

1<sup>st</sup> September 2020

Dear Colleagues,

The new academic year begins with truly exceptional challenges for school leaders. As you prepare to welcome a full cohort of pupils into school this week, I write to express my thanks and admiration for all you are doing to ensure the safety of your pupils and colleagues.

The level of disruption to learning and lives over the past year would have been hard to imagine a year ago. Since then, an unprecedented series of 'big asks' have descended on you including the creation of safe learning environments in constrained spaces, managing the anxieties of staff and parents, and planning support for children's learning where educational and social development and personal wellbeing have been affected by months away from school. The latter is particularly important in those parts of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, where families live with higher than average levels of deprivation which can only worsen with the economic recession.

You and your colleagues are on the front line of the national response to the Covid-19 pandemic. You are making a critically important contribution to the common good and to the flourishing of young people whose futures have been most impacted by the experience of this pandemic. For those young people, your leadership will make the difference that will last a lifetime.

The Church of England's vision for education is particularly relevant in the current situation as together we strive to build church schools that are 'deeply Christian, serving the common good', seeking to live out the good news of Jesus Christ who came 'that they may have life in all its fullness'.

Archdeacon Douglas Dettmer, who chairs the Exeter Diocesan Board of Education, joins me in assuring you of our support and our prayers as this new term gets under way. We pray for your resilience and that you may be sustained by God's gifts of love, peace, patience and hope.

With my thanks for our partnership in the Gospel,

  
+ Robert Atwell