



Friday 24th November

Dear Parent/Carer

Parental Update 129

Welcome to another edition of our fortnightly newsletter for parents. I trust you and your family are in good health and spirits as we start to look forward to the Christmas season.

Extra INSET day, Monday 8th January 2024

As you will know, we have recently joined All Saints Multi-Academy Trust. Existing schools in the Trust use software called **Arbor** within school to manage information about staff and students, and to communicate with parents (in the same way that we currently use ParentMail). We will therefore be moving over to Arbor during the Christmas holidays, leaving Class Charts and SIMS behind.

As part of that move, we will need to train our staff. The All Saints Trust Board (who now have responsibility for setting our term dates) have allocated an extra INSET day in order for this to happen, and I am therefore advising you that St Margaret's will be closed to students on **Monday 8th January 2024**. Please accept my apologies for any inconvenience this may cause.

There will, of course, be implications for how we communicate with you. We will write to you with more details about this shortly.

Christmas Carol Service

As you will know, our Christian ethos is central to all that we do. Our daily Collective Worship is, rightly, a focal point for us all every morning; and we make a point of celebrating significant events in our school year (I wrote last time about our Remembrance Day service). The last time they visited us, independent inspectors rated this aspect of our provision 'Outstanding' overall.

We always finish our Autumn Term with a Carol Service – a long St Margaret's tradition that was only broken by the pandemic. This term's Carol Service will take place on Thursday 21st December (the last day of term). Happily the Cathedral is big enough to accommodate all our students, plus all our parents, plus other family members or friends who wish to attend – so do please come along if you would like to!

Thursday 21st December is a **regular school (half-)day**; students are expected to make their own way to the Cathedral, and will be dismissed from there to start the Christmas holidays when the service is over. We'll provide further information about the arrangements in our next *Update*. If your son or daughter has additional needs and is unable to travel to the Cathedral independently, please e-mail admin@stmargaretsacademy.com as we will be able to provide transport there and back for a small number of students.

Attendance is compulsory, just as it is on any other school day. If your son or daughter is absent without good reason, their absence will be recorded as unauthorised. One of the criteria for participation in our Rewards Trip in the summer is "*no unauthorised absence*", so please be aware that if your son or daughter is absent on Thursday 21st December and their absence is not authorised, they will be unable to participate in our July 2024 Rewards Trip.

Safety traveling to and from school

Given how dark the evenings are now, I thought it would be worth mentioning a few safety tips for travel to and from school. Please could you take the opportunity to reinforce these with your son or daughter over the next few days?

- For those who use bikes, well done! It's a brilliant way of getting to school as (a) it's environmentally friendly and (b) it helps keep you fit and healthy. Make sure you have working bike lights, and that you wear something bright – even just a reflective armband helps. Equally importantly – wear a bike helmet – it can make all the difference!
- For those on public transport, the advice about wearing something bright is still valid. Take extra care when crossing roads – in the dark, oncoming traffic is less likely to see you. And if you ever have concerns about the behaviour of other people on the bus, tell the driver. Sitting at the front of the bus near the driver is also a good move.
- For those in cars, please take care when getting in and out of the car. Again, pedestrians and other road users are less likely to see you on dark evenings such as the ones we have now.

Specific year-group messages

- **Year 11 parents:** we're very much looking forward to meeting you at next Wednesday's **Year 11 Parents' Evening** (on-site from 3:45pm to 6:45pm on 29th November) when we'll have a chance to discuss how your son performed in his Mock exams earlier this month, to discuss likely outcomes at GCSE, and to begin to think about possibilities for next year.
- **Year 7 parents:** a reminder that it's your turn the week after! Our **Year 7 Parents' Evening** will take place online on Tuesday 5th December to provide you with an opportunity to reflect how your son has settled in this term with each of his subject teachers.
- **Year 9 parents:** early next term we'll begin the process of GCSE Options. All St Margaret's students take 9 GCSEs – Religious Studies, English (Language), English Literature, Maths and two Sciences. Students can then choose three more GCSEs, at least two of which need to be 'facilitating subjects', *ie* a third Science, History, Geography or a Language (a slight change from previous years).

It's not too early to start talking with your son about what he might be thinking of choosing: sometimes it's a good idea to 'work backwards' and to think what career he might be interested in, what degree or apprenticeship might help him get there, and what subjects would be necessary to enrol on such a degree course or apprenticeship. (University websites can be a useful source of such information). Of course, we'll be supporting them with further Careers work in school, with an Options Information Evening for parents (and students!), with an early Parents' Evening next term (so you can understand how your son is doing in each

subject), and with individual consultation meetings with a leader within school. More details will follow at the start of next term.

Finally...

Apologies for the slightly later-than-usual distribution of this edition of the *Update* – there's been plenty to sort out as we become fully-fledged members of All Saints Multi-Academy Trust! I can't quite believe I'm writing this, but I'll be in touch again for our last *Update* of 2023! – on Friday 8th December.

In the meantime, if there's any way in which we can support your son or daughter's well-being or studies at this time, please don't hesitate to get in touch – it's what we're here for.

Yours faithfully,

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

Stephen Brierley

Principal.