



In all things faithful

#### St Damian's RC Science College

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#### Headteacher

Mr S Logue BA (Hons), M.Ed., NPQH

28<sup>th</sup> September

Dear parents/carers,

In these challenging times, let's start with some great news. I have to wholeheartedly congratulate *your* children, our pupils, on their positive attitudes and a fantastic start to the academic year. As I anticipated, the pupils have returned looking very smart in their uniform ready to learn. Attitudes to learning thus far have been fantastic and this bodes well for the future. Furthermore, they have also had to get used to many changes but yet again they have risen to the challenge. Please pass on my thanks to them. I am so proud of their conduct.

#### Covid-19 and partial closing

As you know, we have had several positive Covid-19 cases where we have had to contact parents. This started with sending selected pupils home to self-isolate but by Friday I had to send the whole of Year 10 home to self-isolate. All decisions are made in consultation with the local health teams. Our attendance is consistently above the National Average and we have a great attendance team in school, but it is necessary to self-isolate in order to protect our community. Sadly, this is increasingly likely to happen as the number of cases increases in the local community and will become the new 'norm'. Despite all our risk assessments and precautions, it is inevitable that there will be more in the future. This is not ideal for pupils, parents and the school. I ask that you understand that we are doing this to safeguard the wider community and please cooperate if you get a phone call.

NB: Letters sent home with self-isolating pupils do not necessarily add up to the 14 days recommended self-isolating period. So, for clarity, the **14 day self-isolation begins from the first onset of symptoms of the person who has tested positive**, so your child won't necessarily be asked to stay away from school for 14 days.

Can I add that this is a sad time for the school and myself as 'sending pupils home' when they should be enjoying our school, goes against everything we believe in. Safety, however, must remain our number one priority.

#### Face Masks

Can I remind parents that face masks are compulsory for all pupils. To date there is no pupil that is **exempt** from wearing a mask. Please ensure that your child arrives to school with a mask, as it is now a part of the school uniform. I also request that your child has a **spare mask** in case they need to replace it during the school day and that you remind your child that face masks are also compulsory on the bus.

Recently, several pupils have become repeat offenders and have 'forgotten' their masks. If this happens, I may ask your child to go home and get their masks or I may ring their parents to bring a mask up to school. This is a **serious** safety issue. Thank you in advance for supporting the school. I reiterate that I will not be compromising on the safety of pupils and staff.

#### Accompanying Letters

There are 2 important letters also for your perusal. Please ensure that you read these as they have important information.

St. Damian's RC Science College

- *NHS Test and Trace*. This is from Public Health England that outlines what to do with regards to the National Test and Trace system.
- *LA letter*. This is information about the Covid-19 locally and reiterates the importance of the national guidelines

### **Speaking to St Damian's staff**

Can I ask parents to ensure that when speaking to any member of staff that you are polite and respectful. Again, there was an incident this week when a parent was 'rude' to a member of staff. I state with good authority that all the staff; support staff, teachers and leaders are working tirelessly for your children in ensuring that they get a great education during this critical period. That is the *St Damian's Way*. None of these brilliant staff come to work to be 'shouted at', nor in fact do they deserve to be 'shouted at'. As a school we are renowned for solving any 'issues' and I do not understand why any parent believes that 'shouting' will solve any issue quicker or better. I have asked my staff that they do not accept this kind of behaviour and pass calls onto me.

### **Parents' Evenings**

Since starting back in September many planned events on our school calendar have had to be cancelled or postponed or have become virtual. At the time of writing it is highly probable that parents' evenings this academic year are not going to follow the same format as previously. Further details will follow in due course, but I am just letting parents know in advance that these evenings will not be the 'norm', for example, you will not get to meet all your child's teachers.

### **Remote Learning and Passwords**

I understand that any self-isolation or partial lockdown [or national lockdown] will have an impact on your child. In essence, at very short notice your child may have to self-isolate. Because of this, it is important that pupils can access work remotely. All pupils should have passwords to the school system so that you can access work remotely if this scenario arises. If a password needs to be changed from home, there is guidance on the school website in the tab on the homepage called 'Online School'.

All Year 10 pupils should be accessing on-line materials this week and using the chat facility in an appropriate manner to communicate with their teachers. The expectation is that Year 10 pupils should be following their timetable as per the school day.

I apologise in advance if you get the phone call for your child to self-isolate. It goes against what St Damian's is all about, namely high attendance, face to face exceptional pastoral care and quality teaching in the classroom but these are strange and unprecedented times.

### **Prefects**

I am proud to say, finally, that many year 11 pupils were selected as Prefects for the upcoming academic year. This reflects the high standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning evident in this year group. All pupils who applied for the senior positions were a credit to themselves, their families, and the school and I was delighted in the manner they conducted themselves throughout the whole process. The Head Boy is George Ryan and the Head Girl is Susanna Shibu. Well done! But I also have to congratulate all the pupils who are prefects; they are all role models for the younger pupils and ambassadors for the school.

