



In all things faithful

St Damian's RC Science College

Lees Road
Ashton-under-Lyne
OL6 8BH

Tel: 0161 330 5974

Fax: 0161 331 4744

Email: admin@stdamians.co.uk

Web: <http://www.stdamians.co.uk/>

Follow us on Twitter: @StDamiansRCSC

Find us on Facebook

Headteacher

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

24th August 2020

Re: School re-opening plans for September 2020

Dear parents/carers,

I write to update you with regards to the plans to fully re-open in September and to share vital information to help your child prepare for a return to school. Before I share the plans, I have to say that all the staff here at St Damian's are really excited about pupils returning to school and we all look forward to welcoming them back.

We all know that returning to school is the best course of action for their general well-being and their social and academic development. However, parents and pupils must accept that this return will not be 'normal'. There will be many changes that have had to be made to ensure that the community of St Damian's is safe. Having said that, the Senior Leadership Team have been thoroughly planning and preparing for this eventuality over the past few months. Furthermore, all staff; support staff, teachers, and leaders have risen to the ongoing situation, embraced the changes and faced all the massive challenges that have been presented to us in a professional manner. As you will be aware now, guidance changes very quickly and hence the following is correct at the time of writing but may change at short notice if National Guidelines dictate.

The following outlines major changes from September. I am conscious that there is a lot of information below, but I have tried to be as succinct as possible. I anticipate that these changes will quickly become the norm for both pupils and staff as the term progresses.

Starting dates & school INSET days

As explained in the letter dated 13th July, there will be a subtle difference to the start of the year to aid the return of our pupils. Both Tuesday 1st and Wednesday 2nd September will be INSET days and **closed** for all pupils. Thursday 3rd September will be open **only** for Year 7 and Year 11 pupils. **All** pupils in all year groups will be welcomed back on Friday 4th September.

Form groups & pupil groupings

This will be different from what pupils [and indeed teachers] are used to. In essence, teaching groups will be based on form groups. This allows us to minimise contact with other year groups as well as ensuring less movement around the school. Furthermore, due to guidance around health and safety restrictions, we will be looking at the **size** of pupil groupings and most teaching groups **will** see a reduction in their numbers to accommodate safety and appropriate distancing within the classroom. I hope that you appreciate that these decisions have been made to ensure the safety of both your children and the staff.

Creation of 'Zones' to minimise the risk of transmission

For at *least* the first half term, but possibly/probably longer, pupils in all years will be placed into 'zones', and at KS3, in the same classroom for the vast majority of the time. These will be clearly explained to the pupils in September. I expect that after a few days, pupils will become accustomed to these new arrangements.

Curriculum Provision

At St Damian's we pride ourselves on delivering a strong academic curriculum. As a school we make no apology for doing so and our consistently high pupil outcomes are testimony to the high-quality teaching of this curriculum. However, some aspects of the curriculum will have to be curtailed for the foreseeable future. As a school we will aim to keep this to a minimum and for the vast majority of the curriculum, pupils will not

notice much difference. Like all the changes we plan to implement, we will review as soon as possible or when new National Guidance comes out.

Times of the day

The times of the day have changed slightly. Pupils will need to be in school at 9am as usual but will be finishing 15 minutes earlier at 3.10. Due to social distancing and keeping safe there will also be staggered breaks and staggered lunches. This will continue for as long as necessary. Additionally, pupils will leave the school at the end of the day in a staggered manner over a period of 10 minutes which will effectively be a controlled 'exit' from the building to ensure that we social distance as much as possible. Again, I hope that parents understand that the rationale behind this is based solely on safety and to minimise the risk of transmission.

Catering provision

In terms of catering, there will be differences that I have listed below:

- The menu will be condensed but there will still be choice of a hot meal each day
- Fish and Chips on a Friday will not be initially available, but will be reviewed
- Breakfast will not be served as school will not be opening until 8.40am so children do not mix
- Children entitled to Free School Meals will still be able to receive a hot meal
- We advise you send your child with a packed lunch
- Water fountains will be temporarily out of use

All the above will be reviewed at the appropriate time

It is important to note that during staggered lunch times staff will be monitoring social distancing. Pupils who repeatedly or defiantly 'ignore' reasonable instructions from staff will be dealt with accordingly.

