



In all things faithful

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Dear Parents/Carers

The following letter is for Year 11 parents and outlines some important **key messages** and **information**. At St Damian's our aim is to ensure parents have all information available so that you can support your child's education. All these messages will be shared in school, but I ask that parents also convey these messages to your children.

1] Key Messages

A] Time

I can't stress the importance of time. In essence, time management is crucial. I know, and appreciate, that all pupils missed out on considerable learning time between March and July. However, the reality is that pupils should not be using that as an 'excuse' to down tools. This cannot be changed, and pupils have had no control over this. However, pupils have control over how much work and revision they can do now and they should focus on this. From past experiences pupils who do not work, steadily get overwhelmed and ultimately under-perform.

Key Message: I ask that parents support your child, ensuring that they are working hard at home, completing homework and/or revision for between 2-3 hours each night. This should have already started.

B] GCSE Exams 2021

There seems to be some 'talk' among Year 11 pupils that *maybe* the exams will not take place in June 2021. This has been heightened by the exam boards in Wales 'cancelling' GCSE exams next summer. I would just like to clarify that at present this is most definitely **not** the case and your child should be preparing for their exams in the expectation that they **will be taking place**.

Key Message: Exams are likely to take place as planned, albeit possibly in a different way.

Some pupils because of this incorrect assumption believe that St Damian's will therefore put forward 'inflated grades'. This will not be the case and all grades will be internally moderated. If there are no exams and for the avoidance of doubt, all grades generated will be based on Mocks, ongoing assessments, attitudes to work etc and there will be no grade inflation for any child or subject. In fact, it is even more important that your children are working really hard in school **every day** and at home to prepare for their Mocks.

Key Message: All grades submitted by school will be an honest and accurate reflection of the pupils' ability and work and will be based on hard evidence, ie: Mock results and/or ongoing assessments.

C] Hard work

If your child wants to achieve their targets or exceed their potential, then they must work hard. Both pupils and parents need to understand that there is a lot of exam content which has to be completed, learnt and then revised. Ask yourself this simple question. *Has my child been doing at least 2 hours*

work every day since restarting school in September? Be honest and if the answer is no, then you must encourage them to work harder. If the answer is yes, then please praise and congratulate them.

Key Message: There is **no** substitute for hard work.

D] Self-isolation and learning

Where pupils have to self-isolate, it is imperative that they complete work at home. There is no excuse for not doing so. Self-isolation does not mean pupils have no work. It simply means there is no direct face to face interaction with the teacher. For example, work will be set on TEAMS or there may be live lessons. If this fails, for whatever reason, then pupils should be self-disciplined to revise topics from Year 10.

Key Message: The *rule of thumb* is to follow your timetable as if you were present in school, logging in at 9am.

E] Revision/Homework/Work each night

All pupils should be completing at least 2 hours of work each night. This will be a mixture of homework, revision, reading or completing past exam papers. And if all this fails, then pupils should be using ICT based revision sources such as Seneca Learning <https://senecalearning.com/en-GB/> or BBC Bitesize <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/secondary>. Supporting your child with independent home learning is vital. Our year 11 pupils have developed guidance on how they believe you can help them through this challenging time. For further information visit: www.stdamians.co.uk and then select 'Parental Engagement Tab'.

Key Message: As a parent you must challenge the myth of 'no homework' as Year 11 pupils will *always* have work and/or revision to complete

Short video presentation

Next Wednesday I will upload a short video presentation for Year 11 parents to outline key messages as it is crucial that your children focus on preparation for Mock exams and their GCSEs next year rather than second guess whether the exams are going ahead or not. This is simply an unwarranted distraction. A text message will follow when this is uploaded to the website but I ask that you watch this short but important video.

2] Information

A] Parents' Evening

Although different this year, I hope that you received important information about the progress of your child and that you had a chance to raise any issues. Meeting face to face is the ideal scenario but I hope that you understand the rationale for the phone call only. There may be a chance later around February for more phone calls and/or a meeting. Despite this, I am delighted that the oral feedback I had from the eleven staff making the phone calls was overwhelmingly positive. This reflects the great relationships we have with you. I reiterate that the staff at St Damian's are doing everything possible to ensure that your child receives high quality teaching and strong pastoral care.

B] Mock Exams

- Mocks start week commencing 30th November and last for 2 weeks
- These will be robust exams marked in line with previous grade boundaries
- Mocks will be linear meaning that pupils will have to revise subject content from Year 10
- If pupils are absent, then they will re-sit as soon as possible
- During the Mocks if pupils are not sitting an exam, they will be in revision

C] Mock Results Day

On Friday 15th January, pupils will have a 'Mock' results day when we try and replicate what will happen on results day. Pupils will be given an envelope with their grades. Invariably, these results will be 'mixed': some pupils achieve what they are expecting, whilst some will underachieve, and some pupils will be disappointed. However, regardless of these results it is imperative that all pupils learn from *any mistakes* and ensure that they are continuing to focus on learning in classes and revising thoroughly at home. As I have said above, there is no substitute for hard work. Based on previous experiences, there is no doubt that those pupils who are working hard, generally achieve the best grades.

D] Intervention after School

Each year we ensure that there are opportunities for intervention and revision. This has been curtailed thus far but, depending on the National advice, we may start intervention in January. However, there is a possibility this may not go ahead. This school led intervention complements the work that pupils are doing at home. It is important that parents understand that this decision is for safety reasons and is to ensure the well-being of staff so that high quality delivery of day-to-day teaching can take place with as few interruptions as possible. As a school we are always reviewing what we can do and plan ahead to overcome challenges and ensure the most effective use of resources.

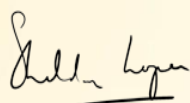
Finally, the well-being of pupils underpins all of the above. My staff and I fully understand that the next few months leading up to external exams make pupils anxious. The advice above will help stop pupils becoming overwhelmed and will ensure that over the next few months they build their confidence and self-belief. It has always been the St Damian's way that happy children achieve their potential. As a caring Catholic school, we also ensure that we are proactive in looking after children's emotional well-being. We do so through the following;

- Student Support Officer [SSO] work. We have 2 SSOs in school and they support our children through the many issues that arise, including support with stress, anxieties or emotional concerns.
- We have set up an email facility that allows pupils to easily email SSOs with appointments to discuss any concerns that arise.
- Form time assemblies raise awareness of how to stay physically fit and mentally well during this period of uncertainty.
- We will distribute information on Monday 16th November with regards next years' exams, how to revise and manage stress. This is all useful reading.
- As a school we also signpost to external agencies. For example, websites including the well-being site 'kooth' and the Anthony Seddon Fund
- Additionally, it is at this time of the year when I informally meet pupils for a 'cup of tea and a chat'. If you feel that your child would benefit from this, please ask them to come and speak to me.

However, we can't do it alone. I ask that you as parents support their well-being and academic achievement by showing encouragement, taking an interest in their work, praising them and ensuring that they are revising each night in a quiet and appropriate environment. As a parent you must instil confidence in your child and that if they '*Believe to Achieve*', i.e. believe in themselves, then they can achieve anything.

Finally, as always, thanks for your overwhelming support. Working together is the best way to ensure that your child achieves their potential over the next few months.

Yours sincerely



Mr Logue
Headteacher