

St Mary's Catholic High School, Leyland

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END OF SCHOOL YEAR LETTER 2020

July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

This week draws to a close a school year that no-one will forget and I'd like to begin by saying thank you to you, the parents and carers, and pay tribute to your efforts throughout the past few months. You have had to grapple with an awful lot since the government closed schools in March. Juggling the demands of your adult life, whilst coping with turning your home into a learning environment is not easy. I'm sure that like every other household, you've had to contend with changes to routines, lack of space, shortage of equipment and dealing with questions about schoolwork you thought (or wished) you'd left behind when you finished school yourself!

Your efforts have been greatly appreciated by all the staff, thank you.

Well done also to all our pupils who have continued to engage with their schoolwork, right to the end. They have had to cope with a situation far beyond anything they'll have experienced before. However, they have shown great resilience and should be recognised for their efforts. Returning to school will be good for them but I hope that, if nothing else, the lockdown will show them they can cope with adversity and what life throws at them and come out stronger on the other side.

You are undoubtedly aware of the efforts that staff have made. They have been absolutely fantastic, making huge adaptations to their ordinary practice and have made every effort to remain connected to you and your child throughout this time. Right from the off, they have continued to look after our key worker and vulnerable children through both term-time and holidays. They have also hand-delivered meal vouchers, phoned families on a regular basis, made PPE from scratch for the NHS and local companies, collected and delivered food parcels – the list goes on. All this in addition to answering phone calls and emails, providing on-line learning, offering feedback and planning for September. Every member of staff has risen to the challenge, no matter what their role in the school and I cannot thank them enough. I could not wish for better colleagues.

School re-opening

As we know, the government has signalled its intention that all schools will reopen fully, to all pupils, from September. The school building has been an empty shell without the children and we have missed them dearly. I understand that you will want reassurance that school will be as safe as possible for your child when they return. It must be stressed that the government guidance itself says that *'it is not possible to ensure a totally risk-free environment.... [but] the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children and young people returning to school'*. With this in mind, we will have to make adaptations and be flexible. In time, we will hopefully return to more familiar conditions, but from the new term, certain changes will need to happen and routines for your child will have to alter.

Whilst these changes are necessary, we are keen to ensure that school life is as close to usual as possible. Therefore, on returning to school in September, your child will be required to once again observe our full

expectations in regards to uniform. During lockdown, boys and girls have naturally had the opportunity to express themselves with their appearance, and the closure of hairdressers has allowed for a variety of styles to emerge! However, as you would expect, our high expectations for uniform will be in force from the first day of the Autumn term. This includes, amongst other things, no make-up/false tan, no jewellery, black shoes (no trainers) and blazers. Jumpers will only be required from October half-term and only for Years 7 to 10.

It is our aim that every child has access to their full curriculum entitlement from the start of the new school year. It is important that pupils experience as much of their education as they can from September. For this to happen, the following changes will be in place from 2 September, the date your child will return to school:

- A **separate entrance** into school for each year group, with form rooms allocated as close to these entrances as possible. Signs will be visible on the first day, showing where your child should enter school grounds
- A **one-way system** throughout the school building, ensuring that pupils travel only in one direction, so not passing each other on the corridor or stairways
- All rooms with moveable tables to have **seats facing the front** of the class, not in group formations
- A **split break time**, with only 2 year groups going to their break at a time. One group will use the Dining Room, the other the Drama Theatre. Each will have access to an outdoor area and these 2 year groups will not mix
- A **split lunchtime**, once again with 2 year groups going at any one time, with arrangements similar to break time
- At both break and lunchtime, **Year 11 will go last and not with other year groups**
- At the **end of the day**, pupils will leave their classroom and exit via a designated doorway which will be closest to the room they are in

These are the logistical changes that are necessary for us to make in order to enable your child to return to school. They will demand patience and discipline from everybody in order for them to work. The first day back in school will concentrate on running through these arrangements and making sure every pupil understands how the new systems will operate.

