

Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

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Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

Registered in England and Wales, Company No 07721932

Headteacher: Matthew Quinn B.Ed (Hons), M.A., NPQH

Our Ref: MQ/SM

8 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Since the beginning of the year, it certainly feels as though I have had to write out to all, or certain groups at least once a day, such has been the fluidity of the situation. Thank you for your patience and forbearance.

At the start of the year, Pope Francis asked us to reflect upon the example given to us by St Joseph who worked quietly in the background to provide stability for his family. What an apt model for us today as we cope with such turmoil, and we reflect upon the heroes of our time, those who work in the background who are providing services for those unable to get out or who are unwell.

You will all now know that as part of the national lockdown to bring the new variant of coronavirus under control, schools have been asked to shift to remote learning until at least the February half term. I hope it will end at that point. We will be remaining open to 'vulnerable' children and the children of critical workers and will offer the highest possible standard of remote learning that we can to all other youngsters.

The Government has confirmed that children who are entitled to free school meals will continue to receive the vouchers. We had anticipated that there could be an extended period of remote learning and stand ready to do everything we can to support you and your children over the next half term.

Unlike the March lockdown, the existence and rollout of the vaccine means that there is an end in sight. We are all looking out for that 'sweet spot' where the impact of the vaccine overtakes the impact of the virus.

Exams

The Government has indicated that it will not be "possible or fair for all exams to go ahead this summer as normal". On Wednesday, the Education Secretary announced a return to teacher assessments. For students in Year 11 and Year 13 the work they are now doing will show their academic worth, contributing to the assessed grade. In short, consistent presence in our online lessons and completion of every assignment set is crucial for us to understand these exam students' potential and to nurture their progress. The announcement has placed a real strain on examination year groups, and it is as frustrating to me as it is to you that we do not have all the answers yet.

Remote Learning

From next week sufficient work will be set for between 3 and 5 hours learning a day, in accordance with Government guidance. At the beginning of the last lockdown, we sampled the quality and range of work set by contacting parents and students. This will start again next week. If you receive an email, I would be grateful for your response.

Lateral Flow Tests

Thank you very much to those of you who have already volunteered to help with this work; I am so grateful to you for putting yourselves forward. If you would like to volunteer to help out with this essential early morning work, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please email m.brooks@oaklandscatholicschool.org

For those students in our critical worker and vulnerable groups we plan to start the testing next week. Consent forms are in the process of being sent out.

Masks

Thank you for the positive response to the full time wearing of masks in school. All students must wear a face mask at all times in class, in corridors, at break and lunch (not just when moving around the site) unless they have a medical exemption reason. This will initially only affect the small number of students in school in the early days of January. However, it will apply to all students when they return later in the Spring. Students who refuse to wear a mask or continually wear it inappropriately will be sanctioned. This protocol will be reviewed in line with the 'R' rate and national tiering. Our COVID-10 addendum to the Behaviour Policy has been amended accordingly and is on our website.

Pastoral Support

During this period, we would also like to offer pastoral support. Every student will have different needs; however, we want all students to know that they can contact someone in school if they have any worries outside of their lessons. As always, safeguarding is our main priority. Students can email or Teams message their tutors with any ongoing daily concerns and a pastoral phone call can be arranged.

They can also contact the Safeguarding and Welfare Team in school led by Mrs Oldroyd using the email KeepInTouch@oaklandscatholicschool.org

Students will receive a weekly safeguarding and welfare message through Teams as well as the pastoral support through daily contact with their form tutor. These are important ways in which we stay connected as a community.

If parents need support, please contact your child's Head of Year in the first instance. There is also a wealth of information for parents in the COVID section of the website [Parent Zone - COVID - Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College](#)

If your child tests positive for COVID or is otherwise unwell please do inform us using the normal **absence procedures** [Attendance - Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College](#)

Our Attendance Officers will then let the relevant staff know. This is to ensure that if your child is unwell, their teachers are made aware that there may be a period where work is not being submitted or live lessons not attended.

Equally if you or a family member is unwell or there is any issue you need to make us aware of that could impact on the wellbeing of your child, please do contact their form tutor or Head of Year. We will support 'remotely' as best we can.

Freddie Fincham

As you are aware we received the sad news earlier this week that Freddie in Year 9 had passed away after being unable to recover from a heart transplant in November. We will be holding an online Mass from school on Thursday 14th at 9.30 am. The link to this will appear on the school website.

Year 9 Options

Early next week I will write separately to carers of Year 9 students to outline how we will manage this process in the current context.

Skoolkit

In line with Government advice, the Skoolkit retail stores are currently closed. However, parents can still place orders online and these will be despatched to home addresses. Please visit their website for more information and contact details [SkoolKit](#).

On-site Provision

We have now reached capacity with the number of students in our on-site provision. We have accommodated all requests to this point but I now have to balance the demands on staffing levels when providing quality remote learning whilst managing the on-site provision. If there are exceptional circumstances which you need us to consider please email Provision@oaklandscatholicschool.org

Thank you for your continued support; please keep safe and I will write to you again next week.

Yours sincerely



Mr M Quinn
Headteacher