

St Mary's Catholic High School, Leyland

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INFORMATION FOR ALL YEARS 7 - 10

Dear Parents/Carers,

As we approach the half-term holiday, I'd like to pay tribute to our pupils who have responded fantastically to the challenges of online learning during this latest lockdown. We fully appreciate the difficulties that families face when working from home, but the level of engagement from pupils in all years has been excellent.

From January, we have tried to stick wherever possible to your child's normal school day. This is important as it provides structure to the day and allows pupils to access help from their teachers at regular times in the week. In addition, by following the normal timetable, it clearly marks the difference between schooling and leisure time.

The current situation is not ideal, and you will have heard me say regularly in the past that there is no substitute for your child being in school, enjoying face-to-face interaction with their teachers and friends. However, that said, the staff at St Mary's have been exceptional in the way they have risen to the challenge and are reporting very clearly that pupils are actively participating far more with their learning than during the first lockdown. I'd like to pay tribute to my colleagues who have had to learn and adapt their practices to enable this to happen. Equally, though, the work of the Teaching Assistant's and pastoral team have been excellent in ensuring that children have everything in place to enable them to learn.

Half-Term

School will be closed during the half-term holiday. This includes for Key Worker / vulnerable children. This will be a well-deserved rest for everybody. Hopefully we can all have some time away from our screens and enjoy the benefits of outdoor exercise and activity.

We will re-open from Monday 22 February, but for the time being, this will remain only for the children of Key Workers, or those identified as needing particular help.

We still do not yet know when we will be able to welcome more pupils back into the school. The suggestion of Monday 8 March has been put forward by the Prime Minister, but no details have followed and we'll just have to wait and see whether any return on this date includes secondary school pupils.

Return to Remote Learning after Half-Term

Online lessons will resume after half-term on Monday 22 February. As I say, pupils are working very hard and we are extremely pleased with their efforts. Moving forwards, I would ask that you remind your child of a few key points regarding remote learning. Firstly, it is important that children are ready for school at 8.45am. The day begins with form time – an ideal way of setting ourselves up for the day, sharing information and remaining in contact with friends in a less formal setting. Attending form time keeps the special family ethos we have here at St Mary's. Secondly, please remind your child to upload their work at the end of the lesson. Engagement in lessons is very high, but some pupils are not uploading their work at the end. Any outstanding work will be chased-up, so it makes sense to upload completed tasks in good time.

Please follow <https://www.ismchs.com/remote-learning> for further advice and for all the resources needed on remote learning.

Finally, if your child is ill or attending an appointment on any given day, please do continue to let school know so that this can be communicated to all teachers for the day and they aren't expecting your child in class.

Lateral Flow Tests and Contact Tracing

Since the middle of January, we have been conducting Lateral Flow Tests with staff and pupils in school. These have gone very well and at the time of writing, we have not yet reported a single positive result. However, I would ask that if any pupil who has been in school this week subsequently tests positive during half-term that you let us know. This can be done on the c19@ismchs.com email address. In this case, we would need to alert other pupils during the holiday that they may be a close contact. Hopefully, due to the flow tests we have conducted, the likelihood of this happening will be very low.

Progress Reports

All being well you will have received your child's Progress Report this week. With most pupils being away from school at the moment, these have been emailed to all pupils on their school email address. If you require further assistance to view your child's report, please get in touch with school for us to help.

Year 9 Options


Unfortunately, we are unable to run our traditional Option's Evening for Year 9 pupils. However, staff have worked hard to produce online videos and documents for you to view with your child. These can all be found by following this link from the school website: <https://www.ismchs.com/learning/year9options>. Over the past few years we have looked to widen our option choices for pupils in Year 9, so that they interest pupils and contain a fair spread of both 'academic' and 'vocational' choices. New this year are GCSE Photography and BTEC Health and Social Care. I would urge every parent in Year 9 to take time to view this webpage and talk carefully with their child about the path they'd like to take at Key Stage 4.

Choosing options at Year 9 can be an exciting time, as pupils have a direct say their future studies, and they realise that their time at St Mary's will eventually give way to adulthood. Mr Riley and Mr Meldrum explain the process in more detail in their videos, but I will stress that pupils should choose their options wisely, and never base it on what their friends are taking! The deadline for option choices is Tuesday 16 March.

Many parents have kindly taken the time to get in touch with school and share their support for what we are doing at St Mary's. Staff appreciate your support very much and it is heartening to know that you understand the difficulties and pressures schools are under at this time.

Of course, though, these are unusual times for us all, and I would like to pay tribute to you for the support and guidance you have given to your children during this enforced absence from school. It certainly isn't easy juggling home-schooling with your own commitments! With God's Blessing, we will soon find ourselves returning to a more normal way of working and living, and I'm sure that for many of us, that can't come soon enough!

Yours sincerely,



Mr P Thompson

Headteacher