

## Re: Easter Message

Dear Parents/Carers

As we begin our Easter holiday and as we approach Holy Week, this most important festival in the Christian calendar, I wish you and your families a safe, happy and restful break.

This Easter break is, of course, an exceptional situation, in which our families are living in self-isolation and in which, on those few necessary occasions that we leave our homes, we are ensuring safe 'social distancing'. We are all learning to live with these new routines, as well as also learning to live with great uncertainty and anxiety. At this special time of year, we remember God's love for his people and the shining light of Christ. This message of love, hope and renewal has special relevance and meaning this year and will, I hope, give us strength as we face together the coming weeks.

I would like to thank all parents and carers for working with us in these unprecedented circumstances and doing your best to provide the necessary support needed to allow your children to engage with our Home Study programme. The feedback we have received from you has done much to enable us to develop our practice and guidance quickly, whilst your many messages of support for all that our teachers and support staff do, and are continuing to do, especially in these testing and challenging times, have been truly heartwarming to read. I have shared all of these messages with staff and I have to say that it has given them a real boost to know that their efforts and hard work are being acknowledged and appreciated.

It is important therefore that you know that your messages have really helped everyone in our community, but especially our teachers who are working so hard from home (and in some cases, in school), ensuring that your child continues to learn and make progress, in spite of the school being closed for most students.

### **Home Study over the Easter Holidays and beyond**

Tomorrow is the first day of the Easter holidays, and it is time for us all to take a break and to rest. As mentioned in my letter to you earlier this week our expectation for pupil work over the Easter break is as follows: -

- The only work set for KS3 pupils over the Easter period will be enrichment-type opportunities. For KS4 & KS5 students, unless external coursework deadlines need to be met, each subject will set just one piece of work over these two weeks.

It is vital that our students have a different experience over these next two weeks with regards to work as opposed to these past two weeks. We need to acknowledge that they too are coming to terms with the situation that we find ourselves in and, even though children generally adjust quicker than adults, they need to switch off from their school work for a while and do their best to enjoy these next two weeks.



At this moment in time, we anticipate that the physical school will continue to be closed when the new term starts, apart from our on-going provision for the most vulnerable children and children of key workers. From Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April, teachers will continue to provide learning on-line. Please note that we are actively looking at ways to improve this provision as we move in to Terms 5 and 6. I am well aware that some staff are already trialing virtual platforms with some of their groups, and it may be that these platforms could be utilized at some point in the future to deliver home learning to a great number of our classes. Additionally, other resources are becoming available too; for instance the BBC is expanding its Bitesize website and they are also looking to broadcast more educational programmes on its iPlayer and Red Button. St John's will continue to do our very best to embrace these technologies and do what we can to support our pupils' education as we continue to work remotely. We will, of course, keep you fully updated on all developments.

### **Safeguarding and other urgent concerns over Easter**

Keeping our pupils safe remains our utmost priority over the holiday period. Firstly, whilst it may prove difficult at times, it is vital that everyone continues to follow the government guidance to self-isolate at home, only leaving the house for essential reasons, such as work, a weekly shop or up to one hour's exercise each day. Even when doing these activities, you and your child should be minimising time spent outside of the home and ensuring a distance of 2 metres apart from anyone outside of your household.

Only by everyone following these essential guidelines can we help contain the spread of Coronavirus and reduce the demands on the NHS.

If there is an **urgent** need to contact a senior member of staff about a safeguarding issue during the Easter break, our Designated Safeguarding Lead is Mrs Kelham and her email address is [okelham@stj.kent.sch.uk](mailto:okelham@stj.kent.sch.uk).

We also know that, during these unprecedented times, there may well be people who will need additional support that the school is unable to provide. Below is a list of outside agencies that may be of benefit to you.

- Chat health text service – 07520618850 – text only service that is monitored Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm by School Health Service Kent
- Childline – 08001111 – [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- Children's and young people's mental health service – 03001234496 – Providing emotional and mental health support for children and young people.
- Citizen's Advice Bureau – 03003309001
- Dartford Early Help – 03000421542
- Gravesham Early Help – 03000413991
- Kent safeguarding Children's board, The front door team – 03000411111
- KOOTH – [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com) – Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people, online until 10pm.
- Medway social care services – 01634 334466



- National Self-harm Network – 0800622600 – 7pm to 11pm
- NSPCC – 0808800500
- Out of hours emergency line Kent and Medway – 03000419191
- Samaritans – 0845790909 – [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Young Minds - 02070895050 – [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

If you are struggling mentally through isolation or anxiety over the current situation, the NHS's Every Mind Matters website has useful advice to help you through. You can find it at <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

### **Examinations update**

The government today released the very latest information regarding how GCSE, AS and A Level grades will be awarded this summer: - the information can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/how-gcses-as-a-levels-will-be-awarded-in-summer-2020>

We will be writing to the parents of all those pupils who were due to undertake public examinations in due course, with regards to predicted grades and the awarding of examination results this summer.

I realise that the school has been writing a number of letters to you recently – many apologies if you are feeling somewhat bombarded with all of this information. However, from our point of view, circumstances are changing so quickly that we feel it is only right to do our best to keep you fully informed of all developments. Rest assured, we will only write to you if we feel it necessary.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all parents, carers, students and staff a restful, holy and safe Easter holiday; God bless you all.

Yours sincerely

Matt Barron  
Headteacher

