children for public examinations and covering for staff absence whilst developing a range of on-line resources may moderate. Life after the pandemic will be different for us all but our mission and calling remain the same, to work together for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

I would like to offer encouragement and inspire confidence at this time. These words of Pope St John Paul II are worth reflecting on:

'Whatever may be your interior or exterior difficulties, which the merciful Lord knows, remain faithful... If the Lord has called us to work in his field, he is with us through his Spirit.'

Despite all the difficulties, you are overcoming them, in many and varied ways. In face of the stresses caused by the pandemic, you are stepping up to the challenge and meeting it head on. The sacrifices and generosity of headteachers, staff and governors of the schools of the diocese leave me grateful and humbled. My anxiety is not about the rich amount you measure out but the personal cost to health and well-being of such self-giving. I want you to know that I am praying for you and that I will ensure that the Diocesan Education Service remains available to offer all possible help at this challenging time.

During Advent the Church encourages us to look to the witness of St John the Baptist and Our Blessed Lady. They pointed towards someone and something much greater than themselves- the Good News of Jesus Christ the Saviour who lived among us. Thank you for being living witnesses for your school community and for your astonishing Vocation, your fidelity and great creativity.

Yours in Christ and Mary,



Rt Rev Alan Williams, sm
Bishop of Brentwood