



In all things faithful

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Headteacher

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1st April 2021

Dear Parents

Well, quite simply, it's great to see our pupils back in school the past few weeks. Back to learning a high-quality academic curriculum in a caring environment. But its more than that. It is also great to see them back in a place where they can develop socially, emotionally and spiritually. Collectively, all of this meets our Mission, which is to develop the whole child. As expected, the vast majority of pupils have settled back well, eager to learn and follow our simple and transparent rules.

However, I apologise in advance if we have to send your child home if they have been identified as having to self-isolate. It is not a decision we take lightly, more so since they have only come back from an extended period of lockdown. But we do so for the safety of us all, pupils and staff. As I write this letter, both my children and I are in self-isolation, so I really do get the inconvenience this causes. But we have to keep positive and pray that there is an end to this.

Lent

This Sunday was Palm Sunday, the start of Holy Week. Form groups reverently reflected on The Stations of the Cross and what the actions of Jesus means for us today. KS3 classes participated in our reflective Holy Week drama, *'The Way of the Cross'*. This drama was performed by 7NML. Thanks to everyone who donated to our Lenten Charity Food Bank through sims pay. All proceeds will benefit the more vulnerable of our Community. Thanks for your generosity. During these tough times we pray for all those struggling. Jesus said to his disciples, *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"*. This past year we have all had our crosses to bear but we pray that this Easter will be a time for reflection and hope with our families.

Year 11

- Work rate and behaviour. I am delighted to say that the vast majority of pupils have returned to school with a positive attitude and are demonstrating resilience and maturity. Year 11 pupils need to continue to focus on their schoolwork both in school and at home. Time really is of the essence. However, there are a small number who are not working hard enough and this will, sadly, be reflected in their teacher assessed grades. Overall, behaviour is exceptional. However, again sadly, I have had to exclude a small number of Year 11 pupils because of their behaviour. This is disappointing.
- Hoodies. We will be organising 'leavers hoodies' for Year 11 pupils soon and details will follow. Each year, these are always well received. As they near the end of their journey at St Damian's the hoodies will be a reminder of the class of 2021! Although it hasn't been ideal, we must ensure that the next few months are productive and highly memorable for your children, hopefully culminating in a 'party' late June. More details will follow.
- Attendance. During the first week back attendance was very high in this year group. However, on Friday 26th March **13 pupils** in this year group were off, none through self-isolation. I know there may be valid reasons for these absences, but can I ask that parents make very single effort to send

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their child to school in the summer term. If they are not in school, then the teacher may not be able to award the grades they could have received.

- The school has received some guidance from Ofqual and JCQ to help support us in determining grades this year but we still await additional information from the exam boards. This may not be available until after Easter. However, the mantra is still *'work hard and follow your teachers' instructions in all classes'*.

Year 10 Updates

- **Work experience.** This will take place in the final week of this academic year from Monday 12th to Friday 16th July. Pupils will be able to secure self-placements or alternatively attend the virtual work experience provision in school. Both are excellent opportunities for personal development and a deeper understanding of the range of skills needed for the workplace. Mrs Henshaw will provide more details as and when necessary.
- **Targeted intervention.** This will start on the week commencing Monday 19th April which is after the Easter break. This will consist of a timetable of subjects after school and there will also be some opportunities pre-school. Attendance will be by invitation and I ask that parents support the school if your child has been chosen to attend.
- **Expectations.** On a more general note, Year 10 pupils are now expected to be doing at least 2 hours independent study each evening as they approach this important time in their courses. Homework and regular revision are two key ingredients for exam success in the future. From experience, pupils that work consistently achieve! GCSE outcomes are an important aspect of your child's education here at St Damian's and they open up many opportunities for their futures.
- **Year 10 SLT phone calls.** Last week Year 10 reports went home to parents. For selected pupils, these will be followed up by phone calls from senior staff w/c 19th April. Conversations will address concerns and identify specific areas where pupils need to make rapid improvements. Advice will also be given on how to prepare well for the Year 10 mock examinations. These phone calls are supportive in nature to ensure we quickly address underachievement.
- **Changes to form groups.** After Easter there will changes to Year 10 form groups to facilitate the introduction of *'Key to Success'* groups. These forms will be run by English & Maths teachers and their aim is that pupils will benefit from expert tuition alongside high quality pastoral care so that they can maximise their grades.
- **Year 10 Prefect applications:** I am really impressed with the quality of prefect applications that I have received. Reading about the sense of pride that our pupils have about being a member of our school community brings a smile to my face. Short listing for Head Boy/Head Girl has now begun and interviews will take place week commencing 26th April. Good luck to all those that have applied. Miss Joyce and I always have difficulty in choosing from such an exceptional field of potential candidates.

