

Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School

Headteacher: Mrs N Oddie BA(Hons) NPQH



*Let your
light shine*

Dear Parents and Carers

Christmas Newsletter 2020

I would like to begin this newsletter by saying thank you for all your support through this long and challenging term. There is no doubt it has probably been one of the most testing terms in my entire 26 years teaching career and a day does not pass without me feeling amazed and humbled at how our school community has pulled together and worked as one body to overcome any barriers placed in our way. Your part in that does not go unnoticed.

We are halfway through the season of Advent and we celebrate a moment of Christmas anticipation. This week we light our third candle in our wreath that represents joy. Indeed, we have much to be happy and joyous about. After tough times we feel as though things may be changing for the better. We are looking forward to seeing our loved ones and families at Christmas and a vaccine is becoming available to combat the virus. As we look forward to 2021, I wish to update you on several points in time for the New Year and the start of our Spring term.

High expectations for uniform

Thank you for your support in ensuring high standards of uniform are maintained. This will be especially important next half term as the weather gets colder. I must remind pupils that hooded tops are not part of the school uniform. We have allowed these to be worn coming to school under blazers, however, they must be removed once in school AND should not replace the importance of a suitable coat.

Reviews

I hope you found your child's Progress Review sent home last week helpful. As you are aware, we have adapted our reporting systems and this year we have broken down our Attitude to Learning to learning descriptors to support pupils in understanding how to improve and continue to develop their Growth Mindset approaches and help parents to support their child's development. Please remember your child's review is a simple snapshot on how your child is doing on the key measures of attendance, home learning, behaviour, progress, and attitude to learning. It reports your child's CURRENT progress score based on their latest assessment and if your child is above track, on track, not yet on track or below track at that reporting point in time. Pupils will always be shown how to improve and if you would like to support that, please do not hesitate to contact your child's class teachers. I know many of you already have.

Literacy

We have continued to develop and support the development of your child's literacy skills. Throughout this term we have worked hard on ensuring key vocabulary is incorporated in all lessons and have ensured that reading is at the forefront of our everyday work. We have introduced "vital vocab" in each subject area, including subject specific and high-frequency words for mature language users. We have embedded this work through developing pupils' skills in writing extended answers. Please continue to support your child's language development by testing them on these words and setting a high expectation that they use them orally in everyday life as well as encouraging your child to read for 20 minutes each day. To support this, we have given every child a book donated by Costa coffee and developed a book swap initiative, so pupils have access to a wide range of reading materials.

Helping Parents support home learning

We have significantly developed our home learning platform BSM@Home since its introduction in May earlier this year. We recently introduced a weekly report to parents that indicates home learning activities set, work already set for forthcoming weeks and an indication of pupil completion or missing home learning tasks. We will continue to develop our understanding of how we can use this with increasing efficiency and effectiveness to ensure we get the best for your child. We have also published each subject's curriculum plan from Year 7 through to Year 11. These can be found on the Curriculum page of the school website. This is to further support the individual year group information evenings we already run to help you as parents engage in your child's learning.

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E-Safety

I cannot stress more highly the important role you play as parents in monitoring your child's use of social media networks such as Tik Tok, Instagram and Snapchat. Some children, even after our repeated educational messages, are putting themselves in danger by sharing information with strangers posing as "friends". On top of this, some pupils still use social media to talk inappropriately to each other, spread malicious gossip about others or to post offensive images and videos. When this happens, the fallout always spills into school leaving staff to pick up the pieces. When this happens, it becomes a school matter and school sanctions will be used to address it. As I often say to our pupils, "if you are going to post anything about anybody on social media, use it to say something good." We are having an E-safety week in school at the beginning of February as another way of doing all we can to keep our children safe.

School Carol Service

It is with deep regret that we are not able to hold our usual School Carol Service this year in the beautiful setting of our parish church, St Mary's, Brownedge. However, we will not be defeated! We will continue to celebrate one of the most momentous events in our liturgical calendar through the wonders of modern technology. If you would like to see our Advent Liturgy, please visit our amazing Chaplaincy Instagram and Twitter pages to see our wonderful pupils lead our celebrations. [Click here to watch it from Thursday afternoon onwards.](#) As I say in my introduction to the service; as a community we come together to sing and dance at Christmas. We sing and dance at Christmas because we have something to sing about! Light has come into the world, and we don't ever need to walk in darkness again.

Holiday Pattern 2021-22

The details of school holidays for 2021-22 have now been published on the school website. A summary appears on the back of this letter. With children from many feeder primary schools, it is not always easy to ensure our holiday pattern fits in with all other schools. However, next year we have followed closely the Lancashire pattern. I hope this will help reduce the number of requests for holidays to be taken in term time, which as you will know, I can only approve in exceptional circumstances.

End of School Arrangements

I wrote to you late last week to change our end of term arrangements. School finishes for Christmas on Thursday 17th December. Year 7 and 10 finish at 12.35pm and for Year 8, 9 and 11 at 12.55pm. There will be no school dinners served on this day, but the usual food will be available at break. Apologies for the late notice, but I do think it benefits all and our enjoyment of our Christmas with our families. We reopen on Monday 4th January at the same timings for our school bubbles as we have this year.

It has still been a busy term. To appreciate just how busy, please take a look at the December 2020 issue of our Shining Lights Newsletter. It will be published in the last days of the school term and is packed full of activities and events that have taken place across school to enrich the lives of the young people at school. I will send it electronically as always for parents.

Wishing you a peaceful and joy-filled Christmas

Mrs Nicola Oddie
Head Teacher