



1st June 2020

In all things faithful

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your children are still well and keeping safe in these strange times. Unfortunately, as time passes there seems to be no end in sight to the ongoing situation. The following letter contains some updates and information for your perusal.

School reopening

News coverage over the past few weeks has seen the *reopening* of schools' centre stage. After the announcement on Thursday 28th May it is pertinent for St Damian's to make tentative plans to re-admit more pupils to school this half term. This will be for **Year 10 pupils** only as per the Government guidance. I am expecting parents to have a range of views on whether it is safe yet to return their children to school. At this stage I would like to assure you that any plans made will be finely risk assessed, thorough and made available to parents to make judgements about sending their children to school. It is my intention to have this plan completed as soon as possible and I will communicate this plan with Year 10 parents when I have it finalised. However, this planning will not be without its challenges.

For pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 we will continue to have a fortnightly phone call to check-in. Also, Remote Learning recommences today for all pupils in Y7-10. Again, I have to reiterate that pupils should continue to attempt and complete work set by their classroom teachers.

School opening for key workers

You may not be aware, but the school has never closed for the children of key workers even during the 'holiday' breaks of Easter and last week's half term. As a school we will continue to provide this service to ensure that the children of key workers and vulnerable children have access to school if needed. Furthermore, there has been some tremendous work from the pastoral team at St Damian's which has never stopped over the past few difficult months.

Mrs Margaret MacKenzie, Foundation Governor

Sadly, I have to report the death of Mrs Margaret Mackenzie, a foundation governor at St Damian's. Margaret passed away after a short illness surrounded by her family. Margaret was a stalwart for St Damian's and has served the community for almost 20 years. Both her children, Robert and Andrew, attended St Damian's and it has always been close to her heart. Margaret was very positive and forward thinking in this role, and we were lucky to have such a talented and experienced governor. On a deeply personal level, Margaret was extremely supportive, highly honourable and her strong values meant that she always made decisions in the best interests of the children and she will be sadly missed.

Parental comments

On behalf of my great staff can I take this opportunity to thank you for the many positive comments regarding St Damian's from parents. At a time when there is end-to-end negative news on the teaching profession, positive comments are very welcome and greatly received. These are received via Facebook, Twitter, email and by word of mouth. A few weeks ago, it was '*National Thank a teacher day*' and I received an email from a parent. I asked the parent if I could share this [removing names of course] and it was a resounding yes. So, I will share it below:

"Today is National Thank a Teacher Day, so it seemed more than fitting to email the school and say not only thank you for all the ongoing hard work you do always, BUT what you are ALL currently doing

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in these very unprecedented times! During the lockdown St. Damian's has been amazing in what is certainly a new learning experience for us all. The teachers have been wonderful at keeping in touch, emailing work, keeping connected with our daughter 'X' via Microsoft teams. During such a time of uncertainty We can only say how much comfort and reassurance she has felt from all of the above. We too as parents have fully appreciated the regular updates, newsletters and phone calls home from your very caring staff!! So thank you very much for all you are doing, it is very much appreciated".

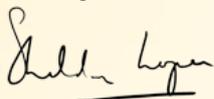
There are two messages that I want to get across. Firstly, the staff at St Damian's' appreciate these. It keeps up morale during this uncertain time and re-focuses our energy. Secondly, it reaffirms what we are doing must be working. As a school we don't always get it right and don't claim to get it always right. But what I can say with absolute certainty is that we are working very hard behind the scenes to ensure that we are doing 'our best' for our great children at St Damian's.

Brief Updates

- Y11 Applicants to Ashton Sixth Form College [ASFC]. ASFC are hosting their Admissions Q&A which will take place on Tuesday 2nd June at 3pm, via Zoom. Students will need to register to receive an invitation. Students are encouraged to access the Transition work and the E-Enrichment Brochure.
- Year 11 Grading process. This has now been completed and Quality Assured. This was not easy for teachers and leaders to do as there are some many factors to take into consideration.
- Year 11 phone calls. Over the next few weeks Year 11 Form Tutors will be ringing parents to 'touch base'. In normal times we would be half way through the exam season and this may be a difficult time for our great pupils in Year 11, most of whom worked extremely hard for their exams.
- Y10 Careers Interviews. Our Careers Adviser, Ms K. Patel, will be organising independent Careers Interviews for Y10 pupils this half term. Pupils will be sent a Careers Interview Preparation Booklet via Microsoft Teams/email. Pupils will need to complete this and be available to take the phone call at the given time which will last 20-30 minutes. The Careers interview will focus on post 16 options for college courses, apprenticeships and further training opportunities. Alternatively, If a pupil wishes to request a Careers appointment, they may email khyatipatel@positive-steps.org.uk
- Remote Learning Updates. Please ensure that learners check the website each week for the Remote Learning updates for pupils. These can be found under 'School Closure Work Resources'. This week's issue features advice and guidance from the Religious Education Department.
- School appeals. I have received information from Tameside LA that shows we have received a significant number of appeals for pupils to come to school in September. This shows that we are a very popular school and over-subscribed.

As always, I end by saying that please continue to take great care. Sooner or later we will emerge from these strange times ready to continue to be a strong community, united in ensuring that we provide a first-class education for your children. That is what they deserve.

Mr Logue



Headteacher