



29th January 2021

In all things faithful

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Headteacher

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

Dear Parent/Carer,

General Update

A warm welcome to my weekly update on all things St Damian's. We are now more than half way through this half term. So far, it has been successful but not ideal for either the pupils or the staff. Ideally all pupils should be attending school allowing us to do what we do best; educate your child and look after their well-being. As the weeks go by, it is crucial that we stay positive and pray that we all keep safe and that we can return to school as quickly and safely as possible.

Pupil Engagement

Pupil engagement on remote learning, form time events and Year group assemblies is paramount. Currently, teachers are awarding achievement points to pupils who are actively engaging with lessons and Heads of Year will be rewarding these pupils in a variety of ways. Pupils who excel with remote learning could even be selected for one of four extra special prizes which will be given away at the beginning of March. These prizes are Fire 7 Tablets. Watch this space...!

Remote learning: General

- *Live lessons and expectations.* I am extremely pleased and proud that all my teachers have embraced remote learning head on. As part of our expectations, all staff are expected to deliver live lessons at least for the beginning of the lesson. Up to now this has worked very well and the many emails from parents are testament to this. However, there may be occasions where teachers will not be able to do this. For example, teachers may have to self-isolate or be absent through sickness. I ask for your understanding if a live lesson does not take place. It will be for a valid reason. It is hoped that if this does occur, it will not be often or for long periods of time.
- *Expectations from parents.* I would like to take the opportunity to remind parents not to listen in the background. I am sure you will enjoy the lessons, but it is only fair on staff and those in the lessons if they are comfortable that others aren't listening in without them knowing. Please could I also remind parents that you must not contact the teachers via chat. This facility is for the **pupils only**. If you want to contact school, please do so through the normal channels. Furthermore, can I remind parents that only pupils are to access the lessons on TEAMS. This week a pupils account was used by a family member to interrupt a lesson and make immature comments. I will not tolerate this. If this does occur I will contact parents and **ban the child from joining live lessons**.

At this point, I must again congratulate the vast majority of our pupils who are, under difficult circumstances, logging in day after day and participating in their lessons. It makes me so proud.

Safeguarding: Children's Mental Health Week 1st - 7th February

Looking after the welfare of our great pupils is a key aspect of the St Damian's experience. In fact, as a community we aim to provide exceptional pastoral care as we believe that 'happy' children achieve. Next week is designated 'Children's Mental Health Week'. The mental well-being of our pupils, sadly, is becoming more prominent and the ongoing lockdowns do not help. We are committed to ensuring our pupils are supported during these challenging times and our Student Support Officers have put together a comprehensive range of activities that children can participate in each day. These will be promoted daily on our social media alongside positive affirmations each day.

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The Children's Mental Health Week website has a page devoted to parents and is worth exploring as a valuable resource. The web site is www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk. Additionally, I ask that you take some time to ask your child about how they feel and to discuss mental health openly with your child. I accept these conversations may be difficult, but it is important that you listen carefully, showing respect and patience as this will build trust and allow children to get the support that they may need.

On Friday 5th February, we will have an own clothes day for those pupils attending to mark this week's activities.

Year 9 and Options

Advance notice that our Year 9 Options programme will be launched after half term. This will include presentations by Subject Leaders on the range of GCSE & Vocational courses available, information on subject pathways and possible careers. In the meantime, Year 9 pupils should continue to work hard, respond to the feedback from their Formal Assessments and ensure that they are achieving well so that they can progress onto the courses of their choice.

Careers Update

'Connect2CollegeLive' is a series of live sessions being hosted by the Manchester College for schools. On Tuesday 9th February [11:00 – 11:30], 'An introduction to T Levels' will be broadcast for Yr9 -11 pupils which includes essential information on new post 16 qualifications and on Thursday 11th February [11:00 – 11:30], there is a session for Year 9 on 'Choosing your Options'. I ask that parents of pupils in Yr9 - 11 read the separate letter on the website and ensure that your child attends these sessions. There will be small changes to the timings of the school day to accommodate these live sessions.

Please look at the latest Careers bulletin in the 'Careers Update' tab on the website. This edition includes the latest information from colleges, a STEM competition for Yr7 - 9 pupils, STEM & Medical Sciences work experience & summer schools as well as apprenticeships information from providers such as the Utilities Industry, Highways England & British Telecom.

At St Damian's our careers guidance is extensive. Pupils who embrace all the various activities are more likely to understand the options post-16.

General Update

- *Year 11 phone calls.* This week, Miss Stoneley and I have been contacting parents where we believe there are serious concerns with regards to online learning, engagement with the work teachers set and a general poor attitude to learning.
- *Laptops.* I am sorry to say that we do not have laptops to give to all pupils. In the future, there may be more available from the Government. If this is the case, we will let parents know.
- *Maths teaching w/c 8th February.* In the final week of this half-term, Mr Khan is leaving, and we wish to thank him for his service. We have recruited a new teacher who begins after half term, but for this week only, the lessons will be uploaded to TEAMS. Thank you for your understanding and please support the school by ensuring that your child completes the work set. Pupils in the classes affected, will be informed.

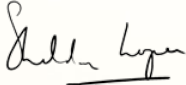
Finally,

There is much speculation about when pupils will return to school. On Wednesday, the Prime Minister stated that a return date to aim for was the 8th March. This was not a definite date and it may be phased. Initially, we were expecting pupils to return on the 22nd February. We are reviewing our provision constantly and further details, including parental input, will follow next week. I am a parent myself and

I have 2 children at home who are also learning remotely. Therefore, I am fully aware of all the issues around remote learning. Frankly, it is neither 'easy' nor 'desirable' but we are 'where we are'. The great staff and I want to fast forward and get the school back to normal as soon as it is practically safe to do so. And,

Take care and God bless!

Yours sincerely



Mr Logue
Headteacher