



St John's End of Term Update

Dear Parents/Carers

I sincerely hope that you and your loved ones are safe and well and that your children are looking forward to some well-deserved time away from their online learning over the Half Term break.

As we approach the end of this first Half Term of 2021, I thought it would be a good opportunity to write to you in order to give you a brief update on a few school-related matters.

SCHOOL RE-OPENING

You will have probably seen in the news recently the government's announcement that the earliest re-opening of schools will be on Monday 8th March. This was a cautious statement because the date of the re-opening will clearly depend on the impact of the lockdown on transmission rates of the virus. However, the government has given an assurance that schools will be given two weeks' notice of the re-opening to give us time to prepare for the students' return. We will therefore be waiting with anticipation for a government statement on Monday 22nd February, which is the first day of Term Four. Hopefully this will be positive news and, as a school, we will be in touch with you once again as soon as we have had a chance to disseminate this information and come up with a concrete plan as to how we can bring the students back safely into school in line with the government's announcement.

In the meantime, we welcome the government's recent message about re-opening, which for the moment gives us a concrete date on which to set our sights. We are, of course, very much looking forward to welcoming our students back to the St John's school site and to teaching them in person.

REMOTE EDUCATION

I would like to say a huge 'well done' to the vast majority of our students for engaging so positively with their Remote Education, including their excellent attendance and on-line conduct. I am proud of how well they have risen to the challenge of on-line learning and of the resilience they have displayed in spite of the difficult circumstances.

In addition, thank you very much to all parents and carers for your fantastic support of our Remote Education provision and also for your own grit and perseverance supporting your child's learning during lockdown. Many of you have written to the school to express your admiration of the superb efforts of our teachers and other staff who have worked tirelessly during lockdown, and who are on a very steep learning curve themselves as they learn to master the new technologies. I always try to share your supportive messages with staff, as your words always give a real boost to our collective morale in these tough times; thank you so much for those lovely comments.

Just a reminder that if you need support with Information Technology resources/hardware, for example Laptops/dongles etc., please do get in touch with your respective Pastoral Team and we will look to support straight away.

PARENT & STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES

Many thanks indeed to the great many parents and pupils who took the time to complete our questionnaires a little earlier on this term. Your views are incredibly important to us and I am really grateful for the considerate and thoughtful way in which you responded to our surveys. We had

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hundreds of returns (over 200 parental responses and over 300 student returns) which have provided us with a great deal of wonderfully constructive feedback, highlighting what we are doing well, as well as some 'even better ifs' that would make the remote education experience even more beneficial for you all. In particular, it was clear that most students prefer either the 'live lesson' experience or having access to resources that incorporate teacher video. As a result of these comments, this is going to be a key objective for the school after the Half term break and I am very confident that our remote provision will soon start to incorporate more visual input from staff than has been the case so far.

SUMMER EXAMINATIONS – GCSE, A LEVEL, BTEC

The government recently ran a consultation on their proposals for the awarding of GCSE, A Level and BTEC grades in 2021. The consultation has now closed and we are expecting the government to confirm arrangements for the "Teacher Assessed Grade" (TAG) process at some point during the week beginning Monday 22nd February. As soon as we are in a position to share this information with you, including exactly what the government's plans will mean for our pupils over these next few months, we will do so.

PARENTS EVENINGS & OPTION EVENINGS

Across this last term we have been able to run several parents' evenings using our new interactive app which, apart from the odd minor teething issue, has proved incredibly successful in enabling us to provide a virtual Parents Evening experience during this pandemic-induced lockdown. In Term 4, we will be looking to run two more parents' evenings, this time for Years 7 and 12 (on Wednesday 17th March and Wednesday 24th March respectively), with the remaining Year 8 and Year 9 Parents Evenings to take place after Easter, which will also incorporate Key Stage 4 Options support. Further details will be shared with you in due course.

HALF TERM WORK

It is extremely important that students take time away from their studies over their well-earned half term break. We encourage them to spend time with their loved ones, undertake non-school related hobbies and activities, and to obtain lots of rest ahead of next half term. As such, teachers will not be setting children any homework over the half term break. The only exception to this will be if a student is in an examination cohort and there is a particularly urgent piece of work that needs completing (e.g. an official BTEC assignment).

TERM DATES 2021/22

Whilst it is rather difficult at the moment to look too far into the future, please be aware that the Term Dates for the next academic year are now on our website. As with previous years we have opted for a two week Half Term in the Autumn.

Finally, on behalf of all our staff and governors, I wish you well during these challenging times, and look forward to hopefully seeing your child return at some point next term.

Yours sincerely

Matt Barron
Headteacher

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