Key Stage Three updates

- **Year 9.** The options process is now well underway. Subject leaders have delivered presentations outlining key information so that pupils can make informed choices about their GCSE options. I am delighted that many Year 9 pupils have high aspirations, and this aligns with the aspirations of their teachers. Well done to the vast majority of pupils who met the deadline last week.

- Year 8. Exams will take place week commencing Monday 26th April. Pupils have received subject revision lists and information on how to revise effectively in lessons. I ask that parents ensure your children are learning the curriculum content that they have been studying since September so that they are well prepared for their exams.
- Year 7. Well done to Year 7! I was impressed with the mature manner in which Year 7 conducted themselves during their recent Formal Assessments. Pupils prepared themselves well, worked hard during revision sessions and adapted well to the formal environment in which the assessments took place. Pupils will hopefully get just recognition for their efforts when they receive their results. I look forward to hearing about their successes. Please pass on that my staff and I are really proud of them. This bodes well for the future. Following the formal assessments there will be changes to form Groups after Easter. Pupils will be notified on the first day back.

Safeguarding

As Easter holiday approaches, once again children will be away from school and the potential of from our Student Support Officers. Self-harm is a growing concern across the UK and we all must understand that no child is immune to this issue. The 'No Harm Done' project provides information for both parents and young people to understand how to support each other and get the right help.

Parents: https://youngminds.org.uk/media/1209/no_harm_done_parents_pack.pdf

Children: https://youngminds.org.uk/media/1211/no_harm_done_young_peoples_pack.pdf

If you are concerned about your child's mental health seek advice immediately by contacting your GP or using online advice from www.kooth.com or www.mind.org.uk.

A message to all our pupils

I respectfully ask that parents pass on to your children that it has been a pleasure to see them return to school in such a positive manner. They have returned with enthusiasm, ready to engage in their learning and have done so with a big smile. Their behaviour whilst we conducted Mass testing was simply sensational. This example simply reflects the high standards that they have. For the avoidance of doubt, we love your children and will work tirelessly to ensure that they continue to love St Damian's.

...And a simple message to the parents

Thank you for the overwhelming support that you have shown over the past year. It is humbling to read the number of emails that you send to the school commenting so positively about how the school has both educated and cared for your children. These comments run into the hundreds. I hope that over the next few months and years that we repay your support in ensuring that your children achieve well and leave St Damian's instilled with values that they have witnessed at here. Having said that, we are not perfect. Mistakes and misunderstandings do occur and for that I apologise and take full responsibility. Thankfully, this is rare.

Another great accolade...

We are delighted to announce that our Head Girl, Susanna Shibu, was nominated for the 'High Sheriff award' of Greater Manchester due to her fantastic service and commitment to community engagement. Susanna had volunteered as a swimming coach, played the guitar and piano in charity concerts and supported her local parish in various community events. Susanna was presented with a 'Highly commended' award and prize in recognition of her achievements. We are extremely proud of Susanna and everything she has accomplished. Well done Susanna! Service to others is a key value within our Community.

Well done!

