

Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School

Headteacher: Mrs N Oddie BA(Hons) NPQH



*Let your
light shine*

Dear Parents/Carers

September 2020 Newsletter

It does not seem like a year ago that I first wrote to you as your newly appointed Headteacher! What a year it has been, full of challenges and encounters; all of which have made us stronger and more resilient as a school to ensure we provide the best opportunities for the young people in our care. Our commitment has never been stronger to provide a warm, welcoming and vibrant community, where we work as a family to support, challenge and care for one another, striving continuously for excellence so that our pupils can be the best they can be. I am determined that over the coming months, our school continues to flourish as it builds on this fully inclusive ethos.

Home and Remote Learning through Teams

Our pupils have started the new school year fantastically, showing great determination and a renewed sense of purpose. This has been great to see and I would like to congratulate them on their behaviour and encouraging attitudes to their learning. As the possibility of a partial school closure looms darkly on the horizon it is imperative that this positive mindset continues. In order to be as prepared as possible all years have had updated training on our BSM@home remote learning platform – Microsoft Teams. Please ensure that your child can access the system, either through their mobile phones or other devices and that they are confident in accessing their work. To ensure that this happens ALL home learning will be set on Teams to ensure that pupils are using regularly and competently. We have missed valuable time and ensuring that we don't miss anymore is essential. Please contact school if you have questions regarding remote and home learning and the use of Teams.

COVID Health and Safety Measures

In terms of school safety measures, I am delighted at how our pupils have adapted to the significant changes we have asked them to follow whilst in school. The staggered start, breaks, lunch, and finish times, together with year group bubbles and breakout areas have been successful in reducing the mix and movement in school and so the potential transmission of this dreadful virus. In addition, we have recently adjusted entry and exit points for pupils in each bubble to further reduce the potential for mixing. We will continue with our current practices and approaches in school, but will continue to review them to ensure they are effective. Please continue to support the local community by helping us educate your child in terms of the expectations when using local shops and public transport and the use of face masks.

Attendance and Holidays

Pupil attendance at school at this time is crucial. However, we do acknowledge that there is some uncertainty on how best to ensure that our pupils are not passing on germs and are safe if ill. Please find attached a guidance document distributed by the Local Authority that may help when assessing what to do with a sick child. If you have any questions, please contact Mrs Doherty, our Attendance Officer, or Mrs Godbold, Assistant Headteacher, with responsibility for attendance if you are unsure of the various and complicated guidance. Details of school holidays for 2020-21 are published on the school website and next week they will be updated with details for 2021-2022. All our holiday patterns try to link with those of local primary schools. As you know, requests for holidays in term time can only be approved in exceptional circumstances on a case by case basis, even during these unprecedented times. The vast majority are not approved.

Staff Update

The start of the new term sees five new staff join Brownedge in various positions across the school. We are joined by Mr McCreech, our new Deputy Headteacher and Mrs Godbold (Assistant Headteacher) who has returned back to school following her two-year sabbatical leave. We also welcome Miss Parker (English), Mrs O'Connell (English) and Mr Hill (Maths). Both Mr Hill and Mrs O'Connell completed their Initial Teacher Training with us last year and are recognised to be outstanding practitioners and well known to our family. They are all very welcome.

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New Communication methods

It is more important than ever than we open up our communication methods with parents and carers so to ensure that essential messages reach home. With this in mind we have designed a new website and created Facebook and Instagram pages. We will also be launching a new school app and we will be in contact once this has been fully developed. It is hoped that any messages, together with our traditional Parentmail emails and texts, will allow parents to be fully aware of what is going on at school. Please share these with friends. If you have recently changed your contact details or are not receiving messages through Parentmail, please ensure school has the most up-to-date details.

Uniform Matters

I would like to thank you for your support in ensuring that our students look smart and that uniform standards have been maintained. The majority of students have returned to school well-dressed. I understand this isn't easy for some who are facing financial burdens at present. Like any good school we have a high standard of uniform approved by Governors which we daily enforce. I believe it sets the tone for learning and shows we are serious in presenting ourselves in the best manner possible. Where there are issues, they tend to be around the same areas: piercing, skirts and shoes. Please continue to support us by following the published guidance on our school website. Year 7 and 10 pupils have responded well to wearing their PE kit on the days they have core PE lessons. Please can I remind, for their personal safety, that girls wear leggings to and from school. As the nights draw darker and colder, this will be especially important.

Charity work in the next half term

During our partial closure we have not had the opportunity to live out our **commitment to love, service and justice** in the local and global community as much as we would have normally. Therefore, we will be encouraging pupils to support two charity events this half term. Once again, we will be supporting the Macmillan Coffee Morning on Friday, 2nd October and the Christmas Shoe Box Appeal with an own clothes day on Friday, 23rd October. More information will follow on how to support these two wonderful causes.

Parent Governor Vacancy and Parent Views

There will be many challenges ahead and therefore it is important that we work together to make sure OUR school serves the needs of OUR young people. We can do this better when we work in partnership. This may prove to be more difficult this year with restrictions on parents accessing school. However, I would like to continue the work started by Mr Wilson by maintaining our Parent Forums, be it virtually so that parents and carers can help shape the future of school through sharing ideas and concerns. If you are interested in becoming involved, please contact me. In addition to this, there is currently a vacancy for a parent Governor and so, if you have a child in school, please consider serving as a Governor. It is a great way to shape the direction and success of the school. You would attend three full governing body meetings a year and probably three more as part of a sub-committee. Meetings tend to be early evening. If you are interested in putting yourself forward for election, please send me an email: head@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk and we will begin the election process.

I am very happy to have our pupils and staff back in school. It is only with them that our building becomes a school, a family community and a happy place to be. We will endeavour to keep you as up-to-date as possible with all the changes taking place regarding Covid and local area restrictions and their implications.

Wishing you a very good Autumn.

Mrs Nicola Oddie
Headteacher