



**A message from Archbishop Justin Welby to school leaders and teachers, thanking them for their work in the challenging circumstances of COVID-19.**



This is a particularly unusual and painful time for everyone, not least the many students and staff who have found themselves adjusting to such an unexpected change in educational provision. I know that children and young people will be feeling a range of emotions as they face their school year ending so suddenly and in such uncertain circumstances, and students, teachers and parents remain very much in my prayers.

I know I speak for all the bishops across the Church of England in expressing my heartfelt thanks to all the school leaders and teachers who are working hard in these extremely challenging circumstances to maintain educational provision for vulnerable children and children of key workers. Keeping these children safe in school is vitally important as we fight this pandemic together, and we cannot thank you enough for your continued efforts.

On top of this, you are putting a huge amount of effort in to provide food or distribute vouchers to ensure all those entitled to free school meals receive that support. Schools are also providing resources to help children staying at home to continue learning and make progress in their education. School leaders and teachers are serving their communities and caring for students in ways that are truly inspiring.

Our Church of England vision for education is to be deeply Christian, serving the common good. We are fully committed to the work of education and provide schools for over a million children in the nearly 4,700 communities which have a Church of England school. I know that Christian teachers and members of our churches work with thousands more community schools across the country for that same common good.

Our vision for education speaks of hope. We offer an education which enables healing, repair and renewal, teaches children how to cope wisely when things go wrong, opens new horizons and guides people to fulfil their potential. I know that our Church of England schools will be

prioritising the mental health and wellbeing of children, working in partnership with local churches to seek ways of ensuring that the spiritual life of families and households is nourished as they offer a range of resources to help grow faith whilst children are at home.

Please be assured of my prayers for you all. As teachers and leaders on the frontline in education, you have my utmost admiration and gratitude for the work you are doing in the service of our children and young people, and for the common good. Christ calls us towards a vision of hope and service, to care for our neighbour and to be a light in the darkness. All those who work in schools are truly a sterling example of this, at this time and always.

*The Most Revd Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury*

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