### **Year 11 – Post 16 Pathways & Personal Statements**

Following the Post 16 Pathways presentation on applying to college, apprenticeships, further training and T Levels, pupils have been given guidance on how to write a personal statement to support any application they may make in the future. Pupils are asked to submit a copy of their personal statement to their form tutor this

week and by Friday 2nd October 2020 at the latest. Careers appointments with Ms K. Patel are now taking place in school. Pupils may request an appointment by speaking to their form tutor.

### Careers Updates

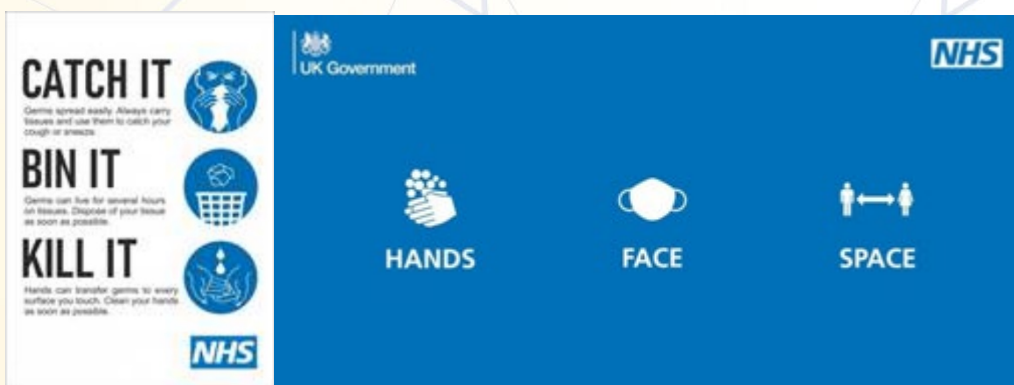
Careers updates will be added to the website regularly. Many opportunities are now being offered as virtual activities and can be accessed online from home. There is a tab on the school website called 'Careers Updates'. Information about virtual College Open Days can be found in this location. Please check the Careers Updates tab each week for the latest information.

### Macmillan Coffee Morning

As a proud Catholic school, we believe that raising funds for those who are vulnerable or in need is in our DNA. As you are probably aware, there has been a massive decrease in fund-raising opportunities for cancer. Therefore, it is more important than ever that we supported this coffee morning. I am delighted to say that we raised nearly **£1000**. This is a phenomenal amount and, in these hard times, shows the generosity of our community. A massive thanks to all the pupils, parents and staff who donated. And a big thanks to the newly formed Charity Committee for their thorough organisation.

### Safeguarding Update

Since school has reopened for the new academic year, our priority has been keeping both children and staff safe. We are following the Government guidelines on social distancing and reducing the risk of the spread of Covid-19. Although our children have been fantastic and adapted well, I ask if you would remind your child about the following 2 campaigns shown below.



The link below shows a short video that will help your child to understand the importance of following the simple guidance on how we can all protect ourselves

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=5IGqADEyxxw&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=5IGqADEyxxw&feature=emb_title)

### Statutory Consultation on School Admission Arrangements

St Damian's RC Science College is carrying out a consultation on the proposed admission arrangements for admission in September 2022. The consultation can be accessed from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020 using the following link: [www.stdamians.co.uk](http://www.stdamians.co.uk) The consultation includes:

- Proposed change in the wording to read: 'Education Health and Care Plan'.
- Proposed change in name of a designated parish to: 'The Parish of Holy Cross and St Helen, Ashton' (formally St Ann's and St Christopher's)

Any comments should be sent to Mrs E Jones, Chair of Governors, using the contact details in the web site above, by no later than Thursday 12th November 2020.

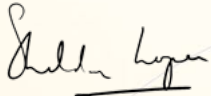
Finally, I started with good news and I will end with good news. Like our pupils, the staff at St Damian's have adjusted brilliantly to many changes and new ways of working. Many of these changes, for example, teaching in different rooms, is both challenging and tiring. I know, and trust, that they will continue to provide a caring and safe environment for your children. Please support us and I thank you for the dozens of positive messages.

I will leave you with this one, obviously with the name removed. I did speak to this parent of a child in Year 10 to ask if I could use what she e-mailed.

*"Thank you for the way you have handled things at this difficult time. I am very impressed with the measures that St Damian's have put in place to ensure the safety of our children whilst trying to get them back into the classroom. XXX was so happy to be back and we knew it would only be a matter of time before she was back to online learning! I appreciated the personal call from school to let us know what had happened ensuring XXX got home safely".*

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely



Mr Logue  
Headteacher