



3rd September 2026
HEB/tmi

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back to a new academic year at St Bernard's. I hope that you and your families have enjoyed a restful and enjoyable summer break.

I would like to extend a particularly warm welcome to our new families joining us this September, especially our students in Year 7 and Year 12, who are now very much part of the St Bernard's community. We are delighted to have you with us and look forward to working in partnership with you over the coming years.

Celebrating Our Students' Success

It is wonderful to begin the new academic year by celebrating the achievements of our students. Our GCSE and A Level students performed well this year, and we are incredibly proud of the grades they achieved. These results are a reflection of the hard work, resilience and determination of our students, supported by the dedication of our teaching and support staff and the encouragement of families at home.

We are particularly delighted to see the majority of our Year 13 students progressing to university, with many successfully securing places at Russell Group universities. We wish all of our leavers every success as they begin this exciting next chapter of their lives. They will always remain an important part of the St Bernard's family.

Premises and IT Teams

A great deal of work has taken place across the school over the summer, and I would like to thank our Premises and IT teams for all their hard work, particularly in the very hot conditions.

Our Premises team have been busy painting, clearing and reorganising areas, moving furniture and carrying out repairs, helping to ensure the school was ready for the new academic year.

Our IT team have also achieved a great deal. Mr Woolner, our IT Manager, has designed and built our new school website, which is now complete. We are delighted with the finished website and hope you will find it informative and easy to use.

The IT team have also installed 11 new interactive whiteboards, which will be a fantastic addition to our classrooms and further support teaching and learning.

This brings me to another very important thank you — our families. The new whiteboards were made possible through the incredible generosity of our school community. Whether you supported us through our Fun Day, RAG Week or through individual donations, every contribution made a difference. Together, you helped us raise more than £14,000, enabling us to purchase these new boards. I cannot thank you enough for your generosity and continued support.

Our Expectations

On Friday, our Heads of Year will be delivering 'Expectations Assemblies' to all year groups. As you know, we have very high expectations of our students in relation to uniform, conduct, behaviour, attendance and attitude to learning.

These expectations are not simply about rules; they are about creating a community where every young person feels safe, valued, respected and able to achieve their full potential. We want our students to conduct themselves in a way that reflects our Catholic mission and the values at the heart of our school: "Love one another as I have loved you." We ask for your continued support in reinforcing these expectations at home. When school and home work together, our students benefit enormously.

Welcoming New Members of Staff

This September, we are delighted to welcome several new members of staff to the St Bernard's community:

- Mrs Collis – Deputy Headteacher for Safeguarding and Pastoral;
- Mrs O'Donoghue – Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion and Personal Development;
- Mrs Ogwudire – Learning Support;
- Miss Carter Welch – Head of PE;
- Mr Cotgrove – Second in Maths;
- Miss Bowman – Religious Education;
- Miss Truman – Religious Education;
- Mrs Weller – Careers Adviser;
- Mr Whale – Premises Team.

We are very pleased to welcome each of them and know that they will make a valuable contribution to our school.

We also have a special congratulations to Miss Hill, who is now Mrs Beech, following her marriage at the end of July. We wish her and her husband every happiness for the future!

Working in Partnership with Parents and Carers

As parents and carers will know, I strongly believe in the importance of a close and positive partnership between school and home. Your views and feedback are extremely important to us, and we are always looking for ways in which we can improve the school further.

This year, we are introducing Parent Forums, which will take place after school from 4.30–5.30pm. These will provide an informal opportunity for parents and carers to meet with members of the school leadership team, share their views, ask questions and discuss how we can continue to develop St Bernard's. There will, of course, be tea and coffee available! It would be wonderful to see as many of you as possible. Further details and dates will follow.

Following the success of our parent information events last year, we have also listened carefully to the feedback we received and are making some changes. This year, rather than having broader key-stage information evenings, we will be introducing 'clinics'.

The evening will begin with a short presentation, after which parents and carers will have the opportunity to visit different members of staff and access advice and guidance on areas such as:

- supporting your daughter with literacy and numeracy;
- GCSE examinations and revision;
- emotional wellbeing and mental health;
- supporting learning at home;
- support with IT software used by the school;

These clinics will be much more bespoke and relevant to the particular needs of your child at that point in her education. A letter will be sent to parents with further information.

As part of our commitment to working together, we have also included the Parent Booklet and Behaviour Policy for you to read. Please take some time to familiarise yourself with these important documents.

Keeping in Touch

Please remember that Edulink is our main method of communication with parents and carers. It is also the system used to book appointments for parents' evenings. If you have not yet signed up for Edulink, please do so as soon as possible.

We are always happy to meet with parents and carers and value the opportunity to discuss any concerns or queries. However, meetings must be arranged in advance, as staff may have teaching, in meetings or have other commitments during the school day. Please do not attend the school expecting to be seen, as unfortunately the likelihood is that the relevant member of staff will not be available.

If you would like to arrange a meeting, please contact the school office, and the relevant member of staff will organise a suitable day and time with you. This helps us to ensure that when we meet, we can give you our full attention and the time your query deserves.

If you have any pastoral concerns, please email pastoralconcerns@stbernards.southend.sch.uk. The pastoral inbox is monitored between 8am and 4pm, term time only. We aim to reply within 5 working days. For any safeguarding concerns, please email safeguarding@stbernards.southend.sch.uk. This inbox is monitored all year round and we will respond within 24 hours.

Our school newsletter will continue to be sent home every half term and will include important updates and dates for your diary. Please find below the dates for the first half term:

- Thursday 10 September – Year 7 Meet the Form Tutor & Year 7 and 8 Clinics
- Friday 11 September – Sixth Form 'Meet the Team' Coffee Morning
- Thursday 24 September – Year 10 Clinic
- Thursday 1 October – Year 11 Clinic
- Wednesday 7 October - Year 7 Harvest Mass

Supporting Our School Enrichment Fund

Thank you to all families who support our School Enrichment Fund, which helps improve our students' experiences, facilities and opportunities. Donations of any size are greatly appreciated and make a real difference. To contribute, please visit the Enrichment page on our school website.

This year, a key priority is increasing the number of classrooms with air conditioning. With warmer summer months, this will improve comfort and the learning environment for students and staff. Fundraising throughout the year will help us purchase and install additional units.

Looking Ahead

There is much to look forward to this academic year, and I am excited about what we can achieve together. Our aim remains clear: to provide every young person at St Bernard's with the best possible education, alongside outstanding pastoral care and support, enabling them to grow in confidence, develop their talents and become the very best version of themselves.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support, trust and partnership. We are incredibly fortunate to have such a committed and generous school community, and I look forward to working with you throughout the year.

May God bless our students, their families and all members of the St Bernard's community as we begin this new academic year together.

Best wishes,



Mrs H Barnes
Headteacher