

Dear Parents & Carers

RE: Information regarding Monday 8th March return to school

With the full school return on Monday 8th March looming ever closer, I thought I would take this opportunity to provide you with as much information as possible in the hope of alleviating any possible concerns that you or your loved ones may have about next week.

Most importantly – do not worry!

St John's prides itself in its warm and welcoming environment and, whilst we believe that it is also important to have high expectations next week so that students feel safe in their normal school routine, we certainly do not want pupils to feel anxious about coming back to St John's. We are really excited about welcoming your children back to our school on Monday – we have really missed them – and we want students to feel the same about coming back to school and seeing their friends and teachers once more.

We know that whilst many pupils have absolutely thrived with their remote learning since January, some students have struggled to engage with their studies for a whole host of reasons. We cannot turn back the clock and therefore staff will be empathetic to those who have missed lessons or deadlines. Students won't get into trouble over this; now is the time to be looking forward rather than backwards.

Additionally, whilst we would like all students to do their very best to come in on Monday in perfect uniform, with their diary, reading book and full learning kit ready to learn, we understand that some pupils might be experiencing issues with one or more of these requirements. Please note that our pastoral teams are here to help you. If you are having a particular problem, please contact your respective pastoral manager (I will share the relevant email addresses at the end of this letter) and they will be able to help you with whatever issue you may have.

Lateral Flow Device (LFD) Covid Testing

I am truly grateful for the excellent response that we have had from families regarding the LFD testing that we have been running in school this week. LFD testing works on collective responsibility and the fact that so many people have been engaging with this programme has given me even greater confidence as to how safe the school environment will be from next week. If, for whatever reason, you have given your consent and your child has missed their appointment either yesterday or today, I would be grateful if you could bring your child in to school at any time tomorrow, Friday 5th, alongside the Year 9s (am) and the Year 12s and the rest of Year 13 (pm), in order for them to take their first test before Monday. All children that have had their first test prior to Monday will be able to start attending lessons on Monday morning without any delay. We will be administering tests two and three to our pupils next week before passing on the government home testing kits (which will hopefully be arriving soon).

Face Coverings

One vital piece of equipment that every student can remember to bring in on Monday is a face covering; we would also highly recommend them to bring in at least one spare. We will be giving further instructions to all pupils on Monday morning as to when exactly they must wear them in school but, in essence, it will be mandatory to wear a face covering both in lessons and as pupils



(and staff) move around the school building. Students will obviously need to take off their face covering to eat, however, we will be doing all we can to encourage the pupils to go outside to play at break and lunch in order to get some fresh air and to have a break from wearing the face covering.

Face covering exemptions

We will continue to respect the needs of those students who are exempt from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition; these pupils should continue to wear an exemption lanyard at all times as they did do in Terms 1 & 2. We would not expect any new student(s) to be joining the exemption list that we had in place earlier on in the year, however, if your child's medical needs have changed since January, we will require a note from your GP to confirm this.

Start and end of the school day

Please do all you can to encourage your child to get to their morning meeting place by 8.40am each day at the very latest (KS3 – MUGA; KS4 – East Plaza; KS5 – Heartspace), as this will help their day to get off to a positive start whilst enabling them to be in a position to hear any key messages delivered by their respective pastoral team. Just so that you are aware, in order to ease congestion at the end of the school day we will continue to implement our staggered release of year group bubbles.

- Year 7: 3.05pm
- Year 8: 3.10pm
- Year 9: 3.15pm
- Year 10: 3.20pm (4.05pm on any days where they have a period 9 lesson)
- Year 11: 4.05pm (3.20pm on Friday)

PE Days

As with Terms 1 & 2, students who have PE or Dance on a particular day should come to school in their PE kit. This will be the case right from our first day back as we are looking to run our normal curriculum from Lesson 1 on Monday.

Ventilation & Warm clothes

We will be increasing our ventilation around the school building as much as possible over the coming weeks by keeping as many windows and doors open, therefore, all the time the weather remains rather cold, I would very much recommend students wearing vests or plain black jumpers each day to complement their school uniform. Please note that we will still be asking students to take their coats off when inside the school building.