Changes to our behavioural policy

Our high standards in terms of behaviour and expectations, as you would expect, will remain. Overwhelmingly, the vast majority of pupils are well behaved and indeed, are very proud ambassadors for the school. As I said in the letter dated 13th July, our continued success will depend upon our great pupils behaving in a safe manner. I fully expect that our amazing pupils will show great levels of maturity and respect when they return in September. I ask that parents, who have always overwhelmingly supported the 5 simple rules, continue to do so. Working together at all times, but more so during this pandemic, will only benefit your children. I am hoping that it will not be necessary, but I and my staff, will enforce the rules for the greater good of the community. The updated policy will be on the web site.

Uniform

As I have always said, pupils who attend St Damian's are ambassadors for the school. One of the most outwardly signs of being proud of attending St Damian's is the uniform. The guidance from the Department for Education [updated 7th August] says that "**Uniforms do not need to be cleaned any more often than usual, nor do they need to be cleaned using methods which are different from normal**". It is important that your child attends school every day in the correct uniform. This is to maintain standards and high expectations. However, as a result of the ongoing situation, the school is not in a position to 'loan' out parts of the uniform, for example ties.

Stationery shop

At St Damian's, all pupils are expected to be fully equipped for learning with the equipment that they need for each lesson. This is more important than ever as we cannot lend out any equipment. Essential stationery items can be purchased online using sims pay and pupils can collect their orders from the school office. More details are on the school website.

Buses

I have been informed that school bus services will be running. However, if your child is able to use an alternative form of transport this would alleviate pressure on the school buses. Transport for Greater Manchester have said that there is no requirement for social distancing restrictions to be enforced on school

bus services, but for children over 11 it compulsory to wear a mask on public transport, including school bus. When boarding the bus pupils are requested to fill the seats from the back, and pupils should remain in their seats until they reach school. It is more important than ever that pupils either have the correct money, a daily/weekly ticket or a bus pass. Can I ask that you impress the importance of good behaviour on the school bus. Pupils who repeatedly misbehave on the school buses will not be permitted to travel on them.

Prefects

Being a prefect is an honour and an important role at St Damian's. It is just recognition that they work hard in lessons, have worked hard during lockdown, have high attendance and are well behaved throughout the school. Year 11 blue and black-tie prefects will be given their ties on Friday 4th September. If pupils didn't receive a prefect tie, there will be other opportunities to receive one. Prefect selection will be reviewed during the first half term to recognise the efforts of pupils who have made a positive effort at the start of Year 11. For the prestigious Head Boy and Head Girl roles, an interview will take place in the first few weeks of September. The pupils will be notified.

Pupil well being

I appreciate that pupils will be coming back to St Damian's having missed out on a significant amount of education. This is the stark reality. However, the first priority of returning to school is to ensure pupils well-being. Different pupils will have had different experiences of not being in school. We have specially trained staff in school to ensure that the well-being of pupils is paramount. They will be able to advise and signpost pupils and parents to the correct specialist help whilst also encouraging pupils to carry out self-help so that they feel confident and able to embark on their learning

Risk Assessment [RA]

I appreciate that some parents may be anxious about their children returning to school. Although it is not possible to say that returning to school is 100% safe [the simple fact is that nowhere is 100% safe] we have carried out a comprehensive RA. As an extra precautionary measure, the Local authority have 'checked' this RA. This is a statutory requirement and our RA will be kept under review (at least every two weeks) to take into account any new Government guidance. The LA are satisfied that our RA has reviewed each area, highlighted actions and put control measures in place to minimise the level of risk, in order to create a safe environment.

Year 11 GCSE exams 2021

At the time of writing, it is expected that the class of 2021 [Pupils commencing Year 11 in September 2020] will be sitting their GCSE exams in May/June 2021. This will be a very anxious time for them as they will have missed months of education and a lot of subject content. My staff and I appreciate that this is not an ideal situation and we will be very mindful of added pupil stress. However, I must make a few points here.

