

# Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

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Our Ref: MQ/SM

19 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you all enjoyed the weekend. If you are like me, it is hard to distinguish one day from another at the moment. The number of emails dropping into my account does not abate over the weekend, blurring the edges of the working week. Across the school week I have begun to define days by activities that have deadlines. Monday is SLT meeting day; Tuesday is publishing to parents day; Wednesday is my weekly conversation with the Local Authority and so on. On Thursday of this week the church celebrates the great feast of the Ascension. This is the day, 40 days after Easter, where we celebrate Jesus' ascension into Heaven. We intend to celebrate with an online mass - the link to this will be sent on Wednesday.

## Government Advice

Over the last week we have had an opportunity to consider the Government guidance on schools reopening. 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. This still leaves Year 7-Year 9 out in the cold. If schools are to open for these year groups, I hope we will receive sufficient notice to prepare. At about this time we would start the transition work for Year 9 as they begin to embark on GCSE courses. Parents of Year 9 children will receive more information on our plans to undertake this remotely over the next few weeks.

## Social Distancing

The main problem for reopening schools is social distancing: schools and curriculum were not designed with that in mind. In countries that have already begun to open schools, teachers have reported exactly that. There has been a focus on keeping students in small groups, with an emphasis on hygiene, for example hand washing, and we intend to follow this. On Monday a significant number of staff came back into school, the logistics of managing 200 adults whilst maintaining distance indicated the issues we will face.

The necessary controls to maintain social distancing to protect students and staff will have a significant impact on curriculum design. 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. For example, at KS4 across both years there are over 100 subject combinations; this indicates the size of the problem if we are to maintain isolated discrete groups of students - the bubble – into this mix you have to consider class sizes to maintain the 2 metre rule.

I have written to the parents in Year 10 and Year 12 in a separate letter to explain the school's proposal should we go ahead with the Government's ambition to reopen secondary schools on 1<sup>st</sup> June. **Year 10 and Year 12 parents have been sent a link to an online survey, this needs to be completed by midnight on 20<sup>th</sup> May.**

### **Provision for Vulnerable Children and Children of Key Workers**

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 May 21<sup>st</sup> to confirm the days they require. This request includes those parents who have had their children in school up to this point.

The DfE has stated: *'Vulnerable children of all year groups continue to be expected and encouraged to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for them to do so'*.

Please note that 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.

### **Engagement Grades**

Further to our communication last week regarding engagement with remote learning, I am pleased to report that there has been an increase in students submitting work. Teachers continue to assess work and give feedback to students. Students have been sent an email with guidance as to how to locate that in Teams. It is also available on the website.

<https://www.oaklandscatholicschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Locating-Teams-Feedback-from-teachers1.pdf>

Teachers are rewarding students with EPraise points (Engagement with online provision) and with messages recognising both the effort made by students and the quality of work produced. Several parents have written back to teachers thanking them for these EPraise points.

### **Laptops for Students**

Last year we introduced a scheme where students in the Sixth Form could purchase a tablet computer at a preferential rate, spreading the cost over approximately two years. The current crisis has underlined the importance of being able to engage in remote learning. The contract is between the family and the supplier, there is no benefit to the school. We will shortly be issuing information to Year 10 parents to see if there is an appetite for extending this initiative.

## A Few Reminders

### On line safety

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Support-tools/home-activityworksheets>

<https://www.oaklandscatholicschool.org/parents/e-safety/>

<https://www.oaklandscatholicschool.org/coronavirus/>

### Outdoor learning

Hampshire Outdoor Centres has put together a bumper pack of fun activities to challenge minds and boost learning. <https://lpda9f27a988.hana.ondemand.com/p/xUw5j>

### Hampshire Futures

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/hampshirefutures/yourfuture>

### Testing for Key Workers

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

### Prayer for the Day

<https://www.oaklandscatholicschool.org/about-us/catholic-life/daily-prayer/>

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. This has to be managed. I know many of our Sixth Formers have continued part-time work in critical capacities, they will have seen first-hand the measures that originations and business put in place to reduce risk. In the midst of this crisis it is important to hold on to the great things that are going on. I have heard of students raising money for good causes and families reaching out to those in need.

The Oaklands News will be published by the end of the week, please take time to read this.

Best wishes to you and your families.

Yours sincerely



Mr Matthew Quinn  
**Headteacher**