



St Mary's Catholic School

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where everyone can succeed



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Dear Parents and Carers

I hope this letter finds you and your family safe and well. As Mr Foster outlined in his previous letter, I am delighted to be taking over as Headteacher in September. I have been blessed to work at St Mary's for many years and I am very much looking forward to leading our very special school community from next academic year.

It is now the government's expectation that **all children will return to school full time in September** and we are confident that the measures outlined below will ensure a safe return for everyone. The school continues to work very hard on its plans for September and will continue to do so over the summer. We are working through the detailed guidance issued by the government two weeks ago, regarding what schools need to do by the start of the autumn term. If you wish to read the government guidance, it is available on the Gov.UK website.

There is much to finalise but I wanted to share with you our broad plan for September. I will then write to you again nearer the end of the summer break with further detail. **Our overriding concern, in all of our thinking, is the safety and well-being of our students and staff.** Therefore, robust protective measures will continue to be put in place in school to ensure the health and safety of all members of the school community and to manage any potential risks effectively.

With this in mind, **the government guidance asks schools to reduce student movement and mixing and to maximise social distancing between those in school wherever possible, whilst also ensuring high quality teaching and learning within a broad and balanced curriculum.** In light of this, for your information our planning for September will include:

- A very significant reduction in student movement. We will do this by ensuring careful 'zoning' of the school to support social distancing and reduce mixing of students, with each year group based in a different area of the school for their lessons.
- Ensuring that students are largely in year group 'bubbles' to reduce mixing of students. We will endeavour to keep KS3 year groups in half year group 'bubbles', whilst Year 10 and 11 will be in year group bubbles, with Year 12/13 treated as one bubble. KS4/KS5 year group bubbles will ensure that students are able to continue to study their full range of option subjects. All of this is permissible and, indeed, anticipated, within the government guidance.
- Ensuring social distancing within the 'bubbles'.
- Amending slightly the timetable in Key Stage 3 to support these 'bubbles' and to reduce mixing. For example, in Year 7, there will be a couple more subjects taught in form groups initially, to reduce the number of different classes in which students are taught.
- Socially distancing students as soon as they are on the school site. Whilst we will not be having a staggered start time, almost immediately when students are on the school site, they will be divided up via different pathways and different entrances into the school.
- Revising the internal timings of the school day to have split break and lunchtimes and some staggered end times.
- Thinking carefully about specific curriculum areas like PE and practical subjects and following all specific government guidance related to these subjects. Further guidance about PE lessons will be communicated to parents before September.
- Continuing to develop our online learning provision to ensure we are fully prepared in the event of a local lockdown.
- Updating our risk assessment and documentation.

We are also currently looking at classroom and pastoral routines such as the use of books and other resources and, again, we will communicate more information regarding all of these areas in due course.

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To give some reassurance about how this will operate, it is worth bearing in mind that since the 15th June, with the limited reopening of the school to Year 10 and Year 12 students, and the continued attendance of some children of critical workers, the school has been operating with teachers, support staff and up to 100 students on any given day. We therefore have established good working procedures that have ensured the safety of students and staff in school. There is clarity around hand hygiene, movement about school, fire safety and revised evacuation procedures, general expectations of students and staff knowledge of how to respond if someone falls ill. We also have excellent support from our Facilities Management company Robertsons, as well as the Cleaning Contractor, Caterers etc to ensure all of their services are in place, including an enhanced standards/cleaning regime for the school. These robust health and safety routines will continue to be embedded. Thankfully, no student or member of staff has taken ill at school, nor, as far as we are aware, has anyone fallen ill as a result of being in school. School has operated very safely and very effectively during lockdown. Our tight procedures have certainly helped this and we are confident that we can 'scale up' these measures for the return of all students in September to ensure everyone remains safe.

We understand that these changes to the organisation of the school in September will feel very different for students and staff but they are absolutely necessary to ensure the health and safety of all members of the school community and, despite the different routines and organisation, we will continue to ensure that all students are able to thrive and enjoy being at St Mary's. It will be fantastic to have all of our current students back in September, as we have missed them greatly over the last few months. It will also be wonderful to be able to welcome our new Year 7 students. The school will once again be filled with energy and warmth in September, when all students and staff return. Furthermore, of course, as soon as it is safe to do so, and government and public health guidance allows this, we will be able to return to our more usual school life.

As mentioned, I will get back in touch with you nearer the end of the summer break, however a couple of further reminders. As outlined by Mr Foster, to help ensure that students are well supported in settling back into school at the start of the new academic year, **we will have a staggered start to the new term in September, with year groups returning to school on different days:**

- Tuesday 8th September – our new Year 7s and new Year 12s will return
- Wednesday 9th September – our Year 11 and Year 13 students will return
- Thursday 10th September – our Year 8, Year 9 and Year 10 students will return

All Year 7 to 11 students must return to school in **full school uniform in September**. All Year 12 and Year 13 students must return to school in **full Sixth Form dress code**. Please see previously distributed guidance regarding our uniform/dress code expectations. The government guidance encourages all schools to return to their usual uniform policies in the autumn term. This guidance also makes clear that uniforms do not need to be cleaned any more often than usual, nor do they need to be cleaned using methods which are different from normal.

Over the summer, we feel it is important that students take a well-earned break from home study. We do not expect Key Stage 3 students to be studying in the holidays. Year 10 and Year 12 students also need to have a good break but teachers have set some summer work for them, so that they return ready for their important final year before public exams. Year 11 students planning to return to Sixth Form need to complete previously issued work over the summer break, before returning in September. When we return to school, for all year groups, we will be spending the first 3-4 weeks of the school year reviewing and assessing student learning and progress in the most holistic sense, in every subject area, given the previous extended period of remote learning. This will ensure that we can plan teaching and learning effectively as we move forward, revisiting any areas of study as necessary and then moving forward with new learning, to ensure that all students are able to re-engage successfully with their studies and progress really well.

Thank you so much for your continued support. I wish you a lovely and enjoyable summer break and we very much look forward to welcoming back all of our students in September.

Yours faithfully,



Miss Patterson
Deputy Headteacher