



# 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 all safe and well. We continue to remember in our thoughts and prayers anyone suffering as a result of COVID-19.

In my letter last week, I told you that senior staff and governors were currently considering our response to the government's recent announcements about its desire for the gradual re-opening of schools and what this might mean, initially, for those year groups in our age range, i.e year 10 and year 12 students, where the ambition is for them to have 'some contact' next half term with their teachers to support continued home learning.

As of today, one day before half-term begins, specific guidance for secondary schools has still not been published by the Government, despite this being promised in their publication of 11<sup>th</sup> May which focussed mainly on primary school settings. This makes it impossible for schools to share any concrete plans with you at this stage. We are continuing to work closely with other schools in Newcastle and with the Local Authority officers to share ideas about what models for year 10 and year 12 wider access might entail. We are considering what would be safe and practical, taking full health and safety advice, working up risk assessments and so on. What we do know is that the government is not envisaging an immediate return of whole year groups of year 10 or year 12 students to a full timetable of normal lessons. If and when students can safely access the school and some of their teachers, we envisage, along with other schools' likely approaches, that this will be very gradual and initially in small groups of students at best, potentially at staggered times during the day and so on.

Along with our whole staff, you, as parents and carers, will of course be consulted on the detail of any plans before any wider access begins, as you will need to be comfortable with what is planned. As is the case with all other Newcastle secondary schools that we have heard from, we are not, therefore, in a position to start bringing students into school immediately after half term. As well as awaiting further secondary school specific guidance from government, we also understand that 28<sup>th</sup> May, i.e. Thursday of half-term, is the date on which the government will, in any case, firm up or delay further its current provisional plans for certain year groups returning from 1<sup>st</sup> June, depending on the conditions and advice that it receives at that time.

I will keep you informed of any further developments. Hopefully, in the week of 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> June, immediately after half-term, I will be able to consult you on a concrete plan for initiating some contact for year 10 and year 12 students.

Obviously, we all want to see students return to school but only when it is safe to do so and when all guidance and advice has been published, considered and acted upon.

I hope everyone continues to stay safe and well in these challenging times.

Best wishes.

J Foster – Headteacher