At St Damian's, celebration is at the heart of our ethos. During lockdown, our pupils rose to the challenges that remote learning posed and staff rewarding their efforts by awarding them with Achievement points. The top 10 pupils in each year group were then entered into a 'Prize Draw' to win one of four 'Fire-tablets'. Congratulations to the following pupils who were chosen at random: Diya Patel (Y11), Faith Milligan (Y10), Bobby Ebbell (Y9) & Alex Carter (Y8). A big well done!

Governor update

- New foundation Governor. For many years now St Damian's has continued to be a strong and united Governing Body, led by Mrs Jones. Recently, Mrs K Connor has been appointed as a new Foundation Governor. She brings a wealth of experience to the role and understands the school as she was previously a Parent Governor at the school for the past 5 years. Furthermore, working for the NHS Pennine Care Foundation Trust ensures that she has experiences in Safeguarding and Mental Health issues which will be invaluable. Mrs Connor says that she is looking forward to continuing working on behalf of the school and said, *"The Governing Body, Staff, Head teacher and pupils are amazing, and St Damian's would not be the school it is without them all"*. I look forward to working with Mrs Connor to ensure St Damian's continues to be an outstanding Community.
- Parent Governor Vacancy. With the appointment of Mrs Connor as a Foundation Governor there is now a vacancy for a Parent Governor to serve on the school's Governing Body. Nominations are welcome for parents to apply for this very important role. Becoming a St Damian's Parent Governor is important because you will be involved in making decisions about many aspects of the school's life, and it is vital that parents' views are represented at Governing Body meetings. Further details and the nomination form can be found on our website; <https://www.stdamians.co.uk/governors>

Covid update

Sadly, we continue to get positive tests in the school, and this means that identified pupils will have to self-isolate. I apologise in advance but if your child has been identified please follow the instructions of my staff and collect your child from school. Then follow the National guidelines which is to self-isolate for ten days. Furthermore, if your child tests positive please let the school know as quickly as possible so that we can react and protect other children in school. Key messages from the Department for Education [DfE] are below:

- Test twice a week at home
- Report results: positive, negative or void. This information is critical in helping us to understand the prevalence of the virus across the country. Online this is done through www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result or text message the school on our dedicated COVID-19 number **07507332277**
- Continue to test twice weekly over the Easter holidays
- Test before returning to school for the summer term, either the night before, or morning of, the first day back to find and isolate any positive cases

Thanks in advance for your co-operation in the above.

Car park

We have an exceptionally busy car park and as such we want to create a safer environment for our pupils as they arrive and leave school. Please help us create a school where children's safety outside school is a greater priority than convenient parking that can put children's safety at risk. The parking bays are limited and therefore for staff only. Furthermore, some parents are jumping the red lights

and parking inappropriately and the buses can't travel freely. Parents should avoid using the car park if possible, but if you do use it, please do not park. Please be considerate to others.

Fund-raising

Sadly, the ongoing Covid scenario is not the only sad news that has had an impact upon our Community over the past few months. Several of our staff have developed cancer and as a Community we want to raise money for Cancer related charities. As part of our fund-raising efforts we are planning, as a Community, to enter for the Manchester 10k run in September. Although this seems a long time away, we are hoping to launch more details regarding this in due course so that we can maximise fund raising efforts.

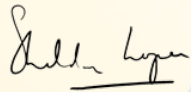
Finally...

Last week, Tuesday 23rd March marked the anniversary of the first national lockdown. Unfortunately, as a community we have all been affected by this global pandemic in one way or another. We felt it was right to take a moment; collectively as a school, to reflect over the last 12 months and pray for those loved ones we have lost and those who are mourning them. A short prayer and reflection were read out at 12 o'clock by our Head Boy and Girl and as usual, our fantastic pupils did this with maturity and reverence. We continue to keep all those who have lost someone in our prayers.

I will finish with a short but reflective prayer, selected by Mrs Gerschler, as we break up for Easter.

**"May the risen Christ fill your heart with joy, bring you new hope, and bless you with peace.
Amen"**

Have a holy and happy Easter!



Mr Logue
Headteacher