

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE,
WESTMINSTER, LONDON, SW1P 1QJ

3 April 2020

Dear Head Teachers,

As we approach the Feast of Easter, I very much want to write to you to express my thanks, and my concern for you.

I wish to express, first of all, my personal concern for you and your families, for your members of staff and for your students or pupils. Please know that I keep you all in my prayers, day by day. In a particular way, I remember in prayer those from among our community of Catholic schools who have been most closely touched by the spread of the virus: those who are ill at this time, those seriously ill in hospital, those who have died, and their families. I pray, too, for those who are in isolation and therefore living through a time of being alone and being understandably fearful. Our prayer for each other is our first and best mutual support.

I write also to express my deep gratitude to you and your staff for all that you have done, are doing, and will continue to achieve as COVID-19 continues to affect our lives. I have heard of the selfless dedication of so many staff who have volunteered to come into work to look after the children of key workers. I know that many schools have devised remote learning programmes at very short notice. I appreciate deeply this costly expression of the concern and love you all have for those in your charge. I think of those many staff who are doing all they can to continue to work, at school or from home, while also supporting their own children's education and their other family duties, in these changed circumstances. For these, and for the many other ways in which our Catholic school community is showing such enterprise and commitment, I offer my sincerest thanks.

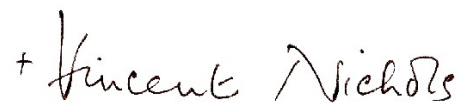
I also want to thank you, head teachers, personally and individually, for the leadership you are showing, with dedication and courage. Often you have to bear the anxieties and worries of others, expressed in so many different ways, while also finding the support that you yourselves need at this stressful time. The resources of our faith, and our faith communities, have never been more important. Thank you!

Finally, I should like to offer a word of encouragement. I have been so heartened to see the compassion evident in our Catholic community in these days. So much good work is being undertaken, often with imagination and ingenuity. Sometimes this has been on a broad scale, for instance in ensuring that provision for those in food poverty

continues. Individual parishes and schools have played such an important part in offering reassurance and practical support to those who are suffering, vulnerable or anxious. Families and individuals are putting their faith into practice in a multitude of ways, often as simple as picking up the phone or sending a message. Even amidst all the uncertainty and the suffering, such faith and such goodness is both moving and heartening.

Thank you, once again, for all that you are doing in these most challenging of times. Please be assured of my prayers for you and your families, your colleagues and your students. As we enter this Holy Week, let us do so together, in good spirit, confident that the Lord is always with us to comfort, strengthen and guide us in every way. And please remember me in your prayers too.

With all good wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vincent Nichols". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

✠ Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster