Dear Parents, Carers and Friends of the Cathedral Catholic Primary School,

It is with a heavy heart that I am sending you this message and I apologise that I could not send it on Friday as I needed to wait until it was appropriate to write to you.

I am sure you will all be aware by now that our beautiful, wonderful dedicated teaching assistant Rachael Haywood passed away in the early hours of Friday morning following emergency brain surgery. This has come as a great shock and with immense sorrow to all who knew Rachael, especially the staff at school who are of course devastated. But as a whole school and Cathedral family our thoughts and prayers at this time are with Lauren and Caitlin and Rachael’s family.

I have included a little prayer for Rachel at the bottom of this letter that you may wish to say with your families.

It is a very difficult time for everyone as the school has had to close due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but the staff and governors are still available by email should you have any concerns about your children in respect of Rachael’s passing as we understand that some children will be upset and worried. We will do everything we can to help.

The Governing Body’s strategic role in respect of education provision is compromised at the moment but what we do know (and I

am sure you will know and agree) is that Nicola Holt, Shiralee Grierson, our strategic leadership team and all the staff at the Cathedral are completely dedicated to and always have your children at the forefront of their thoughts. They go above and beyond to make sure our children are safe and are given the best possible education. I know that they are saddened also by the immediate closure of school but remain available to help your children. The school will remain open for those children of groups identified by the government requiring Education provision.

This last couple of weeks the school has been put under more pressure as we had a visit from Her Majesties Inspectors of Schools (OFSTED). Whilst we still await the official outcome, I can tell you how well your children represented our school and the inspector told us that we must thank them from her for their participation and honesty with her when asked questions. It was wonderful to hear the inspector praising your children in all aspects of school life, from their education, behaviour and the love and care they show each other. As parents you should be so proud. As Governors we shared your pride.

I had hoped that my Easter message would have been much more positive and include the result of Ofsted but we still await the formal report. I had also hoped that we could have shared news of the celebrations of our Year 6 children as they head for the next stage of their education, but sadly their celebrations of their time at the Cathedral are now on hold. The Governors want these children to know that they are in their thoughts and prayers and wish them well when they can eventually start their High School Education.

As Bishop Paul’s Lenten message to us all says this is a time when we need to “live our Faith in an intense way” I recommend to you Bishop Paul’s blog and to pray that our Faith and trust in God helps us and those frightened at this time.

Our churches will remain open and are a source of peace and quiet reflection, I understand the Cathedral will be open from 10am -6pm.

I have never known a time in my life when I could not attend daily or Sunday Mass, but unfortunately for safety as you will understand, all Masses at the Cathedral and St Thomas More have been cancelled.  You will be able to stream Mass online via “church services tv” should you wish to sit and attend as a family and the Cathedral are hoping that Mass during Holy Week will be available via live stream. The information in respect of this will on our school website and the Cathedral Parish website.

It just remains for me to thank you all for your support and patience during this extremely difficult time and I hope that you, your children and families stay safe and well during these unprecedented times.

With prayers

Clare Nolan-Barnes

Chair of Governors

**A prayer for Miss Haywood**

**Eternal rest grant unto her Oh Lord and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. Amen**