

# 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

18 May 2020

Dear Year 10 and Year 12 Parents and Carers

I would like to update you on the Government's recent announcement and conditional plans for schools opening to more children and young people. I apologise for the length of this letter, but I do need to set out the Government and school's position, as well as some of the proposed detail in relation to reopening. Please take time to read this.

## The Government Position

The Government has asked schools to potentially open for children and young people in specific year groups from 1<sup>st</sup> June. It is the 'ambition' that secondary schools will begin some face to face support with Year 10 and Year 12 pupils, although it is not expected that these pupils will return on a full-time basis at this stage.

All schools will continue to remain open for children of critical workers and vulnerable children in all year groups. Parents in this category who require a place for their children in school next half term must email [Provision@oaklandscatholicschool.org](mailto:Provision@oaklandscatholicschool.org) by 21<sup>st</sup> May to confirm the days they require. This request includes those parents who have had their children in school up to this point.

Some of you will rightly remain concerned about the safety of your children and your families if your children do return to school. The latest scientific advice to the Government is that:

- There is high scientific confidence that children of all ages have less severe symptoms than adults if they contract coronavirus. There is moderately high scientific confidence that younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus.
- Limiting the numbers of children going back to school and college initially and then gradually increasing numbers, guided by scientific advice, reduces risk of increasing the rate of transmission.

## Assessing the Risk at Oaklands

Every school is different and, as a result, arrangements in every school will be unique to their individual context. However, the DfE has provided advice to schools on the steps they should take as they plan for reopening. It is our intention to minimize the risk; measures include but are not limited to:

- Carrying out a risk assessment before opening to more students - the assessment will directly address risks associated with coronavirus so that sensible measures can be put in place to minimize those risks for children and staff.
- Making sure that children and young people do not attend if they or a member of their household has symptoms of coronavirus.
- Promoting regular hand washing for 20 seconds and ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'Catch it, Bin it, Kill it' approach.
- Cleaning more regularly frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, table tops and chairs.
- Reducing contact between students through smaller classes or group sizes and altering the environment as much as possible, such as changing the layout of classrooms.
- Reducing mixing between groups through timetable changes, such as staggered break and lunch times.

The Government is encouraging children in the Years 10 and Year 12 to attend, unless they are self-isolating or there are other reasons for absence (such as shielding due to health conditions). Unfortunately, siblings in different year groups, unless those siblings are children of critical workers or vulnerable children, will not be able to attend at this time. Parents will not be fined for their children's non-attendance during these arrangements.

The Government has produced further information for parents and carers. This information provides answers to a number of key questions and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

Any reopening of the school will be subject to the latest Government advice, this could be as late as 28<sup>th</sup> May, during half term.

We will not be operating a holiday provision over May half term as we will be preparing the school for Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June.

## **Our Plans**

By the time we reach 1<sup>st</sup> June, students will have been in remote mode for 10 weeks, some of this will have been holiday time. Our engagement monitoring, along with the survey work, conversations with parents and feedback from teachers, has confirmed that students are at very different points in their learning journey.

The necessary controls to maintain social distancing to protect students and staff will have a significant impact on curriculum design for returning students. Added to this, we have a significant number of colleagues who are shielded. One of the key 'planks' of the Government strategy for schools is that groups of students will remain together in a 'bubble' during their time in school to reduce the risk of infection spread and assist in contact tracing. The personalised nature of the secondary curriculum with students undertaking different courses at different levels, requiring them to access different specialist teachers, classrooms, workshops and laboratories will make this challenging to achieve.

We are of the view that the offer in school has to add more value than remote learning at home. The first steps to achieving this is to have a thorough understanding of where children are at with their learning. We are particularly concerned about subjects that have a practical component; it is unlikely students will have completed this work at home. Whilst the survey provides a starting point, the detail can only realistically be ascertained through one-to-one conversations.

## Arrangements for Week Commencing Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June

**Year 10:** A maximum of 45 students would be brought into school each day in rotation over the first week. They would receive an induction into how the school will operate to maintain social distancing. They would then have an academic review with a teacher. Time would also be set aside for independent work. Over the course of five days the entire year group could be seen.

**Year 12.** Students would have one timetabled session in each of their option subjects across the week. Year 12 may have to attend school on more than one day. Similar to Year 10, the conversation would focus on progress made on remote learning. Their review would be with their normal subject teacher during the timetabled slot.

We would aim to publish the timetable on our website by the latest Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May. Students will be able to identify when to attend by form in Year 10 and subject in Year 12. Instructions will also be published around expectations for behaviour, uniform and maintaining social distancing. This information will also be sent by email.

I hope across the week a picture will emerge as to how we are going to organise face-to face contact across subsequent weeks so that gaps in learning are filled, students continue to achieve and we can do this in a safe manner.

## Approval by Governors

We intend to outline our plans to the Governing Body on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May. I said in my letter on 12<sup>th</sup> May that they will make the final decision whether or not they maintain it is safe for both students and staff to start face-to-face contact for Year 10 and year 12.

## Degrees of Uncertainty

Although the planning for 1<sup>st</sup> June has commenced, there are still a number of uncertainties. For example, many of our students use public transport and it is not clear how operators will respond to the gradual opening of schools. I am also aware that professional associations and unions have raised concerns, mirroring the anxiety of parents and teachers. To this end, we will be issuing a short questionnaire to parents in Year 10 and Year 12 and students in Year 12.

Please follow this link: [Survey](#)

The survey link will also be sent out by separate email, your response is important to us, it will remain confidential, but it will help us to shape our provision. **This will be the first of two surveys, the second will be issued once we have analysed the data.** As I am sure you appreciate, the guidance has set a tight timeframe for school. With the half term looming and the need to communicate the next stage, please reply **by midnight on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May.**

It would be disingenuous to suggest that this is not a time of increased risk in all our lives, whether going to school, shopping at the supermarket or returning to the workplace. I know many of our Sixth Formers have continued part time work in critical capacities, they will have seen first-hand the measures put in place to reduce risk.

The main problem is social distancing: schools and curriculum were not designed with that in mind, which is why working with students at this time is key to constructing any long term provision. Having small numbers of students in school also allows us to test systems. If social distancing is not possible or realistic in our setting, we will review our plans.

Finally, all students have had considerable interruption to their education. At this juncture, I cannot see a date when normal 'play' will resume. However, for Year 10 and Year 12, I can see a time in May and June 2021 where they will sit public exams in some form and the grades they achieve will carry them into employment or the next stage of education. Trying to find a solution so they can achieve the best outcome safely has to remain our focus.

My weekly letter will be published tomorrow, I will also drop you a short note after the Governors' meeting on Wednesday.

Best wishes to you and your families.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Quinn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr Matthew Quinn  
**Headteacher**