



14 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I don't think any of us will ever forget 2020, the year when we all had very clean hands, had fewer hugs, kept our distance from even our closest friends and developed skills in using technology more quickly than ever before! I know that our schools have been highly inventive and creative to engage your children in education throughout this period, whether they were in school or self-isolating at home and have even celebrated Christmas in new and imaginative ways. I am sure that you will join me in thanking all of the staff for the amazing work they have done to keep your children safe and happy throughout 2020, despite the many challenges we have all faced.

As you know we have implemented extensive protective measures in school to keep your children and my staff safe. The protective 'bubbles' have been a major initiative and appear to have also reduced the normal winter spread of coughs and colds across our schools. Regular handwashing and sanitisation too has had a positive impact for us all and is something I hope you will continue to encourage during the holiday period. We recently introduced a requirement for all visitors, including parents, to wear face coverings whilst on the school site and I am sure you will have also seen many more people wearing face coverings as a matter of course when they are out and about. Thank you so much for following our rules and for helping to keep your children and your communities safe. I would encourage you all to see face coverings as this year's essential Christmas gift, as you only need to be within 1m for 1 minute of an infected person to catch the virus. People are infectious for two days before they have any symptoms, so any of us or any of our family members could have the virus and not know it yet. Please remember to encourage your children to continue to take care and to follow the Hands, Face, Space guidance over the holiday period.

I am sure that you are all now planning your Christmas celebrations with the opportunity to form a 'Christmas bubble' with two other households for the five days from the 23rd to the 27th December. This will provide us all with a welcome opportunity to mix more freely with our loved ones, but will also inevitably increase the risk of infection. Provided we all stick with the government's guidelines and return to local Tier rules on the 27th we hope to be able to contain the spread of the virus sufficiently so that we can keep our families virus-free and can have a safe return to school in January.

The government continues to prioritise schools remaining open as a major investment in the wellbeing and long-term futures of your children. The medical advisors agree that school is the best place for children to be to keep them safe, as they are highly regulated, COVID-secure environments. As we all go into the holiday period I will certainly be considering some of the infection control measures that our schools use in my own home and will be insisting that my family continue to follow Hands, Face, Space guidelines, even when in our Christmas bubble. Don't forget that once we reach the 27th of December we will all need to reduce our inside contacts to those in our own household and those in COVID secure workplaces and that we will all need to keep to the 'rule of six' and to social distancing for meetings outside our household group.

It is clear that the COVID pandemic has changed the way that we see the world. For me it is the small things that matter, the 'thank you', the smile, the zoom calls with the fantastic Trust headteachers and with my family. I have also been very affected during this time by the wonders of nature, - the beautiful sunsets, the rainbows and the sun emerging from behind the cloud. Christmas is always a special time for families and a time for memorable moments and is likely to be extra special this year as we meet with our loved ones some of whom we may not have seen for some time, except on a screen. I do hope that you have many memorable moments this Christmas and enjoy the holiday season. As we leave 2020 behind we can look forward to 2021 and hope that later in the year we can get back to a new normal with vaccinations, holidays and hugs!

Don't forget that you also have access to the Care First website which gives many great tips for a happy and healthy Christmas. Do take time to explore it during the holiday if you have not done so already. You can access it at:

<https://www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk/> Username: unicatp Password: wellbeing

In the meantime, I do hope that you all have a wonderful Christmas break and that your Christmas bubble is filled with joy, much laughter and hope for a safe and healthy 2021.

With my very best wishes to you all,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Samson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sue" and last name "Samson" clearly legible.

Mrs Sue Samson
Chief Executive Officer
University of Chichester Academy Trust