



RE: Information regarding delayed return to school

Dear Parents/Carers

I sincerely hope that this correspondence finds you and your loved ones safe and well.

Following on from the government announcement yesterday regarding the delay to the reopening of schools in the Spring Term, I can confirm that St John's will be closed to all students from Monday 4th January, apart from those children of Key Workers and those pupils who are deemed as vulnerable.

The government has announced that external BTEC examinations will be taking place from Wednesday 6th January as planned. If your son/daughter is due to take one of these BTEC examinations, they will receive an email on Monday 4th January or Tuesday 5th January informing them when they will be required to come to school for their examination.

Given the above information, from Monday 4th January, we will be providing remote learning for all students via Show My Homework. If your child encounters issues in accessing the work (eg: log-in difficulties / internet access), please contact your relevant pastoral office, and a member of the team will support you in resolving this matter.

We will be aiming to deliver some virtual "live" lessons through MS Teams from Monday 11th January. These virtual "live" lessons will complement the activities being set on Show My Homework and further details of these lessons will be shared with you next week.

Children of Critical Workers and Vulnerable pupils

During this time of whole school closure, we will be able to offer a limited provision to the children of some critical workers and to our vulnerable children; this provision will be available from Monday 4th January. As we are being asked to stay closed due to the high numbers of infection in the area, it is imperative that this provision is only used if your work is required to maintain the UK health/education/social care sector or the produce supply chain, and there is no adult in the family who can work from home. Every child who can be cared for safely at home, should be. This will help to limit the chance of the virus spreading.

To apply for a key worker place, please email: worksurvey@stj.kent.sch.uk with evidence of your Critical working status. This evidence could be sending the email from your work email address for example: nhs.net or by sending a copy of your work ID card. All requests must be received by **4pm** on **Sunday 3rd January** so that places can be organised accordingly. If you do require a place and you meet the criteria, your child(ren) is required to attend school between 8.40am and 3.20pm in full school uniform, and they will be required to bring in a packed lunch.

If your child has been identified as 'vulnerable', our SENCO, Mrs Giles, will contact you directly to discuss the best option for your child. If you wish to contact Mrs Giles you can do so via the following email address: rshea990@stj.kent.sch.uk.



BTEC Examinations

As detailed above, the government has announced that external BTEC examinations will be taking place from Wednesday 6th January as planned. If your son/daughter is due to take one of these BTEC examinations, they will receive an email on Monday 4th January or Tuesday 5th January informing them when they will be required to come to school for their examination.

Free School Meal Vouchers

The school remains committed to supporting those families entitled to Free School Meals and vouchers will be emailed out to those specific families during the week beginning 4th January. Please be patient as it might take us a few days to set this up. If you have any queries at all, please email our designated FSM email address: fsmvouchers@stj.kent.sch.uk

Mass Covid-19 testing of pupils

As you may well have read in the news this week, part of the government's current strategy in ensuring a safe return to school for examination year pupils (at first), followed by a safe return to school for all pupils, involves the mass testing of pupils on school site using lateral flow tests. I am sure that you can appreciate that the implications of this strategy pose a great many challenges for schools across the country to implement this programme successfully, including St John's. We are currently awaiting further guidance from the Department of Education and KCC as to how best to implement this strategy so that we can start to welcome cohorts back to school safely. From Monday 4th January, I will be working closely with my senior team to devise a way in which we can implement this programme safely and effectively; we will keep you updated with this accordingly.

As part of the government's strategy on this, we have been encouraged to seek volunteers from the local community to help us run the serial testing in school. Ideally, we are looking for volunteers with either a medical, educational, military, or clerical background but this is not essential. If you are able to support us or know of anyone who would be able to help us facilitate the administration of our testing site, then we would be very grateful to hear from you. All volunteers would have to be vetted through the enhanced DBS service which we will arrange. Please register your interest by contacting my PA, Mrs Julia Jay, via her email address: julia@stj.kent.sch.uk and we will contact you back at some point next week.

Return to School

It is very much our intention to get all students back to school as swiftly and as safely as possible. In yesterday's announcement, the government stated their intention for all Year 11 and Year 13 students across the country to return during the week beginning Monday 11th January, with all other students returning on Monday 18th January. However, the current situation with the pandemic continues to change rapidly both nationally and locally, and there is a chance that those dates are subject to change. That said, you have my commitment to keep you updated regularly on the matter and that the staff of St John's will continue to act in the best interests of the children and our school community at all times.

This is not how we envisaged the Spring Term starting and I really am sorry for the disruption and anxiety that this latest government announcement has undoubtedly caused you and your child/children. However, please be rest assured that we will continue to do our very best to support

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St. John's Catholic
Comprehensive School

our students and that we are incredibly grateful for the patience and support that you continue to offer us as we navigate these unprecedented times together.

I hope that you are able to enjoy this evening's New Year celebrations and let us all hope that 2021 brings with it renewed joy and optimism and that all of our lives can get back to normal soon.

Yours sincerely

Matt Barron
Headteacher

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