

13th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to ask for your help.

As you may have become aware from the news over the weekend, last Friday the Government updated its guidance to schools regarding welcoming the children of critical workers and vulnerable children into school. The guidance now makes it clear that although schools are open to the children of critical workers and vulnerable children, these children should only come into school where it is not possible for them to be cared for at home while they are learning. It is clear, that much higher numbers of pupils are in our ODST schools during this current period of “school closure” than was the case last March. It is also clear that incidences of virus transmission are much higher among all the communities served by our schools than the rates last Spring/Summer.

So, I am writing to ask you **only to send your children into school if it is absolutely not possible for you to care for them at home.**

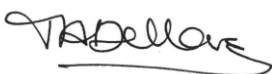
The numbers of pupils in schools nationally mirror our ODST experiences and are notably higher than they were during the last lockdown. It is this data that has led to the government issuing clarity about the guidance, for the safety of us all.

I am very proud of our teachers who are working so hard to provide high-quality home learning as well as teaching sizable groups of pupils in school. ODST has a responsibility to keep our teachers and support staff safe, as well as minimising the risks of virus transmission for pupils. If schools have large numbers of pupils in class, the safety of everyone is put at risk. It is consideration of this risk, of course, that has led the government to close schools in the first place.

I want to reiterate our commitment to providing on-site learning for those pupils who need it the most, but if we are to beat the virus as a society, we need to work together to keep safe until things improve. So, if you are at home, even if you are working, and it is possible for you to care for your children, please do keep them at home. I am all too aware of the challenges that keeping your children at home presents both for them and for you - I have four school-aged teenagers at home myself, and can only sympathise with those of you trying to look after much younger pupils. These are very difficult days for us all, but by working together, and making sacrifices for one another, we will beat the virus much more quickly and get schools open, and staying open, for all pupils once again.

Thank you for your support in this.

Yours sincerely



Anne Dellar
ODST Chief Executive Officer