

To Cumbrian Head Teachers and Principals

22 May 2020

Dear Colleague

Since the 23rd March all of us within schools have had to face unprecedented times dealing with the most significant public health crisis we have ever seen. It comes as no surprise to anyone who lives in Cumbria that the professionalism and dedication of our staff over the last few weeks has been outstanding in every way.

The rapid creation of school hubs, along with some standalone provisions across the county, ensured that critical and key workers' children were offered immediate places from day one of lockdown. This offer also included, and continues to include, places for a growing number of vulnerable children. Colleagues have, through the dedication of their teams, been able to remain open during holidays including bank holidays.

Leaders and teams have consistently put the needs of their communities and staff first. Indeed, leaders have brilliantly risen to so many challenging situations, have had to make so many rapid critical decisions as well as dealing with the constant demands of reading and implementing guidance, reading and implementing updated guidance, as well as reading and implementing ever-changing guidance.

During this time our staff have demonstrated unswerving professionalism in creating innovative ways to engage with young people, families and communities having turned overnight into distance learning establishments. The speed and creativity which produced instant online curriculum offers, home learning packs, social media challenges and messages has been astonishing.

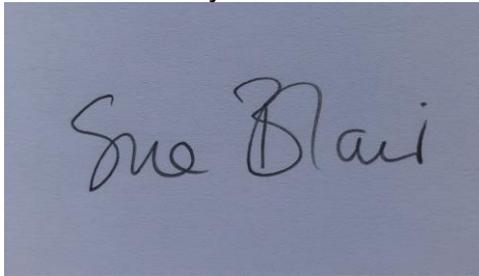
More than this, what we have seen is staff going over and above to ensure families have the support and help they need. The list of support is endless. From delivering food parcels, creating videos to make families and schools smile, phoning young people twice weekly, cooking meals and delivering them, delivering Easter Eggs, providing online support and feedback for lessons, delivering home learning packs, organising surprises to be delivered by colleagues in the police and fire service, and

simply giving the mental and emotional support that so many families and young people have needed during this challenging and difficult period. For that, on behalf of our young people and families, we say an enormous thank you.

During all of this we have had committed support from the LA (particularly Dan Barton who has led with a clear moral purpose) and LIS team (particularly Dale Hill who has shown tireless commitment to work with colleagues towards getting the support they need), LASL, CASL and our own Primary Heads and Secondary Heads' Associations. Each cog in the machine has played a vital role in ensuring that Cumbrian schools have been able to shine brightly, be beacons of reassurance and provide an oasis of support during the coronavirus pandemic.

We wish to say a heartfelt thanks to everyone for the outstanding job you have all been doing. The hours have been long for the last few weeks, the decision making stressful but headteachers, leaders and teams have strongly worked together in that unique Cumbrian way, united in their passionate dedication to do the very best they can to serve their communities. We have as a profession overwhelmingly done ourselves proud. Your care for your pupils and students; your care for your parents, communities and staff has not gone unnoticed. Although much of your work and dedication is often invisible to the wider world, your resilience, passion and commitment is clear for everyone involved in education to see. Thank you for being bloody brilliant.

Yours sincerely

A rectangular area with a dark blue background containing the handwritten signature 'Sue Blair' in white ink.

Sue Blair – Chair of Primary Heads Association

A handwritten signature 'J. Schafer' in black ink on a white background.

Judith Schafer – Chair of Secondary Heads Association