

# Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School

Headteacher: Mrs N Oddie BA(Hons) NPQH



*Let your  
light shine*

13 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

## January 2021 Newsletter

If I haven't yet reached you with my New Year best wishes, then I send them now to you. It does seem like such a long time ago we welcomed in the new year; but it is only 13 days ago and only 8 days in school. Time has moved very quickly for us over those 8 days and I would like to update you on what is happening in the Brownedge St Mary's community. Before I start with the updates, I would like to welcome Mrs Boardman, who joins us from All Hallows'. Mrs Boardman is an Assistant Headteacher, with specific responsibility for SEND and joins the English Faculty. We very much look forward to her working in our Brownedge family.

### Remote Learning

The national lockdown that was reinstated last week is until February half term, week beginning 15th February. This means all young people in Year 7 to 11 will be working from home via remote education until at least after February half term. We have been really impressed with our students' engagement with our online learning this week. The vast majority of students have attended all Teams 'live lessons' and are actively engaged. Teachers have been particularly impressed with students' confidence to answer questions, participate in the live chat and turn their microphone on (when invited); we really want to encourage this. Thank you to all our parents and carers who have supported their children so they can engage so purposefully. I know a few families have struggled with their broadband encountering 'overload' particularly at logging on time. We also understand that Microsoft Teams has encountered 'overload' and has had to make adjustments nationally to maintain their service. Please encourage your child to be patient when 'glitches' happen. They often resolve themselves in a couple of minutes.

### Live lessons

We are aspiring to provide students with a 'live lesson' for every period on their timetable. We believe this is a very effective way of supporting our young people. This differs from how many schools are approaching it nationally. For example, some schools are setting remote written work/independent learning, and some are doing a mix of live lessons, recorded lessons and set written work/independent learning. I would appreciate some parental feedback on our model of remote learning. If you have a few moments I will be sending an email out on Monday containing a short parental questionnaire. Please complete this to share your views. I will also be contacting all pupils to gather their views and feedback on how the first weeks have gone.

There are times when a 'live lesson' is not always possible. For example, if a member of staff is unavailable to work through personal illness or family bereavement. Where staff are unable to deliver live lessons, they (or their Head of Faculty) will contact their classes and set Teams Assignments as an alternative to live provision. If students do not see a lesson scheduled, encourage them to check Assignments and their email. Furthermore, in terms of punctuality, when live lessons are in full flow, it can be very difficult for teachers to monitor latecomers waiting to join the lesson in the lobby. Please encourage your child to be logged on ready to go at the scheduled lesson start time. We have reduced the lesson time to allow pupils (and staff) time away from their screens etc so they can be ready to start the next lesson when needed.

To support 'live lessons' pupils will need resources such as exercise books, paper and writing/colouring equipment. Please contact [info@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:info@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk) should you wish to visit school to pick up appropriate resources. We are open 8.30am to 4.00pm for anyone wishing to do so.

### Families struggling with ICT access

Since the start of the pandemic, we have supported over 85 families with ICT access at home. This week I spoke to a generous parent who has gifted a donation from their family business to support families struggling with ICT access.

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We have also applied for more devices from the Government. In addition, there is also support available for extra 4G data from mobile phone providers. If any families do need support in terms of ICT devices and access to the internet, please contact [Mrs Dudaniec \(Dudaniecl@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk\)](mailto:Dudaniecl@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk) and we will do all we can to support you. If you are encountering problems, please contact our [ICT Support services \(ictrequest@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk\)](mailto:ictrequest@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk) school office. Although it is not a perfect solution, Microsoft Teams can be accessed via Xbox and PlayStation. We have posted on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) details on how to do this. I would suggest this is only used as a last resort as having a 15-year-old teenager myself, I know it is very tempting to abandon your work and start playing a game! The second screen, however, is beneficial.

## Wellbeing of our students

Young people get so much from attending school in addition to their lessons: sports, clubs and the opportunity to socialise with their peers. Next week we will start to have one 'live' form period per week and there will still be school assemblies, accessible via Teams. Heads of House and Form tutors will be keeping in touch with students and additional pastoral provision e.g. counselling, intervention and key worker support will continue. Senior House and House council meetings are also going to be taking place as usual. Rachael Bower is continuing with her outstanding chaplaincy support online. The following links will take pupils to our 'virtual chaplaincy' service:

- Twitter: [@BSM\\_Chaplaincy](#)
- Instagram: [bsm\\_chaplaincy](#)
- Email: [bower@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:bower@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk)

If you have a particular concern about your child, please contact their Form Tutor copying in their Head of House in the first instance. If you have safeguarding concerns about any child who attends our school, please contact the school reception, and ask to speak to a member of the Safeguarding Team or email [Mrs Dudaniec](#) or [Mrs Watson](#) directly. We have a dedicated page on our school website that supports pupil's wellbeing. [Please click here for more information.](#) Mrs Watson also has an Instagram account that pupils can visit to get extra support. Instagram: [bsm\\_intervention](#)

## Mass Covid Testing

Since opening in January, we have created a Covid Test Centre and have currently tested over seventy staff and pupils. This provision will continue and hopefully support an easier transition to opening school when we are allowed. More details of how this will be rolled out to all pupils prior to their start back will be given out nearer the time.

## Parents' Events

Year 11 Parents' Evening will continue to take place as a virtual event on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> February starting at 4pm. Other parent events planned for this half term include our Year 8 Pathways Evening. This again will be a virtual event and Mrs Godbold will send more information about how we are moving forward with our new 2021-22 curriculum plans later this half term. Year 8 and 9 Parents' Evenings will take place in March as normal.

## Supporting families with food

Families of pupils eligible for Free School Meals were previously provided with supermarket vouchers during the previous lockdown to the value of £15 per week. Initial government advice to schools last week suggested that schools could provide food parcels or continue to provide vouchers during this period of lockdown. As a school we feel that the voucher scheme offers the better solution for our families, both in the flexibility to choose foods that our pupils enjoy, and to minimise the possibility of transmission of Covid19 within our community that increased visitors to school could bring. There is currently a lot of media attention on this issue, and latest government advice is that the voucher system should be available next week. As soon as we have access to the system, the orders will be processed and backdated to 4<sup>th</sup> January. Should you have any queries or concerns regarding the free school meals voucher system please contact Mr Burrows.

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In addition to our FSM offer, Morrisons have very kindly donated to school a variety of items that we will distribute to our families. If you would like to request one, please contact Mrs Sinclair, [sinclairc@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:sinclairc@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk) and we will do all we can to help. A huge thank you to Mrs Danson, a Morrisons employee and ex Brownedge pupil, for all her work on this.

This is such a difficult time for everyone, and I am grateful for the support and understanding that you continue to show. Now we are in lockdown again, please encourage your child to adhere to all the guidance, so we all support the attempts to drive down the rates of transmission in the community. It goes without saying that as soon as I receive any further information or guidance, I will be in touch to update you.

Kind regards

Mrs N Oddie  
Headteacher