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16<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Dear Parents and Carers

As you will know, we took the decision late in the day yesterday, to close Frome College to pupils today. We are very sorry for the disruption this caused and are grateful for your support. This was because of a serious malfunction across all IT systems and infrastructure. At this point, we are still investigating the cause of this disruption.

Fortunately, our IT system analysis which runs constantly in the background, picked up on irregular activity across the Frome College network and we were able to shut down all systems rapidly at approximately 5:30pm yesterday afternoon. However, we were left with the difficult decision regarding opening the school the following day. Whilst we do have Business Continuity Plans in place, which were immediately activated, IT systems now run many aspects of schools. For example, locking mechanisms on school gates and water systems. In addition, because of the forced shut-down, the school had limited access to central databases of information about pupils and parents, etc. The size of the database file back-up is considerable and takes a number of hours to arrive back in school from off-site back-up facilities. Therefore, we felt that we had little option but to close the College today to eliminate any safeguarding or health and safety risks for pupils on site.

All data held by the College remained secure and we anticipate that all systems will be back to normality by the end of next week. Our business continuity processes, which ensure we can contact staff and parents in situations like this, worked successfully. Over the coming days, we hope you will continue to be understanding as the school and MAT staff work to restore all software and other ancillary systems.

As a result of the forced shut-down of all IT systems, there will now need to be a carefully orchestrated process of bringing the IT network and all machines back on-line. This has to be sequenced carefully and all devices have to be fully scanned to ensure they have not been damaged. The College has in excess of 500 computers, a complex infrastructure, as well as many 100s of pieces of software. As such, this scanning and checking process will take some time to complete. This means that full IT functionality may take a few days to restore and we will also need to assess damage to IT switches, etc as a result of the forced shut-down process.

**As indicted however, our Business Continuity Plan has kicked in and pupils will be able to return to the College on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> January as normal. By this point, we will have full functionality for all the requirements of school safeguarding and health and safety.**

Incidents where IT systems malfunction are growing more common and we would advise all parents and pupils to be vigilant and careful in their operation of IT, particularly if transferring information from one network to another. Ensuring software updates are completed on home machines and other devices, will also help protect personal data.

As I said at the beginning of this letter, myself and Ms Reynolds appreciate that the school closure was disruptive and we are very grateful for your understanding. Once pupils are back in school, we will focus on ensuring any missed learning is addressed quickly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alun Williams', with a small star above the first letter.

Alun Williams – CEO MNSP Trust