

7th May, 2021



Dear Parent/Carer

### **Coronavirus Update 58**

Earlier this week I had the pleasure of umpiring a Year 7 cricket match. 36 hours later I've just about thawed out! Umpiring a cricket match isn't something I can do that often, but it was truly invigorating to spend a few hours with a group of boys whose surfeit of enthusiasm more than made up for their deficit of experience. Sadly we finished up on the wrong end of a last-over thriller against St Hilda's, but I'm sure Mr Kingston will work hard with the team so that they can come back stronger next time. Well done to all who took part – the potential was clear to see.

I guess that for all of us who work in schools, it's that *potential* that inspires us to get out of bed every morning. Maybe the connection that a student has made in one of their lessons this week will prove to be the key that unlocks their future progress in that subject. Maybe the excitement of Wednesday's Year 7 cricket match will prove to be the start of a life-long love of cricket for one or two players. Maybe the first meeting of the [Alpha course](#) that started in school this week will prove to be a significant milestone for a young person on their journey to make sense of life. I hope your son has enjoyed at least some such moments over the last few days!

### **Safeguarding Team**

I'm delighted to be able to advise you that Mr Gibbons has been appointed Deputy Director of Pastoral Care (with effect from Monday 10th May). He will continue to serve as Head of Year 8 too.

That means our Safeguarding Team is now:

- Dr D Silverstone, Director of Pastoral Care;
- Mr T Gibbons, Deputy Director of Pastoral Care;
- Mrs V Wyke, Deputy Director of Pastoral Care; and
- Mrs J Dally, Family Liaison Officer.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with them ([safeguarding@stmargaretsacademy.com](mailto:safeguarding@stmargaretsacademy.com)) if you have any safeguarding concerns about your, or another, child.

### **When your son or daughter is absent...**

...please can you ensure you let us know **before 9:30am**, even if they don't start school that day till after then? Late notifications of absence can cause our office colleagues considerable inconvenience, so please let us know as soon as you can.

### **Year 9 options**

Letters confirming Year 9 students' GCSE options have been mailed out this week and should arrive (in the post) over the next couple of days, if they haven't already. **Please let us know about any problems as soon as possible.** If your son has changed his mind about what he would like to study, we may be able to accommodate the change – but please be aware that some subjects are now quite tight for numbers.

## Term dates, 2021/2022

It's recently been confirmed that the next academic year will only comprise 189 school days (excluding INSET days), instead of the usual 190. The reason for this is the extra Bank Holiday that's been given to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The extra Bank Holiday, Friday 3rd June, falls in most schools' half-term week anyway, and it's now been clarified that schools will be able to take an extra day's holiday elsewhere during the school year instead. We have decided to take it on **Monday 6th December**. School will now be closed to students (and staff) that day.

Our full term-dates for next year can be found [here](#).

## We value your views...

As you'll be aware, we've made a number of changes to school life this year, and now we're planning for next year, we're keen to hear your views about which changes should 'stick'. There are three areas in particular where we'd appreciate your views:

- *How should we arrange Parents' Evenings?*  
Pre-Covid we invited everyone on site; nowadays we run virtual Parents' Evenings. Which work better for you? – or would a hybrid model be best (say: Years 7, 9 and 13 have a physical Parents' Evening, Years 8, 10 and 12 have a virtual one, and Year 11 has one of each)?
- *Should students still come into school in their PE kit on days when they have PE?*  
(This is likely to be only one day in the week).
- *How often do you want to hear from me? (!)*  
Pre-Covid I wrote *SMArtTalk* once a month. Nowadays we have a weekly *Update*. Which did you prefer? – or would a once-a-fortnight model be the best way forward?

I ask these questions now to promote some discussion; next week we'll have a link to a quick survey for you to give your views. The survey will remain open until Friday 18th June, as it would be unfair to ask Year 10 parents for their views on Parents' Evenings before you've experienced the joys of a virtual event! (Year 10 Parents' Evening will be held on Monday 14th June, as announced in *Update* 55).

## Dr Silverstone's section

Dr Silverstone, our Director of Pastoral Care, writes:

*“This week, I'd like to highlight a really useful collection of resources that can be found at [www.safeguardingresourcehub.co.uk](http://www.safeguardingresourcehub.co.uk). The site has sections specially designed for children aged 11-18 and for adults, parents and carers. In each there is a wealth of resources for all kinds of safeguarding and wellbeing issues. For example, in the collection of resources for children, there are links to Bullybusters, CAMHS, Frank and the National Youth Advocacy Service. The section for parents gives links to organisations that look after mental health, legal issues, bereavement and many more. If you or your children have any specific concerns, the chances are you will find something to support you on this resource hub.*

*“And as always, if you do have any questions or concerns, please do get in touch with us at [safeguarding@stmargaretsacademy.com](mailto:safeguarding@stmargaretsacademy.com)”.*

## Finally...

I spoke at the start of this week's letter about *potential*, and the promise of what might be to come. Next week Christians will celebrate Ascension Day, when we mark the moment Christ physically left us for the last time; our Muslim friends will celebrate Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan. That sense of looking forward and looking backward will also pervade our thinking in school, as we

get ready to bid 'goodbye' to students in Year 11 and Year 13 – whilst simultaneously starting our Induction programme for next year's Year 7. The scenes of life may change, but as people of faith we know that some things don't have to change! As the hymn-writer put it:

*Through all the changing scenes of life  
– in trouble and in joy –  
the praises of my God shall still  
my heart and tongue employ.*

We'll be in touch again next Friday.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Brierley', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Stephen Brierley  
Principal.