



# Charles Darwin School

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Headteacher: Aston Smith, BA (Hons) MA NPQH

Dear Parent/Carer

6 September 2024

As you will be aware from the letter your son/daughter brought home yesterday we had been experiencing IT issues, unfortunately this is worse than hoped in that this is a cyber-attack in the form of Ransomware.

We do not know at this point what data has been accessed however we need to state there is the potential for all information held by the school to have been accessed. Our Data Protection Officer has reported the breach to the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) and is now conducting a full Data Impact Assessment. Information that is cloud based and with external providers have not been accessed, such as Parent Pay. We currently have a cybersecurity company completing a forensic investigation and until this is completed, we will not be able to provide any further details on the level of any data breach.

We have been working with experts from the Inicio Trust, the cyber-security sector, data recovery specialists and the Government cyber security. We hope to have things restored as quickly and as safely as possible.

I have been advised that we will be without internet, email and access to other systems in the school for an estimated 3 weeks and we appreciate your patience and understanding during this very difficult time for us.

**I have taken the decision to close the school on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> September.** This is because all staff devices have been removed to be cleansed and then time will be needed to allow teachers time to re-plan lessons for the week and senior staff to create systems for the smooth running of the school. Safeguarding remains our highest priority and solutions have been put in place whilst the systems are re-built.

Satchel one should be accessible and we ask parents and students to check this regularly. Staff may set work and send messages this way. All students have had their 365 accounts disabled as a precaution. If you receive an email from an unusual email address we ask that you are vigilant. We will never send any attachments or links during the recovery process.

In an earlier communication, I asked that you only contact the school if in need of an emergency by phone and this is still the case. Staff are unable to access emails in school but telephones are working for urgent issues. Please use your child's planner to write notes to teachers who can respond back in the planner. We are unable to answer individual questions regarding this.

Understandably there will be a lot of concerns and questions that parents may have and I will update you regularly by letter when I have further information via our website. Please also follow us on social media for alerts to updates for further updates. X @CDarwinSchool and Instagram@cdarwinschool

Unfortunately cyber-attacks like this are happening more frequently despite having the latest security measures in place. Our understanding of our situation is that it is similar to what was experienced by the NHS, Transport for London, National Rail other schools and public sector departments.

We may have to take further measures in the weeks ahead based on new information and the progress made to restore our systems. Once again, I understand the disruption this causes to education and families and I thank you for your support over the coming weeks.

Aston Smith, Headteacher