

# WILLOW TREE ACADEMY



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Mr A. Trueman – Chair of Trustees    Mrs J.K. Fearnley – Chief Executive Officer

Dear Parent/Carer

It will soon be Christmas and I would like to thank you for all your support over the Autumn term.

As we reflect on the difficult time our Heads of School and our teams have had to keep the schools open in such challenging circumstances, we realise just what a monumental task it has been - but we got there! We have had staff, children and parents testing positive for coronavirus COVID-19 and it has been a relentless responsibility trying to keep up with it all - they have done the most phenomenal job!

You have worked with us to ensure that we can keep your children safe, our environments clean and so that we can do the best teaching possible (even remotely). It has been our aim throughout the term to ensure the outstanding provision continues at Willow Tree Academy schools.

We have also reviewed Friday afternoon closure and as Rotherham is still in the Tier 3 we are going to continue with this in the New Year. This will enable us to ensure that your children have consistent high quality teaching (as PPA happens on Friday pm) and to continue with deep cleaning.

However, we do realise that we must increase our teaching time because of the losses from staggered start and finish times and difficulties with staggered playtimes and lunchtimes; these take so much of the school day away. To address this, we have looked at our school timetables and have re-organised them so that there are at least 25 hours of teaching time in the school week, this is a national recommendation and we have always taught above this.

Your school will inform you of changes to the start and finish times which I hope you will approve of. The changes enable us to be sure we are using our time effectively and that your children receive the best education possible for the remainder of the school year.

I hope you continue to work with us to understand the predicament that we are in with the global pandemic and that we will still face this in the Spring term. We are hoping that all school staff can access the vaccine very soon to alleviate the need for staff absence and self-isolation.

**Please note that the 4th January will now be an inset day to enable us to respond to any positive cases over the Christmas period and any staff absence due to contact and the need to self-isolate.**

The events of the Christmas term are amazing as always, although we are missing our singing! You will be able to share them with us by video links.

Thank you for the wonderful positive messages you have sent to our teachers and leaders, they have been very much appreciated and have made us both smile and cry!

Once again I would like to thank you all and our amazing Willow Tree team for going the extra million miles in the face of such adversity.

Have a wonderful Christmas with your families and wishing you a very very happy and healthy 2021!

Mrs J K Fearnley  
Executive Head

Ms L Greenwood  
Head of School