



St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School

Prepare the way of the Lord

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12 November 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to request your assistance in highlighting a real inequality and unfairness which is impacting on your son or daughter. A similar letter is being sent by every Wigan Secondary Headteacher to all Year 11 parents/carers.

The inequality and unfairness stems from the disproportionate impact of Coronavirus on the North of England, particularly the North West. As you know restrictions were introduced into our area far earlier than the rest of the country and Wigan is currently the Local Authority with the 4th highest Coronavirus cases in England.

The prevalence of the virus and the blunt tool of isolation, contact tracing and bubble closure is having a disproportionate impact on our schools and on the education we can provide. When pupils are not in school we have offered 'live lessons' but this is clearly no substitute for face-to-face attendance in school every day. Pupils at all schools have been asked to self-isolate through track and trace and for us this has resulted in **3,187** Year 11 school days lost to isolation. This does not provide the whole picture of course, as some pupils have been disproportionately effected in this total and a number of pupils have had to isolate on other separate occasions as well; in addition, we have lost 61 teacher days due to self-isolation.

I am deeply concerned about your son or daughter's GCSE exams. The impact of Coronavirus since September has been very disproportionately felt across the country. There is a huge number of schools in the rest of England which have not had any Coronavirus cases and have not had to ask pupils to self-isolate. As it stands at the moment, our pupils and your sons and daughters will be sitting the same examinations as pupils in other parts of the country who have not had significant disruption to their education. **This is simply not fair.**

My concern extends beyond this as this is clearly having an impact on the wellbeing of our pupils. They are fully aware of the importance of the exams and the disproportionate impact it is having on their attendance at school and preparation time. Pupils are becoming extremely worried about this and, as time progresses with a vaccine some months away and Coronavirus cases becoming more prevalent, the anxiety levels are growing as the exams inch closer.

The purpose of this letter is to ask for help in raising awareness of the impact of Coronavirus on our pupils as they prepare for their GCSEs, to demonstrate the strength of feeling and a call for the authorities to take appropriate action. I am asking that you write to your local MP, Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Department for Education to show the impact this is having on your child's future and well-being. For your convenience I attach a letter which you may wish to use and have included the contact details for the correspondence.

I thank you in anticipation for your support and hope that this action can demonstrate the strength of feeling at the injustice our young people may experience if nothing is done. We will be contacting appropriate media outlets to inform them of these actions.

Yours sincerely

M J Dumican
Headteacher

