

Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

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Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)
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Our Ref: MQ/SM

22 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Despite the uncertainty of the current time, the term moves on at a pace. In the Catholic church this week it is the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time. Instituted by Pope Francis in 2019, this Sunday, denoted as the 'Sunday of the Word of God', is an annual celebration of the gift of Scripture. It encourages us to grow in our knowledge and love of the Scriptures and of the Risen Lord, shaping how we are called to live and to relate to each other. This week we again hear of people changing their ways. Jesus begins his ministry by finding and inviting the first disciples to leave their work as fishermen and follow him for greater things.

The current pandemic has necessitated significant change in our lives, much of it beyond our control. Perhaps during this coming week, we can pray for the grace to be open to any change the Lord asks us to make, so that we can respond better to his call and be ready to go wherever he is asking us. This is something we can control.

Remote Learning

All Key Stage 3 subjects now have a live lesson content at least once a week, this complements recorded content, independent learning, third party resources, online learning software and self-directed study. Please encourage your child to attend the live session. I appreciate that laptops and computers need to be shared in some families. In addition to computers, live content can be viewed on smart phones and some games consoles. All students in KS3 are aware of how to view online live content as they do this for tutor time each morning. We will continue to monitor attendance at live lessons.

Lateral Flow Tests in School

The Secretary of State announced on Wednesday morning that he is pausing daily contact testing using Lateral Flow Tests in the majority of secondary schools; this follows advice from the NHS Test and Trace and PHE. I am sure you can imagine my frustration at the timing of this decision after undertaking the work to establish a testing centre in school, along with all the associated procedures; not to mention the cost of such endeavours here and in all secondary schools and the manufacturing of millions of tests.

As you are aware, our testing regime involves two tests for students when they first come into school, alongside serial daily tests for seven days for close contacts of confirmed cases. It is the serial testing that now ceases.

At the point where students return to school it is still envisaged that we will offer a test at the point of their return, repeated a second time after 3-5 days.

However, as part of our control measures, we will now move to testing those students who are attending the on-site provision, where we have consent, once a week between now and half term. The picture is changing so rapidly it would be unwise to speculate what will happen beyond the end of February. This will run alongside the testing for staff.

For students in school, if we have another confirmed case, we will, following the guidance, revert to our close contact tracing procedures. This will necessitate students isolating for a period of up to 10 days.

DfE Consultation on A Level and GCSE Exams

I explained previously that I would communicate with you when I had further information from Ofqual. On Friday afternoon they published their proposals for consultation in the document below. It is particularly important for those of you who have children in Year 11 and/or Year 13. Ofqual are seeking the views of parents, carers and students as well as teachers and leadership teams, the school will make its response. You may also have a view - the consultation can be found following [this link](#).

The consultation will be open for two weeks starting on Friday 15 January and ending on Friday 29 January at 23.45pm.

Parental Survey

Thank you to all the parents who responded to the survey on remote learning. I will publish a summary of the outcome next week.

We would like to clarify that staff endeavour to respond to student and parent messages in line with our usual timescales but these must be reasonable and proportionate within the 'working day'. For the sake of our students' wellbeing, they should not be posting messages to their teachers late into the night nor should there be an expectation of a response at that time or at weekends. Parents are reminded not to use the student Teams chat facility to communicate with staff. If you as a parent are concerned that your child is taking too long to complete the work or is becoming anxious about workload, then please email their form tutor and we will look into it.

Parent Support

Two links this week which may of interest to parents. The first is about adult mental health <https://documents.hants.gov.uk/adultservices/HCC-Wellbeing-Guide-Adults.pdf>

The second is a useful guide with information and advice for parents and carers on online safety [Supporting-Young-People-Online.pdf \(childnet.com\)](#)

These, along with a wealth of resources, are available on our website [Parent Zone - COVID - Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College](#)

Finally, thank you for the support you have shown to the school this week. The fluidity of the current situation puts further pressure on families and schools alike.

Yours sincerely



Mr M Quinn
Headteacher