

Statement 4 Jan 2021

As a Diocese we are most grateful to all the support staff, teachers and Heads who have such a positive impact on the children and young people of Cumbria. Our schools are communities of learning and personal growth, where things are discovered and explored every day, so that this necessary move to remote learning - surely the best way to “love our neighbours” in present circumstances - is a real loss for very many.

But this recent announcement doesn't mean that education is on pause. Instead, our school leaders, classroom staff and many others will be working extra-hard to support high quality online and remote learning, as well as continuing with on-site provision for vulnerable families and children and young people of key workers. Drawing on our recent experiences of home-schooling, we are confident that our pupils will also demonstrate that same level of commitment. For hundreds of years schools have served alongside parents and the wider families and communities which combine to raise a child, and our schools will continue to do that in these difficult circumstances.

As a Board of Education across this County we are committed to the values of wisdom, hope, community and dignity: the pursuit of wisdom which is more than knowledge, moving forwards with aspiration within our various communities whilst recognising the unique value of each individual. And of all of those, perhaps hope is what we need most in the coming days; the hope given by brilliant science and hard-working medical professionals, but in this Christmas and New Year season, let's not forget too the hope offered by the baby in the manger, King Jesus. “Light and life to all he brings”, which is exactly what we all need.

In the days ahead let me also commend all of us to serve others as best we can; following guidelines carefully and making it as easy as possible for our fantastic teachers to support our children in the coming days. Loving our neighbour often means doing for them what we wish they'd do for us: being careful, sharing encouragements, forgiving quickly, keeping positive, considering others. And as we do that together, with God's help, these days too will pass.

Rev Andrew Towner
Chair, Diocesan Board of Education