

# Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School

Headteacher: Mrs N Oddie BA(Hons) NPQH



*Let your  
light shine*

Dear Parents and Carers

## Christmas Newsletter 2021

Following an extremely rewarding yet challenging first term, I am delighted to be writing to all parents to celebrate the significant number of combined achievements of our school community. These have been showcased in our termly newsletter Shining Lights; I sincerely hope you have a look when it is published next week. In it we have attempted to capture some of the fantastic work our school community does; not all is often easily seen and we could have written pages upon pages.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all parents in what has been a challenging time for so many of you, for consistently offering your patience, understanding and support to the school. It has been genuinely heart-warming to see and hear parents taking a moment, amongst your busy schedules, to offer a kind word to our exhausted yet unswervingly committed team of staff. It is fair to say that this term has presented another set of challenges for our school staff to overcome... the vaccination rollout for 12-15 year olds, ventilation checklists, transmission rates, contingency plans and the associated school response, combined with our school Open Evening, Welcome Mass, catch up curriculum, parents' information evenings, assessments, clubs, trips, preparations for productions and the million and one other daily tasks a school day demands.

### Firefly Parental Gateway Portal

To support parents, we have invested in a new parental portal called Firefly. This system brings together all our existing communication tools including INSIGHT, Parentmail, SchoolCloud under ONE app. Parents will be able support their child's learning by being able to see their positive and negative behaviours, access the home learning assignments set on Microsoft Teams, view their child's reviews and reports and book Parents' Evening appointments and extra-curricular activities, all within one web portal or app. This will mean that parents only need to have one login to access all of the information they need to support their child and access communication from school. Our Firefly rollout has begun with Year 7 in time for Parents' Evening this week and will continue with Year 8-11 early in the new year.

### Mental Health and Wellbeing

It has been a very challenging time and I believe it is absolutely essential that we continue to do all we can to support students, staff and their families. At the beginning of this academic year, we launched our commitment to students and colleagues' mental health and emotional wellbeing. This work is set to continue and it has been amazing to see pupils and our Mental Health Ambassadors embracing activities including an interhouse penalty shoot competition for Year 7 and 8, against Mr Hayhurst and Mr Crusham. Our Mental Health Ambassadors have also been busy visiting all form groups to introduce who they are and to highlight how pupils can access support in school for themselves or their friends. Two ambassadors, Jack and Lily also attended our Year 7 Information Evening to highlight the support for parents and pupils in relation to their mental health and wellbeing. We look forward to 2022 with many more activities planned including fund raising for YoungMinds UK, Time to Talk Day in February, and an afternoon tea for our Governors.

### Pupil Voice

Pupil voice at Brownedge is essential in helping our community work as one. Throughout this term, we have witnessed some amazing work from our school House Council, including our newly appointed pupil Senior Management Team. Both councils have led in some strategic, and day to day decisions for the school and the members of each have shown a maturity and dedication to school which is to be applauded. The School House Councils have led on decisions about the rules for own clothes day, the end of term rewards day and 'COVID keeps' in new technologies and online learning apps. They have also been included in the evaluation of behaviour across school, attendance and punctuality, and COVID health and safety. Pupil voice also forms part of our ongoing work to improve Teaching and Learning, with pupils evaluating how they learn best and how they can self-regulate their own learning. Our Year 10 pupils have also given their voice outside school to help the local community through membership in the South Ribble Youth Council, using their voice and influencing decisions within the local community. Fantastic work!

### Utilising the power of reading

Reading is an essential skill and a powerful tool for lifelong learning, widening horizons and making sense of the world. It improves pupils processing skills, vocabulary, and comprehension. Over the past term, we have been continuing our work

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in strengthening pupils' literacy skills to improve all areas of their communication. This has included the development of a whole school drive to utilise the power of reading, both for pleasure and for learning. Research suggests that we not only learn how to read by reading, but we learn how to read fluently by listening to fluent readers. In form time, pupils' have been reading weekly extracts taken from all different genres and styles of writing to improve our reading and literacy skills. These have included a remembrance poem, an article about climate change, a speech from Martin Luther King and an extract from Matilda to celebrate our forthcoming School Production.

## High expectations for uniform

In September we began a Uniform Card system whereby all pupils, parents and staff were able to track our high expectations in terms of uniform. I am very pleased to say that this system has been very effective and pupils have been rewarded for their efforts on this. Our high uniform expectations will be especially important next term as the weather gets colder. I must remind pupils that they are allowed to wear the **school jumper** or their **PE zipped fleece** under their blazers and are not allowed to wear any hooded tops in school. Many pupils use these as coats, and whilst it is acceptable to wear these over blazers for their journey to school, they are not permitted under blazers once in school. They must be removed on arrival at school AND should not replace the importance of a suitable coat.

## Testing in January 2022

We have been notified by the Government that all pupils in England must take an LFD test (Lateral Flow Device) in school before returning after the Christmas break\*. To facilitate this, we will undertake the testing over 2 days. Currently, our plan is to ask Year 7 and Year 11 to return to school as normal at 8.50am on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January, where pupils will be immediately tested and then begin lessons as normal. Year 9 will start school at 12.15pm on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January and we ask that they have had their lunch prior to attending school. Year 8 and Year 10 will learn online via TEAMS on Wednesday and return to school at 8.50am on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January. We can only allow those pupils whose parents have previously given consent to be tested. If you haven't previously given permission but would now like your child to be tested, please email Mr McCreesh at [mccreeshc@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:mccreeshc@st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk) with your child's name, year group and date of birth. \*Pupils who have had a positive COVID PCR result in the last 90 days do not need to test and those pupils whose parents have refused permission also do not need to test.

## E-Safety

I would like to continue to stress 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 at risk of sanctions by using social media to talk inappropriately to each other, spread malicious gossip about others or to post offensive images and videos. It becomes a school matter if it has taken place in school or the fallout is such that it causes issues in school. I repeatedly say, "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.

## Holiday Pattern 2022-23

The details of school holidays for 2022-23 have now been published on the school website. May I again take this opportunity to remind you not to take holidays during school term time.

## End of School Arrangements

School finishes for Christmas on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> at 12.45pm approximately. We hope to celebrate Advent by holding a liturgy at St Mary's Church. The school will be divided, with some Houses having the service before break and other Houses after break. There will be no school dinners served on this day, but there will be an extended break, with our usual food being served. We reopen on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January as described above. We will publish this on the website at the start of January to help remember timings.

Wishing you a peaceful and joy-filled Christmas

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Head Teacher

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