



CE Briefing

SCHOOL YEAR 2021-22
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Seasons greetings, one and all! Despite the emergence of the Omicron variant and the anxious wait for scientists to confirm the new risks this brings, all of our schools have been trying to have as typical a run-up to Christmas as possible, so that our pupils can end the calendar year with more fun-themed activities than 2020 allowed. It is so disappointing that we can't have families in school for nativities, but I know that our risk management advice is a lot more evidence-based than some of the unhelpful messages coming from senior Government ministers recently.

This autumn term has been a really challenging one for all our schools, as staff absence has put a huge pressure on those left to keep things going. Nationally, hardly any schools are being advised to close due to high COVID cases, which creates a real tension between the rhetoric of all schools being open in full - and catching pupil learning up from what was missed in 2020 and early 2021- and the reality of being in schools with a lot of staff absent. All anyone can ask is that people continue to do their best, which is clear to see whenever I spend time in our schools. **Thank you.**

I can't publish this latest briefing without passing comment on the appalling case of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes, the beautiful 6 year old boy who was so shockingly abused and killed by his father and step-mother. Arthur's story is beyond harrowing: it is a heart-breaking case study in the human capacity for cruelty which will be talked about for years to come. Having been sentenced, Government attention is now moving away from the perpetrators of his abuse to those agencies charged with safeguarding Arthur and all children from harm. My sincere hope is that - in the pursuit of seeking explanation rather than excuse - the national review takes the time to understand - and has the courage to report on - the root cause of the system failures. For too many years now, cuts to Council budgets have seen the consequential heightening of safeguarding thresholds, whilst demand on services continues to creep up to all-time highs. I know how hard it can be for our Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) to get referrals through the social care 'front door' for statutory assessment, and I work closely with Heads to provide advice and support wherever it's helpful. Safeguarding remains one of the core functions of our schools, and - despite the challenges we face - I am proud to be part of a Trust that has such dedicated, knowledgeable and passionate staff.

Finally, I am pleased to inform you all that, as a Real Living Wage employer, the Trust will be seeking to consult with our union partners on further changes to our lowest pay points to bring up our minimum pay levels, and we will also be consulting with the unions on our non-teaching pay award for 2022, given the Chancellor has announced an end to the public sector pay freeze. The Trust will continue to adhere to the school teacher pay and conditions documents, with a pay rise for all staff expected to be in place for September 2022. On that note: **Merry Christmas everyone!**

Have a great break once it arrives.


Warren Carratt