In terms of health promotion, we will increase the cleaning regime during the school day so that regular-use areas, such as door handles and toilets are frequently cleaned. Dining areas will also be cleaned after one year group has used them and between sittings. We will also ensure that the school is thoroughly cleaned every evening in line with government advice, so your child will return in the morning to as sterile a site as is possible. We will be asking every child to wash or sanitise their hands on entry into the building every morning and at other times in the day. The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach will be promoted as well, with tissues and extra bins provided for rooms. From the start of the school day until the end, wherever physically possible, your child will only be with members of their year group, except potentially at brief movement times on the corridor. Any child wearing a face covering when travelling to school will be asked to remove it on entering the school, as per guidance from the government.

Teaching and support staff will also play their part in terms of the resources your child will have access to during their lessons. For example, textbooks and any specialist equipment which your child may use, say in Science, PE or Technology, will be cleaned if used by different year groups or rested for 48 hours (72 hours for plastics).

To help make this work, I am asking for your help and support with certain aspects of school life.

- Our **start and end times to the school day will not change**. However, please consider carefully how your child will travel to and from school. If travelling on **public transport**, please discuss with your child the current rules regarding face coverings and social distancing
- At the time of writing, we do not have information on dedicated **school busses**. I know many of you have completed the online questionnaire from Lancashire County Council regarding travel plans for September. Unfortunately, at the moment the best advice we have is to contact LCC if your child is intending to travel on a school bus because we are not currently aware of what their plans are. If we find out any more information, we will communicate this to parents
- It is best if your child can **walk or cycle** safely to school. Remember please that **cycling helmets** became compulsory for St Mary's pupils from January this year
- If you are intending to **drop off or pick up your child**, be aware that we are expecting Royal Avenue to be very busy, especially in the first week. Please consider stopping your car so that your child has a short walk to school, rather than directly outside the school gate
- Restrictions around the site mean that for the foreseeable future, **lockers** will not be able to be used by any pupil
- Please encourage your child to bring their equipment in just **one bag** which they will take with them around school. Pupils will not be able to lend or borrow equipment from one another
- **PE kit** will not be required on the first day of term
- To help with the turnover of pupils in the dining facilities, please could you encourage your child to bring a **packed lunch**, at least for the first couple of weeks as the new systems bed-in. A limited sandwich selection will be available for all pupils to pre-order in the morning, but **hot school meals** will initially only be made available to those pupils in receipt of Free School Meals
- It is possible that your child may have to spend more time outdoors at breaks and lunch than they ordinarily would. With this in mind, we would recommend they bring a **lightweight waterproof coat** in case of rain
- As is currently the case, we will continue to ask that any **visits from parents and carers** into school are by appointment only. As much contact as is possible will be done via phonecall or email.

These are the main points that you need to consider for September. I apologise if there is quite a lot to take in. The government guidance is extensive and detailed, and here I have given you a summary of how it will affect your child in the new school year. Please check the school website and social media channels for updates and further details over the coming weeks.

It is possible, though unlikely, that either our plans or the wishes of the government may change before September. If this is the case, I will write to you again over the summer holidays with how this may affect your child.

Staffing Changes


This summer we say goodbye to two members of staff, both of whom are leaving the teaching profession to pursue career opportunities elsewhere. Mr Kelly (Science) and Mr McMahon (Music) leave with our very best wishes. They have served the school very well and have given their time freely in support of pupils. Good luck!

As St Mary's grows, we have been able to recruit more staff to the team. In September we will welcome Mrs Sales into Technology, Miss Ingham into English (a past pupil!), Mr Rawsthorne into Humanities, Mrs Watson as Head of Music and Mrs Hamid into Science. We are also delighted to be able to confirm that Miss Howard has been made a permanent member of the Science department. Each addition will bring expertise to their subject area and I am confident they will quickly settle in and deliver high quality learning experiences for your child.

This academic year has been unique for many reasons. Pandemic aside, we have had to come together as a family following the tragic death of Miss Spruyt, we have welcomed Ofsted and received a glowing endorsement with the continuation of our 'Good' grading, and for the first time in 13 years we have been oversubscribed in Year 7, with families appealing to get in after not receiving a school place. The support you have shown the school has been gratefully received and is never taken for granted. Let us hope and pray that next year allows us to return to some form of normality. School will be the same, yet different, from September but what won't change is the dedication we have to providing the best possible opportunities for your child.

This year, school closes at 12.35pm for all children on Friday 17 July. We will fully reopen on Wednesday 2 September after what will hopefully be a much needed rest for all.

Yours sincerely,



Mr P Thompson

Headteacher