



26th February 2021

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Headteacher

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

Dear Parent/Carer,

General Update

It has been another eventful week at St Damian's but at last we have got the news that we have been waiting for. On Monday it was announced that pupils are to return to school **from 8th March**. The return of pupils is likely to be phased so that we can administer the testing required. I will be sending out a letter on **Tuesday 2nd March** around midday that outlines the details for this return. This letter will need to be read very carefully. However, in the interim, it is important that pupils continue to engage in the remote learning until they return. My staff and I are delighted that pupils will be returning very soon and we will be planning carefully behind the scenes for a successful re-integration to school.

Lent

We are now in the period of Lent, a time for reflection. The Gospel talks about temptation and for Catholics, when it comes to temptation, we have to ask ourselves if our daily decisions will bring us nearer to God or take us further away? As a community, we pray that during these testing times we are developing strength so that when we are reunited as a community we are stronger and more resilient.

During Lent I am sure that keeping our Lenten Promises and giving up our little treats and luxuries has been a challenge at times. I have given up the three Cs for Lent: Crisps, Cheese and Chocolate. However, I am aware that some of our families are struggling. This Lent I ask that you support our St Damian's Foodbank. By giving up something you enjoy and donating the money to our St Damian's Foodbank you can make a real difference to the local community. Please tell friends and families about this great cause. All donations can be made through SIMS Pay.

School Return

We now know that pupils will return from 8th March. This is great news for your children and the wider St Damian's community. Face to face learning in a safe positive environment is what your child deserves. In the letter on Tuesday, I will outline a few reminders to ensure that this return to school is safe for all. However, may I remind parents that Covid has seriously affected some members of staff. As Headteacher, I will not compromise on the safety of my staff at any time. ALL pupils are expected to follow these simple but fair rules.

Rapid Lateral Flow Testing Consent

This continues to take place, with the sole aim to safeguard ALL in our community. This is NOT a medical procedure. We have been conducting these tests since the beginning of January and there have been NO issues at all. There is no real reason why all pupils can't undergo this test. To ensure a smooth running of the testing process when students return to school, I ask that you complete your child's consent **before** returning to school w/c 8th March 2021. There are two simple steps to this process;

- **Step 1:** You will receive a TEXT message from 07507332277 which directs you to an online consent form. Please save this number in your phone for future notifications from us.
- **Step 2:** Once you have completed the form online you **MUST respond to the TEXT message** with either 'YES' or 'NO' to activate your preference.

It is as simple as that!

NB: Please see our Privacy Statement on our website www.stdamians.co.uk on how we process your information in line with GDPR.

Building Pupil Confidence...

One of our major objectives for the return to school is to re-engage all our pupils. We will do so in a measured and proportionate approach. But it will not involve massive intervention or catch-up, that simply puts added pressures and anxieties on both pupils and staff. What it will involve is re-establishing the positive relationships based on respect that St Damian's is renowned for, and delivering high quality teaching.

Furthermore, we aim to build confidence and promote leadership opportunities in our pupils by the following;

- Year 10 prefects. During remote learning, year 10 pupils have been asked to draft their letter of application to become a prefect. It is an honour to be a prefect at St Damian's and they are outstanding ambassadors for the St Damian's community.
- Pupil Learning Forum [PLF]. As part of their remit to improve pupils' learning experiences, our year 9 PLF will be asking KS3 pupils 'What do they think helps them to engage with their learning?'. They will then share their findings with teachers and pupils to support with their re-engagement.
- Form Captains. Forms in Years 7 - 10 will be re-electing their Form/Vice Captains. A massive 95% of pupils who experienced this leadership opportunity last term said they had enjoyed this role and 89% felt they had developed confidence and resilience as a result of taking on the role of a pupil leader. This is a great opportunity to develop skills for the future.

National Careers Week

The National Careers Week will take place 1st - 5th March 2021. As you would expect St Damian's is planning a comprehensive programme of activities during this week. This year, activities will take place via virtual events on Teams. Pupils will be given an update on Labour Market Information with a particular focus on changes to the job market as a result of Covid. Yr.9 and Yr.10 pupils are asked to get involved in a form competition to develop entrepreneurship and project management skills where they can contribute to ideas on how to 'Build Back Better'. Pupils will also learn about career opportunities across the curriculum. The final programme for pupils will be published on Teams.

Year 11 and Exams Consultation

The details on this years' 'GCSE examinations', at the time of writing, have not been published. However, I am expecting it imminently. I am hoping that I will be able to share any details with parents as soon as possible. Rest assured that as soon as we receive the information, leaders will be working hard behind the scenes to ensure that your child gets the grades they deserve.

I know that I keep reiterating this, but it is absolutely crucial that your child continues to work hard over the next few months. Yes, there is another week of remote learning but attendance at all live lessons, engaging fully and persevering is important. This continued effort will have an impact on the final grades they are awarded.

More Great News Regarding Oxbridge

A few weeks ago I announced that our ex Headboy, Oliver Cooney, was given an offer to study Linguistics at St John's College, Cambridge. I am now delighted to report that Katrina Nabukenya, a Year 10 pupil, has been accepted on the Year 10 Course Target Oxbridge course with Trinity College, Cambridge. This is a real personal achievement for her and again demonstrates that St Damian's mantra, 'Believe to Achieve' is alive and well. We wish Katrina the best of luck in this venture.

Year 9 Options Process

At St Damian's, our Options programme started in earnest on Wednesday with the launch of the Year 9 options through a Teams assembly. The options process will continue over the next few weeks and pupils must attend the Options programme being delivered each Wednesday at 9am in assembly time. Subject Leaders will present options choices and the Options Presentation for parents will be released on Monday 8th March. Individual queries will be answered on Options Evening which will be held on

Thursday 11th March 3.30pm - 6:00pm in the form of telephone consultations. I ask parents of Year 9 pupils to note all these dates.

Year 9 Options Presentation by The Manchester College

I was delighted by the feedback following the webinar on Yr.9 Options on Thursday 11th February. One pupil stated '*Don't choose options because your friends are choosing them or because of a teacher. Pick what's best for me. No GCSE goes to waste but pick something you think you might do in later life*'. I would echo this sentiment as choosing the correct option subjects are crucial for the future. Well done Year 9 for being so mature in your approach to your GCSEs.

Y7 Formal Assessments

Year 7 pupils have received subject revision lists and information about how to prepare for their forthcoming Formal Assessments w/c 15th March. Lessons over the next couple of weeks will include guidance on how to revise effectively. It is important that Yr.7 pupils get into good study routines and complete the work required so that they are well prepared for the assessments.

Finally...

This week was Year 7 Parents' Evening. Having spoken to staff regarding parental feedback it was obvious that support for the school is overwhelming. That is great to hear as it is what your children deserve. Here is an example of an e-mail I received this week. I have asked the parent's permission to share this.

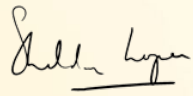
"Just to say a big thank you to the staff of St Damian's. Our daughter, XX, joined St Damian's in September. We were a little worried, because her best friend was going to another school, and we were nervous as to how she would find school without her.

Now as parents, we couldn't be happier. XX is being challenged brilliantly in class. She loves the learning and lessons set, has made lots of friends and loves school. She is so happy to be returning soon. Thank you very much to everyone, for helping her to flourish. 😊 Kind regards

My staff and I love the positive support and enthusiasm from parents. It lifts our spirits and spurs us on to continue to do great things for your children. They are very much appreciated!

Take care and God bless!

Yours sincerely



Mr Logue

Headteacher