



22th May, 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Coronavirus update 14

Welcome to another weekly update to keep you informed about what is happening at St Margaret's during our 'repurposing' period.

On-site childcare

Average attendance onsite this week has been running at 12.1 students per day – up from 9.4 students per day last week. This increase mirrors similar increases across the City.

Thanks to the creativity and imagination of the teachers who have been coming into school, this week our students have been making cards for those in local care homes and producing some artwork for a local NHS ward, as well as submitting their online schoolwork and enjoying some physical exercise. If you qualify for our onsite childcare provision, please let Mrs Penketh and me know if you'd like your son to join us; we will be open from Tuesday to Friday inclusive over the half-term week. **School uniform need not be worn** for those attending childcare over half-term.

Possible partial re-opening in June

We are continuing to plan for a possible partial re-opening for students in Years 10 and 12. As I mentioned last time, so far we have decided:

- we will not re-open on June 1st; and
- we will not re-open for pupils currently in Years 7, 8 or 9 until September at the earliest.

Our planning for Years 10 and 12 is still in its early stages as we are still waiting for some key guidance documents to inform our risk assessment processes. We are also mindful that the scientific advice is also evolving as more and more data become available about the spread of Covid-19. With those heavy caveats, our **very early thoughts** for Years 10 and 12 are as follows...

- Given current advice and restrictions, our risk assessments indicate that we cannot open for more than 70 pupils over lunch-time (and we will need to continue to set aside 20 of those places for our ongoing provision for key workers' and vulnerable children). We therefore think we will be asking Year 10 and Year 12 students to come into school on a part-time basis, but wherever possible for full days; this will minimise the use of public transport, in line with current guidance.
- In order to minimise the opportunities for the virus to spread, we may look to put Year 10 students in small groups ('bubbles') in which they would stay all day. Each small group would then be visited by different subject specialists to provide ongoing support for their remote learning. For a number of reasons, it may not be possible for every child to see their own teacher, however.

- We would expect Year 12 students to be able to maintain social distancing more effectively, so we anticipate that somewhat less stringent arrangements would apply for them.
- We have been monitoring what proportion of online learning work each student has been submitting. We are aware that some students with relatively low submission rates may have difficulty accessing digital content at home, so we are considering how best we can invite them into school for some supervised access to our ICT networks.

I would stress again that these are **very early thoughts** and that no definitive decisions about provision for students in Years 10 and 12 have been made yet. Naturally we will write to the parents of all involved once our plans have been finalised – which may occur during the first week back after half-term (there is a full meeting of the Governing Body on Thursday 4th June).

On-line learning

Dr Manwaring, a member of our online learning team, writes:

“Feedback from parents and our IT helpdesk has indicated that the large variety of websites and online systems that departments are using can detract from our students’ learning. Whilst our focus thus far has been on practicing previously taught work, we would like to move on after half-term to studying new material. We have reviewed several ways to do this and have decided, at this stage, the safest way to do this for our pupils is not via live video lessons but by pre-recorded video lessons.

*“The **Oak National Academy**, supported by the Department for Education, has set up a virtual school and created a model for online lessons which incorporates effective teaching practices. We have been monitoring these lessons, and found them to be of a good standard; moreover there is now a sufficient quantity of these lessons available to populate our timetable. Our Heads of Department will start to roll out these lessons in the coming weeks. There are a few subjects that do not appear on Oak National Academy yet, and for these subjects we will use the BBC Bitesize lessons.*

“This model will also allow better access to the learning material from a range of devices. In fact it will be possible to complete both the Oak National Academy lessons and the BBC Bitesize lessons on a smart TV or smart phone providing pupils also have access to a pen and paper. This will help families who are sharing technology between several children and adults working from home. Pupils will continue to follow their normal timetables and links will be provided on SMHW that link to the Oak National Academy or BBC Bitesize lessons each day. All work will be submitted via SMHW and will consist of a photograph of the work completed. If your son or daughter cannot photograph the work please submit a comment or other attachment instead of the photographic file.

“As teachers, our next ‘virtual school’ focus will be on effective ways to feedback to pupils on their work and how to help them ‘virtually’ when they need extra support. One possible answer here is ‘online tutorials’ but there are a number of safeguarding issues surrounding this approach that need to be considered in detail. As we consider the best way forward, please do let me know (cmanwaring@stmargaretsacademy.com) if you would like to participate in any trials of different things we may try.”

Safeguarding

Dr Silverstone, our Director of Pastoral Care, writes:

“As half term is coming up, form tutors of boys in Years 7 to 10 will not be emailing their tutees next week to check in and offer pastoral support and information. However, our safeguarding inbox (safeguarding@stmargaretsacademy.com) will still be checked regularly, so if you have any concerns, please do get in touch.

“While the boys have a week away from work, we hope that they will take the opportunity to spend some time away from their screens and do some more physical activities - whether in the house or garden or out in local parks (subject to appropriate social distancing). I know that some boys have been setting themselves regular challenges to achieve in terms of exercise, which seems like a great idea.

“For those times when the boys are online, many of you will have heard of the Oak National Academy, an initiative set up to support pupils and parents while schools are closed. Over half term they are running the ‘Oak Activity Club’, which will feature cooking and nutrition ideas, input from the scouts covering nature and crafting skills, debates on various topics, virtual countryside tours, and much more. Exact details have yet to be released, but you can find them at www.thenational.academy or search for #OakActivityClub on Twitter.”

Free School Meals

I have this week written to all parents of **Liverpool** children who are entitled to Free School Meals enclosing a £10 Asda voucher (one per child) for lunches during half-term. I am not aware of any similar schemes for residents of other authorities, and can only apologise to families who may have missed out.

The Edenred voucher scheme will restart after half-term. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any problems with the vouchers – we know there have been a few!

Pedal for PPE

I write from my desk in school, half-way through the third-longest cycle-ride I've ever done, and the first of this length with a day's work in the middle! Please don't tell the Governors, but I probably haven't been at my most productive today... However, we have together managed to raise a goodly sum for a very worthwhile cause. It's not too late to chip in, and you can do so [here](#) – thank you!

If you're wanting to find out whether I'll make it home this evening (as opposed to tomorrow afternoon...), I'm posting irregular updates on the school's Twitter feed – which is well worth following for its more serious news, of course! Keep an eye on @SMALiverpool for the latest developments!

With best wishes for a peaceful Bank Holiday weekend,

Yours faithfully



Stephen Brierley
Principal.