



26th March 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

As Term Four comes to an end, I thought I would write to you with some updates and information from the Trust, much of which relates to all children across our schools.

Firstly, many congratulations to the following schools and settings who have been inspected by Ofsted or SIAMs teams (SIAMs is the Church of England Inspection process), since Christmas:

- St Dunstan's School in Glastonbury was again graded 'Good' along with its Autism Resource Base.
- Somerset Studio School in Radstock - graded 'Good'.
- Leigh-On-Mendip Primary School – graded 'Good'
- Farrington Gurney Primary – meeting or exceeding all requirements of the SIAMs inspection framework (there are no longer grading's awarded in these inspections).

In addition to the fabulous news above, I have recently received the Spring data check from all our schools and it would appear that once again, the Trust schools are on-track to have strong pupil results across all the key stages. I am hopeful that we will again be in the top three Trusts nationally for our GCSE outcomes, something I am very proud of, given that we have sustained this position for a number of years. This excellence is even more impressive when you consider that there are over 3000 secondary schools in England alone. I am sure you will join me in wishing all our pupils involved in national tests or exams across our primary, secondary, special and AP schools the very best of luck this year.

School Attendance Matters:

For children to reach their potential, they must be in school as often as possible. Being absent can harm pupil progress and make it more difficult for children to keep up with their peers and do well. Of course, some children cannot help being unwell, or have difficult issues to manage outside of school. However, for the vast majority, we would expect them to be in school every day.



- An attendance of 94% or more, is not classed as 'good' attendance.
- An attendance below 90% will reduce the chance of passing maths (GCSE grade 4), by 33%.
- Poor school attendance often leads to poor attendance in the workplace later in life.
- 97% attendance is a good target to aim for.

The Government has recently published updated guidance for schools on how to improve attendance. This is in response to attendance being particularly slow to recover to pre-pandemic levels in secondary schools. MNSP primary schools have strong attendance by and large. Some of our secondary schools however, have lower attendance data. I plan to rewrite our attendance policy in Term 6 of this academic year, outlining the requirements of all schools in the Trust with regards to attendance. I am focussing predominantly on what we can do as schools regarding the following:

- 1) How we ensure that schools are welcoming places for children to be. This includes a range of aspects from the décor, to how a school manages alleged bullying incidents, or the quality of learning experiences.
- 2) How we support parents of older children who are struggling to get their children into school.
- 3) How we reward pupils for good/excellent attendance.
- 4) How we ensure that pupils and parents and carers understand the link between assessment/exam outcomes and attendance, along with future life chances.

Additionally, I will be expecting all schools to be robust on attendance procedures to ensure pupils are in school.

Over the coming months we expect Frome College, Oakfield Middle School and Trinity First School in Frome to join the Midsomer Norton Schools' Partnership. I am delighted that these Frome schools have chosen to join the Trust and look forward to working with them over the coming months and years. We are also in discussion with Ansford Academy in Castle Cary and hope they too will want to be part of the MNSP family.

I am delighted to announce that our bid to build a brand new free school for Alternative Provision has been given the go ahead by the Secretary of State for Education. This new school will be a facility for BANES children in the first instance, but will also support pupils and schools in Bristol and Somerset. This multi-million-pound project will really boost the chances of pupils who sometimes find school difficult, but also allow all schools access to outreach specialists who can support them with managing behaviour and other issues such as pupil mental health.

Many parents will be aware that the Government is beginning to issue stronger guidance to schools regarding a number of areas including how schools manage the use of mobile phones. As you know, our schools do not allow pupils to use their mobile phones in school without permission from a member of staff (with one exception, where there is a split-site school). Rightly, the Government has determined that too much screen use is not healthy for children and they have listened to schools about the many problems social media can cause. As is the case nationally, we often have issues relating to pupils' misuse of social media outside of school time that can cause issues during the school day. I am sure many parents are also worried about the impact of social media on children and young people. To be clear, we do not allow pupils to use their mobile phones or devices in the school day across all but one of our mainstream schools. In addition, the law allows schools to intervene, should they feel it is appropriate, with issues that take place outside of school hours where they impact pupils in the school day.

Finally, I had the delightful experience of helping to judge the MNSP Young Chef of the Year award a few weeks ago. I was joined by Martin Blake - Head Chef of the Royal Crescent Hotel in Bath, Josh Eggleton - Executive Chef, The Pony at Chew Valley and Steve Shore - Development Chef, Arthur David Food, as children in Year 9 across our secondary schools competed to produce a main course dish in one and a half hours. The quality was truly astounding and the professional chefs in attendance said all of the dishes would be welcome in their restaurants – praise indeed! The range of dishes was also impressive and the winners were: Ciya from St Mark's School in Bath, Carmen from St Dunstan's School in Glastonbury and Olly from Beechen Cliff School in Bath. Well done to all pupils involved throughout the competition.

Thank you as always for supporting schools.

Kind regards



Alun Williams
CEO