

14<sup>th</sup> January 2021

County Hall  
Bythesea Road  
Trowbridge  
Wiltshire  
BA14 8JN

Dear parents,

Hello, my name is Helean Hughes and I'm Director of Education and Skills at Wiltshire Council.

Alongside my team I work closely with our schools to provide them with support to continue educating Wiltshire pupils during these extraordinary times.

I would like to thank you for everything you are doing to ensure your child continues to learn, and for your ongoing support for your child's school – this will continue to be so important.

Your school will already have contacted you regarding remote education at home. Schools have had to turn this around very quickly and are working hard to ensure that pupils can still progress and have the support they need to continue their learning.

As with any school curriculum, this will look different according to the school, the children and circumstances. Each school has a different set of IT provision, skills, and training. The government has set out guidelines for good practice in remote education and says that live lessons are one method, alongside recorded remote learning, that is effective for pupils.

Your school will have developed a curriculum balancing provision of remote learning alongside teaching those children who are still attending school as they are children of critical workers or vulnerable pupils. Many schools are starting with remote recorded teaching; providing links to pre-recorded sessions such as BBC Live or the Oak National Academy, supplemented with other paper-based tasks. Please talk to your child's teacher if you have any queries about your child's remote education but be assured that they want to provide the best education so your child can thrive and progress.

Home learning makes us all feel we should do more to support our child in their lessons. There is support available, including our Family and Community Learning Courses, to help your child with subjects such as English and Maths. Some of the free courses can be accessed in the evenings as well. All you need is access to a tablet, laptop or smartphone with WIFI to log in online. You can find out more by visiting the website, or by

emailing [familyandcommunitylearning@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:familyandcommunitylearning@wiltshire.gov.uk). I've also attached a poster with some top tips on helping with remote learning, which I hope you will find useful.

I would also like to share with you a plea from Wiltshire Council and our schools to follow government guidance on whether your child should attend school if you are a critical worker. Government guidance states: "Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school or college if required, but parents and carers should keep their children at home if they can."

If you are a critical worker but your child can learn at home, please can we ask they remain at home and access remote learning. This will help free up places in schools and help to keep numbers low.

Currently our schools are much busier than they were during the first lockdown, with almost the same numbers in some primary schools as there were in June when a number of year groups were able to attend. Our schools are open for vulnerable children and it is important that they attend, in addition to children of critical workers. We would ask those parents who are classed as critical workers, but who can keep their child at home to access remote education, to please do so. Schools that need to will be prioritising places for NHS and health workers, social care and those who work in the education sector.

We are working closely with our schools to ensure our disadvantaged families can access laptops. We've invested £1.1m of our government funding to purchase approximately 2,500 laptops for disadvantaged families. Schools have been allocated a funding amount to buy digital devices that meet the requirements for their pupils. Meanwhile, if you are in a household where there is only one device for a number of siblings, you can use Xbox and Playstation devices to access Zoom and Microsoft Teams. More detail on how to do this is [here](#).

We do post a lot of information online, so please have a look at our FAQs on the council website. You can also follow us on Twitter and Facebook to see the latest news affecting our area.

Finally, thank you once again for everything you are doing to help your child continue in their education – we know it isn't easy and we know it's not ideal, but by working together we are going to be stronger and make this work.

Yours sincerely,



Helean Hughes  
**Director of Education and Skills**  
Wiltshire Council

