



Southend East Community Academy Trust

“Strong Partnerships, Strong Community, Strong Schools”

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Chief Executive Officer: Mrs Ruth Brock

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Dear Parents and Carers

Welcome back after the half term. I do hope that you and your loved ones are all safe and well and managing to keep upbeat at this time. We know how difficult this second lockdown is for all in the community and further afield.

As we enter the second half of the autumn term, collectively, we face another challenge. A second lockdown was not what we all wanted but has been deemed necessary. However, as per Government guidance, we continue to open our schools, keep your children safe and ensure they learn and have some normality at this challenging time.

It is refreshing to receive emails that congratulate us on how well you feel SECAT schools have managed the return to school. It continues to challenge all of us, but you too are to be congratulated. You support your children and their schools constantly and we thank you all for that.

Having received some communication from parents regarding the ‘Southend School Gate’ campaign that all SECAT schools entered into, I would like to take this opportunity to address some concerns that have been raised.

I will add that this campaign is causing much consternation across the Borough. Interestingly, from what appears to be two opposing camps.

I hope it will be helpful if I explained to you - in case you did not know - that the Executive Team meet fortnightly and communicate regularly in between. All of the Headteachers are an integral part of that team which also consists of me, the Chief Operations Officer, Finance Director and managers of HR and ICT.

When the initiative came to us, we spent much time debating it. Our risk assessments were already amended (as they are almost daily when we receive the DfE announcements) but some schools were encountering additional concerns where there was bottle-necking at entrances, too many people for the available road/pavement, or other reasons.

We researched how many other schools in Southend were joining the initiative. Almost all. Whilst that did not directly impact on our decision, it would be wrong to say it was not part of our decision-making process.

It was decided that we would make a request in line with guidance about social distancing. We would not simply release the poster. We felt that this wasn't right for our community and not appropriate for some schools, where parents have told us they prefer to read information in newsletters rather than as attachments.

We agreed the wording and that each Head Teacher would decide where in their newsletter they would put it.

We recognise that we cannot police it and will not attempt to do so. Our basis for the decision and recommendation was around the Government guidance of 'if you cannot socially distance, wear a mask'.

The Trust Board fully supports the stance we have taken and are aware of the concerns parents on both sides have presented. Not to mention the concerns that the Local Authority are managing across the Borough about this initiative.

I am in constant contact with Brin Martin at the Local Authority and have had several communications with Public Health. We are all jointly satisfied not just with this action that we took at SECAT, but also with the superb way we at SECAT have collectively managed the COVID pandemic.

Individual parents have had responses to letters or emails, from me or their headteachers depending on who they wrote to. I hope that this letter further explains the process and the involvement of Headteachers in that process as part of SECAT's Executive Team.

I hope you have a good rest of the half term and that you remain safe and well.

Kind regards

Ruth

Ruth Brock
Chief Executive Officer