- Massive amounts of 'intervention' is not the best way to proceed. This simply adds stress to pupils and staff at an already difficult time. Intervention will be planned and importantly, proportionate. In the first half term our aims are to get pupils *i]* used to the new routines *ii]* engaged in their learning *iii]* get to know the gaps in their knowledge and importantly *iv]* prioritise their well-being. If we can achieve those, then the focus on pupils' academic progress will be more meaningful.
- There is still adequate time, despite missing out on so much. This key message is vital, and we will convey this to pupils at every opportunity. However, to maximise their chances of reaching their potential, pupils must start working hard from the first week back. From many years' experience I can state unequivocally that those that work steadily from September with a clear revision plan are the pupils who excel in their exams. The year ahead is a marathon, not a sprint and starting early is the key to success.
- As parents, you must convey the 'right' messages to your child. A child with a positive attitude will always do better. As a school we will continue to promote our unofficial motto of 'Believe to Achieve'. I ask that you instil this in your child through encouragement and focusing on the end goal. In essence, do not underestimate the importance of positive encouragement right from September. If you feel they are

stressed please contact their form tutor in the first instance. Ms Stoneley, as Head of Year 11, and I will also be available.

A quick message for parents of Year 7

Sadly, the transition day did not proceed as previous years. This day was to allow pupils the opportunity to experience St Damian's. However, I can promise that the Year 7 pupil will soon adjust to the new environment. We are a caring community where pupils are loved. My advice is to reassure them [and you as a parent 😊] not to worry. We have great staff and are well experienced in overcoming any issues that arise.

Attendance

St Damian's pupil attendance at school has always been consistently high. This is a great indicator that they love the school. The guidance on attendance from September is clear; it is mandatory for all pupils unless you are unwell or self-isolating due to having symptoms of Covid. Where pupils have symptoms, we will endeavour to provide education remotely.

Covid specific messages

At all times you must follow National Guidelines. Although the school is re-opening, the risks are still here and real. The above outlines the changes we are having to make but they are proportionate to allow the reopening of the school to all pupils. In order to ensure safety can I ask parents to note the following. These are essential actions to reduce the risk in school and further drive down transmission of Covid-19:

- ✓ If a pupil presents with symptoms *at home*, please do not send to school. Follow 'Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection', self-isolate for at least 10 days and get a test. Other members of the household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms
- ✓ If a pupil is asked by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate, please follow the guidelines given, contact school and let us know
- ✓ If a pupil presents with symptoms *in school*, they will be isolated, and we will ask you to collect and follow the guidelines given above
- ✓ If a pupil is tested, please inform the school of the outcome ASAP to ensure that the correct procedures are carried out for our school community
- ✓ If someone in your household presents with symptoms, please contact school and let us know
- ✓ If a positive Covid19 test result is present in school, members of that bubble will be notified the local health protection team will provide definitive advice on who must be sent home. This advice will be adhered to by the school.

We have

- Rearranged classrooms to ensure maximum space and to allow a 2m distance rule from teachers
- Extra hand washing facilities have been deployed throughout the school
- Enhanced cleaning will be undertaken throughout the school day
- Organised assemblies so that pupils continue to experience collective worship whilst not mixing

The above is necessary to ensure the safety of everyone in school. If there is a local lockdown or indeed any other 'issue' that affects the St Damian's, then we will contact parents via text message that is likely to refer you to a letter on the website.

A message from Chair of Governors, Mrs E Jones

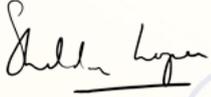
I am pleased that we are welcoming all our pupils back to school in September. As a school Community we have strictly followed all the National Guidelines to ensure the safety of our pupils and staff in these strange times. As Chair, I appreciate that there are many changes and indeed unknowns, but I believe that we have a duty to re-open the school for our great children. I look forward to a different year and pray that in the weeks and months ahead we are all safe and that we are doing what we do best; that is providing a safe environment where are pupils achieve a first class education.

Finally...

I am genuinely delighted that we are opening the doors for all our pupils. All the staff are *'fired up and ready to go'*. Although it will not be 'as we know it' and we all have to accept that it is unprecedented and there will be massive changes I have no doubt that the new routines will quickly become accepted by the pupils, and ultimately become embedded. At this crucial juncture, I ask you to pray that all our community will be safe. I look forward to continuing to work with you in the weeks ahead. I have no doubt there will be challenges, but equally, I have no doubt that they will be overcome.

I will write again in a few weeks with an update.

Mr Logue



Headteacher

St. Damian's RC Science College