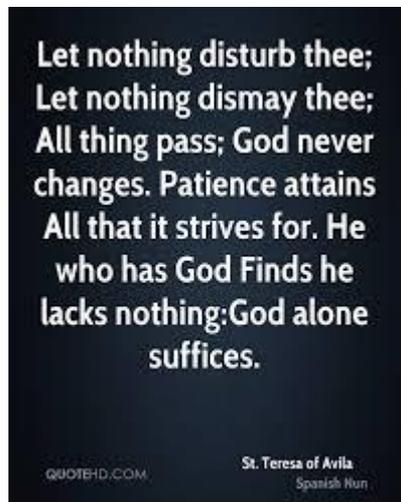




January 2022



Dear Colleague

Whilst I hope you managed to have a good Christmas break, I am sure that there are some for whom this was not the case owing to having caught COVID or suffered other viruses. I am also mindful that the rise in infection rates and the consequences would have remained in your mind. In conversations with many of you the return to school has once again brought significant challenges in terms of dealing with depleted numbers of staff which, has for some schools included key leadership. As always, the team spirit built within your schools means everyone is 'mucking in' to keep the ship afloat. So, thank you to all in your communities. As yet, I have not been informed of any actual closures but am aware that remote learning has once again returned in some schools. Patience is indeed a virtue that is being tested at the moment for all. We know that this situation will come to an end too, but the question we are all grappling with is when! As indicated, we do have some key leadership members including heads currently off sick and so I am sure you would support me in wishing them and everyone a speedy recovery.

In line with government guidance whilst Alexander House is not closed, we have returned to only having a skeleton staff in the office until at least the end of January, and so as before can I ask that your first port of call to us is via email or phone. We will get back to you as soon as we can. In the same manner as your team are pulling together the Schools Department is doing the same in terms of covering in the absence of any staff, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank my team. The admin staff particularly keep Paul, Louise and I going in terms of making sure we are at

the right place and right meeting. Whilst the use of technology has been great, the number of meetings now being arranged, sometimes without gaps, has tripled.

Whilst face to face training and support for schools with Louise has been suspended, she is still managing to deliver substantial inset and support, which I know has been welcomed and continues to be beneficial.

Jenny has communicated that Section 48 Inspections have been suspended until after February half term when we will again review the situation in line with any guidance. Whilst I am not aware that Ofsted have suspended, we have as yet not had any notifications this term. As you know should the call come, and you have significant staff absence you can ask for a deferral. Can I remind you of the opportunity to become a National Diocesan Inspector? There is no cut-off date for applications, and we would welcome any further applications in order to recommend tranche two for training. The link to information and an application form is: [Welcome | Catholic Schools Inspectorate](#)

I am sure you have received or are aware that there is the opportunity to apply for funding for those of you facing significant staff absence and financial pressure with the costs of staff cover for the period 22 November 2021 to 18 February 2022. Please check to see if you are eligible. The link is:

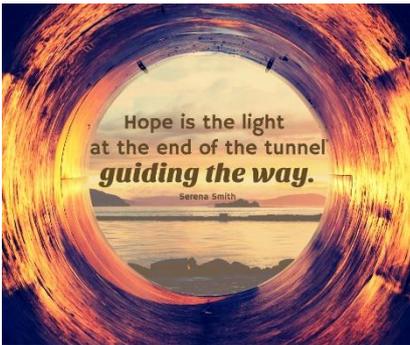
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-workforce-fund-for-schools/coronavirus-covid-19-workforce-fund-to-support-schools-with-costs-of-staff-absences-from-22-november-to-31-december-2021>

There is also the opportunity to apply for a grant and access to DFE quality training to help develop a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing. The link is: [Senior mental health lead training](#)

School Condition Allocation (SCA)- (previously LCVAP) - Just to remind you that all applications should be in by Friday, 14th January, along with quotes related to the work and where it fits into the schools' maintenance /asset management plans. Can I add that where you are informed that you have been successful, the money allocated must be spent within the allocated time span, and any possible overspend or changes to the project must be referred back to the diocese for approval, or the school itself is liable for the costs. In the case of any underspend, this will be reclaimed by the diocese for re-allocation. If you have any questions, then please contact jenny.fitzgerald@cliftdiocese.com

You may be aware that Raymond Friel, the previous head of St Gregory's Catholic Secondary School, Bath and Sr. Margaret Harlock, a governor of St Brendan's Sixth Form College were both honoured in the New Year Honours List for their services to education. On behalf of the Diocese, I would like to congratulate them on this honour which serves to support how valuable those in education are to society, and specifically those of faith.

As you know, I am due to retire from my post at the end of April and I am aware that many are wondering and asking what the plans are for my replacement. What I can say is that recruitment plans are currently being undertaken by the trustees. In the meantime, can I reassure you that I remain committed to the role and as has always been said please do not hesitate to contact me or indeed anyone in the team.



Yours sincerely

Colleen Collett
Director for Schools and Colleges