



**RE: School's Response to Current Guidance on Safe Return to School**

Dear Parents/Carers and Pupils

I hope that this letter finds you well and coping with the different demands at this most difficult of times. Following recent government announcements on the safe return to school and the wide media coverage of this issue, I feel it would be beneficial to try and navigate some of the possibilities regarding school life before September 2020.

Firstly, in the government's 50-page document about 'step one', it is stated that there will be 'no full opening of schools'. The government want to encourage more vulnerable children and key workers' children to return to work. From 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020, if all conditions are right, Years 10 and 12 should be reintroduced to School in order to spend some time with their teachers in support of their home schooling.

Whilst the situation may well change over the next few weeks, the consequences of the above statements mean it is likely that

- Years 7-9 will not return to school before September 2020 at the earliest; they will continue to receive home schooling with lessons provided by teaching staff and assisted by support staff. Pastoral teams will continue to support their cohorts and particularly those in need.
- Year 10 will not come together as a whole Year group into school and receive a full taught timetable before September 2020 at the earliest. They will continue to receive home schooling. Year 10 may be welcomed back in small groups in June/July (dates to be decided) to meet their teachers in order to check on their progress and continue the pastoral support by our pastoral teams. It may also prove feasible to introduce some in-school class teaching for small groups, although the full logistics of this will need to be planned out very carefully in order to ensure the complete safety of everyone involved. Senior teams and Governors are currently reflecting on how this will be achieved. As soon as we decide on how it will occur, we will inform you.
- Similarly, Year 12 will also not come together as a whole Year group into school and receive a full taught timetable before September 2020 at the earliest. They also will continue to receive home schooling. They may be welcomed back in small groups in June/July (dates to be decided) by staff to support their home-schooling progress. It may also prove feasible to introduce some in-school class teaching for small groups, although the full logistics of this will need to be planned out very carefully in order to ensure the complete safety of everyone involved. The Senior teams and Governors are currently reviewing the best way to support students and you will be informed by myself in due course on the way forward for Year 12.

Secondly, as you may well be aware, the government has decided that there will be no public examinations in the Summer of 2020.

- Within each subject, pupils will be ranked and given an estimated grade based on what it is believed that they would achieve should the examination have taken place.
- The grades and ranking will be submitted to the examination board who will use a statistical method to grade students throughout the country.



- Hence, staff grades may be changed by the examination boards which is the reason why staff cannot inform you of the grade being proposed. It would contravene examination board practice and be considered as malpractice.

Navigating our way through this situation has been challenging and I must thank the entire staff at St John's and the Governors in supporting our efforts. We have had to make many decisions related to staffing, finance and our overall education provision, with our guiding principle always being the health, safety and welfare of pupils and staff.

We have undertaken to

- Ensure appropriate safeguarding measures are in place for pupils on site and off site.
- Welcome vulnerable children and key workers' children into our schools, including during the Easter holidays.
- Ensure that staff use a wide range of evidence and moderation to provide Centre Assessed Grades, for students in Years 10, 11 and 13, who would have sat public examinations in Summer 2020.
- Provide ongoing work for pupils and ensuring some assessment is taking place-often whilst home schooling their own children.
- Enhanced our communication with parents and pupils by providing regular Year Group and whole school Newsletters.
- Provide any support needed by pupils and parents or carers, including provision for pupils eligible for free school meals and those with additional educational needs.
- Plan transition virtually to welcome Year 7 pupils in advance of their starting the academies in September 2020, as well as support the smooth transition of internal and external pupils from Years 11 to 12.
- Celebrate the hard work undertaken by pupils and staff. My admiration for our teachers and support staff has become even greater than previously as they have had to adapt and learn new technologies and ways of presenting work to pupils, whilst also enhancing their communication with parents. My admiration for pupils, who have had to work hard in difficult situations whilst still producing some great work and showing their care and empathy for others within the community, fully embodying our Mission Statement of 'Excellence for All', 'Service to Others' and 'Inspired by Christ'.

In addition:

- St John's should rightly be proud of the dedication and professionalism displayed by our teachers and support staff-some of whom have underlying health conditions themselves. I praise the pupils who have remained motivated, enthusiastic and innovative in their excellent work.
- As I have stated above, planning is taking place for a phased reopening of our school, ensuring that our sites will be safe and that social distancing will occur.
- Preparations for the new academic year in September 2020 are underway. In September 2020, it is highly unlikely that we will return to the way it was prior to lockdown and closure. Social distancing will need to be observed, which will have significant implications for the way we manage St John's. For example, plans to feed more than 1200 children and managing their safe movement around the building,

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keeping two metres apart, will be an incredible challenge.

### **Financial Support**

During these unprecedented circumstances, some of our families are finding themselves with a different financial outlook. With recent changes, it may well now be appropriate for some of our community to be eligible for alternative benefits.

The details of this assistance can be found in the following link:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/coronavirus-check-what-benefits-you-can-get/>

Your child may also now may be eligible for Benefits Related Free School Meals. Should you be eligible for Benefits Related Free School Meals you could be receiving school-produced food parcels (or potentially food vouchers that we are carefully considering moving towards), during this period of school closure. Below is a list of criteria against which you can check this and we would advise you applying if you get any of the following:

- Universal Credit-if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 and your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get).
- Income Support
- Income based job seekers allowance
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on-paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

If you think you may eligible, then you can apply using the following link:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/free-school-meals#tab-2>

**The application takes about 5 minutes and the outcome is instant.**

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support as parents and carers of our young people. Please be rest assured that we are trying our very best to continue to offer a quality education for both those on site and off site. Some of you I know have lost loved ones and our thoughts and prayers are with you and your families. We pray that this coronavirus pandemic will soon end. In the meantime, we will continue to serve society by educating our young people of whom we are so proud.

Yours sincerely

Matt Barron  
Headteacher