

Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

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Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust
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Headteacher: Matthew Quinn B.Ed (Hons), M.A., NPQH

Our Ref: MQ/SM

11 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

As we approach the third Sunday in Advent (Rose Sunday) we are reminded of the joy that is ours in knowing the power of love in our lives.

The theologian Henri Nouwen described the difference between joy and happiness. While happiness is dependent upon external conditions, joy is the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing, sickness, failure, emotional distress, oppression, war, pandemics or even death – can take away that love. This joy can be present in the midst of great sadness.

I think this is a really important reflection as we come to the end of 2020, bearing in mind the year we have all faced together and some of the challenges we have been presented with.

End of Term

I am sure most of you have seen that the Government has granted school the flexibility to use Friday 18th December as an INSET day, for many schools this will necessitate a change in term dates. We made a decision at the beginning of the year to use the 18th December as an INSET, whether this was good foresight or just good luck I will let you decide.

I know many parents are concerned about the final week of term, in particular the impact on family life at Christmas should their child have to isolate. The edict from the DfE is that any student absent from school next week for an unauthorised absence should be coded as unauthorised; there is no flexibility with this. That means unless your child has been told to isolate by school or by NHS Test and Trace or they have confirmation from a medical professional that they should not be in school we will not be able to authorise their absence. I know from the conversations that I have had with some parents that there is a degree of frustration, and in some quarters anger, about the stance that the DfE have taken with attendance in school. A number of you have said that the announcement on Tuesday about the end of term for schools, at best, sends a mixed message to parents. I share some of your frustrations.

The Government has also made it clear that there is a responsibility on schools to track students and staff should a member of the school community succumb to COVID-19 early in the holiday period. This will present a logistical challenge, necessitating staff being 'on call' up until Christmas. Next week I will detail how these arrangements will unfold.

Uniform

There are a significant number of students arriving in school with incorrect uniform, including hoodies and sweatshirts. This becomes difficult to police in school when students leave home incorrectly dressed. Similar to all schools, our buildings are not as warm as they have been during previous winters due to it being necessary to increase ventilation as part of our COVID-19 controls. If students are cold, a plain t-shirt should be worn under the shirt or blouse, then a school jumper, then blazer. The Christmas holiday provides parents with an opportunity to source missing items. The OFPA have a stock of 'preloved' uniform that can be purchased from their shop. Details on how to arrange this can be found on the school website. Students should not be surprised if non-uniform items are confiscated next term.

OFPA Christmas Raffle

The Oaklands Friends' and Parents' Association (OFPA) are holding a Christmas Raffle Draw which is open to all members of the Oaklands community. Tickets cost £1 each and can be purchased via Scopay (under Miscellaneous).

[Online Pay - Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College](#)

First prize is £100 cash, second prize is a Christmas Hamper and third prize is a Pamper Hamper. Tickets can be purchased until the end of Wednesday 16th December. Please do support this festive fundraiser as the OFPA have been unable to hold their regular events, which generate additional income for projects throughout the school.

641 Bus Service

For those of you whose children use the 641 bus service from Southbourne to Oaklands, via Rowlands Castle and Leigh Park, a separate letter has gone out regarding the temporary reprieve of this service until Easter 2021. I would urge parents to continue to use this service to get their children to and from school in order that the long-term viability of this service can be maintained.

[641-Bus-Service-Update-10.12.20-1.pdf \(oaklandscatholicschool.org\)](#)

Online Christmas Music Concert

I am very grateful to the Music department for organising an online Christmas Concert. This has given some of our talented musicians and performers an opportunity to showcase their talents. The link to the concert is:

[Virtual Christmas Music Concert 2020 - Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College](#)

Online Christmas Carol Concert

Our online Christmas Carol concert will go live on Wednesday 16th December. Again, I am very grateful to all those students involved with this. At the end of the concert there will be an appeal to support charities close to the school. I appreciate that this is a very difficult time for many families. In the past the Oaklands community has been enormously generous. I know that I can count on you again. The link to this service will be on the school website on Wednesday:

[Homepage - Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College](#)

Hot of the Press

The news this morning confirms that the Government is going to change the isolation period from 14 to 10 days. At the time of writing, we are waiting for clarification from Public Health England. It is possible that this advice will be published over the weekend so if your child is isolating, please visit our website for further information. We will write to groups isolating separately to confirm their return to school dates when we know more.

Finally, please continue to keep yourselves safe and follow the guidance provided.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mr M Quinn', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Mr M Quinn
Headteacher