Break and Lunch arrangements

From Monday 8th, our caterers, Sodexo, will be running a normal canteen service at break and lunchtime. Any credit that your child had on the system before Christmas would have rolled over, however, please just check before Monday that your child has money on their account if you would like them to purchase refreshments in school.

Returning Laptops

In order to support a number of families with home learning, the school has loaned out well over a 100 laptops to students since January. We would be very grateful if those laptops could be returned on Tuesday 9th March so that we can start to use them in school once more. (We would like to focus

all of our in-school efforts on Monday in ensuring your son/daughter's return to school is as smooth and anxious free as possible – as such, no laptops are to be returned on Monday).

Summer GCSE, BTEC & A Level arrangements

Since the government's release of their examination consultation last week, Mr Walton (Associate Headteacher) along with members of the senior team and Department representatives, have been working very hard to develop a rigorous and fair system to support the awarding of Teacher Assessed Grades this summer. We will be sharing our plans with our examination-year students at the start of next week and we will provide parents with this information as soon as possible thereafter.

Friday 5th March – Preparation afternoon

In order that staff have some time to get their teaching rooms ready for Monday's return, there will be no remote learning activities set or 'live' lessons running from 12.20pm tomorrow afternoon (Friday 5th March). Students should use any time gained by packing their bags and getting everything ready for Monday morning.

And finally...

I wanted to finish by providing a little personal comment to the recent reams of media 'doom-mongering' that has been written about the need for a huge national academic 'catch up' programme for children due to the pandemic.

Please be rest assured that the students of St John's - your children - are amazing; bright, articulate and incredibly resilient. The vast majority of them have been working extremely hard over these last 12 months in some challenging circumstances, including throughout our two major lockdowns, and have made huge amounts of progress academically, whilst also developing other important skills, not least in their use of IT and electronic communication.

Children also make the most academic gains through Quality First Teaching, and we are incredibly lucky to have such talented and dedicated teachers at St John's who will be able to identify gaps in each pupil's learning and work with each student in order to close these gaps. Academically your children will be absolutely fine and, with our expert support, will continue to flourish and meet their individual potential.

That said, your children – our pupils – have missed out on other things, which has been incredibly unfortunate. Hopefully, with the roll out of the vaccine and by everyone following the 'systems of control' measures put in place by the government and institutions such as schools, we will soon be able to get back to a situation where children can 'catch up' on doing the things that are truly important when enjoying a happy and fulfilling life. Things like talking and interacting with friends and wider family members; enjoying sports clubs and performing arts clubs; going swimming; going to the cinema; having a meal out; perhaps a trip to the theatre or a museum; maybe a visit to a theme park; having a day trip to the seaside or, if at all possible, maybe even a holiday; basically having fun in each other's company. These are the things that children have missed out on and so badly need to experience once more; therefore, as soon as St John's is in a position to safely support with putting on some of these opportunities for our pupils, we will do so.

As mentioned earlier, if you have a particular concern about next week, please do not hesitate to



St. John's Catholic
Comprehensive School

contact the relevant pastoral manager via the email addresses below and they will be happy to help you: -

Year 7 – Miss Styles: JStyles878@stj.kent.sch.uk

Year 8 – Mrs Hodges: lhodges326@stj.kent.sch.uk

Year 9 – Mrs Buckingham: lbuckingham911@stj.kent.sch.uk

Year 10 – Miss Rooke: hrooke319@stj.kent.sch.uk

Year 11 – Mrs Murray: jmurray763@stj.kent.sch.uk

6th Form – Mr Cadwallader: dcadwallader834@stj.kent.sch.uk

Many thanks as always for your ongoing support and I very much hope that all of our children have a wonderful time when they return to school next week.

Yours sincerely

Matt Barron
Headteacher

Excellence for All

Service to Others

Inspired by Christ

Tel: 01474 534718

Email: office@stj.kent.sch.uk

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