

Clergy and Schools

Maintaining a strong relationship during the Covid-19 school closures

I know that many of you have close working relationships with the CofE and Community schools in your parishes. Your formal partnership may include serving as a governor and leading regular collective worship or school assemblies. Informally, many of you will also spend time in school chatting to staff and children during the day and parents at drop off or pick up time.

Like the Church, the schools are closed but open! Schools have transitioned to providing care for the children of key workers and those who are deemed vulnerable. Whilst this means that there are far fewer children in schools it does mean that the ones who remain have potentially more pastoral demands. Whilst it is not possible to make visits to schools to support staff and parents it is vital that the staff who remain, particularly head teachers feel supported by their parish.

I am sure that many of you will have contacted the head teacher of your local school last week and had a conversation to see how they are getting on, offer a listening ear and promise to pray for the them and the school community that they lead. If you didn't get chance, it would be a great thing to do this week. Most schools are operating a rota system with staff in school, working from home and resting in turn. This should also apply to the Head, although some of them may need you to encourage them to do this!

Communication is probably best via email, if you don't have an email contact for the head call the school office and leave a message for the head to contact you via email or phone.

Heads are dealing with the anxieties of children, parents and staff and find themselves, like the rest of us in alien territory. Local Authority staff and Academy Trust staff are all working from home and so heads do not have a "human" that they can turn too if they need to talk to someone. The offer of a phone contact (it doesn't have to be you) to listen and pray would, I am sure be very welcome. As the weeks advance it is likely that Heads will be dealing with ill staff, parents, children and possibly bereavements and as a Church we should be able to offer support. I have written to every CofE school head offering my mobile number for them to call if needed and have had a very positive response in an environment where we have been reduced to emails only! It would be great if you could intentionally do this for your local community schools also.

Finally, please pray for all the children, parents, staff and governors in our schools at this time. Ask your congregations to intentionally add your local school to their prayer lists.

The DBE are setting weekly challenges for our school communities via our twitter account @Cov_DBE please encourage your congregation to join in and tweet their responses.

If you have any questions concerning how to interact with your local school now or in the future, or have questions raised by heads that you can't answer do get in touch and I will try to help.

Yours in Christ

April Gold

Deputy Director of Education