

15<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you and your family are keeping well. I would firstly like to thank you for your kindness, determination and patience throughout these first two weeks of the new school term. We appreciate the difficulties being faced during this challenging period and want to ensure you that as a Trust we are here to support you every step of the way.

The opening fortnight of 2021 has also been my first as Chief Executive Officer of Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust (DMAT), having joined DMAT from Woodland Academy Trust in the South East of London at the start of the academic term. I am passionate about breaking down barriers and removing as many challenges as possible for children, to enable them to achieve their potential. This is why I am hugely excited to be joining you, and look forward to working alongside each and every one of you as we work towards a brighter 2021 for the community.

Already I have seen the proactivity, positivity and sense of community shared by our students, staff, and parents. This all means that I have no doubt that together we will get through these challenging times. I wanted to take this opportunity to share an overview of the measures which the Trust has taken to support children and families during this latest national lockdown.

### **Digital Support**

As you know, all of the Trust's schools remain closed except to children of key workers and vulnerable learners, in line with the latest guidance from Public Health England (PHE) and the Department for Education (DfE). We are continuing to provide remote learning for all students, including an increased number of live lessons and access to a range of engaging educational activities. With support from the DfE, we are also providing digital devices to all disadvantaged students to help them access remote learning and are working extremely hard to ensure every child can access their education. As well as this, we have been delighted to work with Vodafone to provide a number of SIM cards for students which will enable those without broadband to access the internet using their phone or tablet.

We took the decision to close our schools ahead of students returning on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January due to growing rates of Covid-19, and to allow us additional time to ensure our risk assessments and health and safety measures were comprehensive and in line with the latest national guidance. We are now safe in the knowledge that this was the correct decision

CEO | Mr Dan Morrow  
VICE CEO | Mrs Hazel Fox  
CHIEF FINANCE & OPERATIONS OFFICER | Susanne Kiff

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following the Government's announcement on the evening of Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January to close all schools and colleges across England.

### **School Access**

I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate the guidance which is currently in place regarding the children of key workers and vulnerable learners to whom schools remain open.

- If your child is classed as vulnerable, or if you or your partner are a key worker, then your child is able to attend their school if required, but parents and carers should keep their children at home if they can.
- If your child is not classed as vulnerable and if neither you nor your partner are a key worker, then your child is expected to engage fully with their remote learning during this time so they remain engaged with their education.

The Department for Education's full guidance on these measures can be found [here](#), and we will of course update you should this change. Adhering to these guidelines will help to ensure that every child is supported in receiving their education, so if you are unsure of the situation with regards to your child, please contact your school for more information.

### **Free School Meals**

As some of you will be aware, to support our students and families who are eligible for free school meals through the latest national lockdown, we are currently working with local partners and the DfE to provide families with food vouchers. The vouchers will be worth £15 and can be spent at local registered supermarkets. The Trust has issued physical vouchers to all schools, and they will be in touch with those families very soon to get the vouchers to them. We will continue to provide updates for those families affected.

I know these are difficult circumstances for all our students, staff and wider school community and I am hugely grateful for your ongoing support during this time. Should you have any further questions at this stage, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

**Dan Morrow**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust**

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