

27 May 2021

Dear All,

Since our Chair of Governors wrote to you to inform you that I had been successful in my application to the seconded post of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust School Improvement Lead for Primary, much has happened at St Aloysius. I will be away from St Aloysius between June 2021 (part time) and Autumn 2022 (full time).

Over the last few weeks, Wendy Woods, our chair of governors has been working alongside HR from the Trust to ensure the Acting Headteacher succession is in place. Wendy and HR sought advice from the senior team at the Diocese regarding next steps following the announcement of my new role. Following these discussions I am pleased to announce that Miss Kathryn Fenwick stepped forward and has been offered the post of Acting Headship in my absence.

The last few weeks could have been uncertain for the community because people did not know what was happening at a senior leadership level in the short term. I would like to pay tribute to all of the staff and the leadership team for remaining professional and friendly whilst continuing to keep the needs of our children at the centre. In the time I am away, I know our school is in very safe hands. We have exceptional leaders who will take St Aloysius in their own direction, the pupils will continue to flourish and excel whilst being supported and challenged. I know that Kathryn will excel as Acting Headteacher, she will have her own vision for the school and it is crucial she is supported to fulfil it. St Aloysius will flourish in the short and long term and I look forward to supporting the senior team in any way I am asked to.

Miss Fenwick is presenting her vision for the school at the Termly Governors meeting today. She will work with the Trust and Diocese to decide what further senior leadership backfill arrangements need to be made. It's the next chapter at St Aloysius - it'll be filled with new challenges and opportunities, I know St Aloysius will be a place of excellence, fun and dedication. Children will thrive and staff will flourish and I will look forward to seeing the progress the school makes. Successful organisations evolve over time, this is simply the next step on our journey. I will remain based at St Aloysius until the end of this term so you will still see me around.

Last week we were nominated for the Times Educational Supplement National Primary School of the Year - it would be a great achievement to be successful, however regardless of the outcome it's lovely to have our hat in the ring.

In the meantime, I wish you all a lovely holiday from school. It is a really busy half term but one of achievement, happiness and support, enjoy the break.

Nick Conway

Please see an important and sobering letter from the regional Directors of Public Health

We're not out the woods yet

As we all enjoy more freedoms as a result of Covid-19 restrictions easing, we need to remember that the virus is still with us.

While embracing loved ones for the first time in over a year, or enjoying a meal indoors at our favourite restaurant and celebrating the progress of the vaccination programme, it is understandable that we could feel like the pandemic is over.

But the reality is that we're not out of the woods yet.

Some areas of the country are beginning to see infection rates creep up again – some are increasing very quickly - and cases have been linked to new variants of concern which appear to be more easily passed on.

Schools and businesses across our region have been affected by small, localised outbreaks and as we know from painful experience, this is likely to result in spread among the wider community.

Our communities have sacrificed a great deal to drive down infection rates and this diligence has led to the Roadmap progressing according to its original schedule. There is, however, no guarantee that restrictions will be lifted further on June 21 as we all hope they will be.

The vaccine remains one of the best ways of protecting ourselves and others so our message today is to ask everyone to take up both doses of the Covid-19 vaccine when it is offered. Early data indicates the vaccine protects against the variants of concern we are seeing. So even if you missed out on taking this up when it was first offered it's not too late to have the vaccine, you just need to visit www.nhs.uk

Although the vast majority of those awaiting vaccines are in the less vulnerable age categories, even those under 50 can suffer severe illness or death. People in these cohorts may also be more likely to have persistent symptoms – or long Covid.

More freedom means the virus has more chance to spread so we must do everything we can to limit transmission and the potential emergence of more harmful variants. Whether you're waiting for your jab or you have had one or both doses, remember to continue to follow all the rules as no vaccine is 100% effective.

If we develop symptoms we must self-isolate immediately, book a PCR test and respond to Test and Trace services to quickly identify close contacts and possible outbreaks. Even if we feel well, we can better protect our loved ones by regularly taking rapid-turnaround tests at home – they are an important tool in our fight against this disease as many as one in three of us may be carrying Covid and passing it to others without knowing.

We can't afford for the virus to spread uncontrollably once again throughout our population. Please make sure you do your bit to help us keep moving forwards to support livelihoods as well as save lives.

Wendy Burke, Director of Public Health, North Tyneside

Amanda Healy, Director Public Health, County Durham

Alice Wiseman, Director of Public Health, Gateshead

Eugene Milne, Director of Public Health, Newcastle

Liz Morgan, Director of Public Health, Northumberland

Tom Hall, Director of Public Health, South Tyneside

Gerry Taylor, Director of Public Health, Sunderland