

# Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

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

Our Ref: MQ/SM

12 February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope that this letter finds you all well and that you are looking forward to the half term break.

At this time of year, I find myself with one eye cast back to Christmas and Epiphany, and the other looking forward to Lent, Holy Week and Easter. We realise that the Child in the Manger will be the Crucified of Calvary. We turn from the manger to the tomb. The season of Lent starts with Ash Wednesday on 17<sup>th</sup> February which, as with many things, will have a different look this year; online Ash Wednesday services will be available in many parishes. While Lent itself remains the same, with the global pandemic, some of our activities will have to be nuanced to fit the needs of this time. For many of us, as we come together by staying apart, this marks a full year of managing and planning around the coronavirus.

## Conflicting Tensions

The impact of youngsters not being in school is not even, both educationally and in terms of their wellbeing, almost a year on, the enormous variation is evident. Schools are under significant pressure to ensure students engage in online learning; this is open to external scrutiny. Some students have fared extremely well, some better than being in the classroom, others are 'battle weary' and feeling the emotional strain of isolation. Finding the educational 'sweet spot' in these chastened times, with so many conflicting tensions remains problematic.

Pressure is growing on schools to develop programmes so youngsters can catch up. I am sure many of you have picked up the national soundbites suggesting earlier starts and later finishes and extending the school term. None of these suggestions are particularly helpful. Getting children to the point where they can start to get their confidence back and restore their motivation is a significant undertaking and is the priority once we welcome students back into school.

## Public Exams and Reopening of Schools

Over the next two weeks, we will receive information on the plans for the reopening of schools and details on how the cancellation of examinations will be managed in England. I understand that Ofqual have been overwhelmed by the number of responses to their consultation. We have all become more adept at managing to live with uncertainty, but the greater clarity will help us to allay some of the anxieties that students and staff have been experiencing. I will, of course, write to you in due course once I know more.

## Track and Trace over Half Term

The school has a responsibility to trace COVID-19 cases over half term for students who have been in our in-school provision. This means that if a student or member of staff tested positive over the holiday and the infectious period occurred whilst in school, we would have to notify families of those students who had been in in close contact with the infected individual.

The table below follows the current DfE guidance where schools are asked to look at the two-day period before the day of the onset of symptoms:

Date of Symptoms	Infectious Period
Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> February	10 <sup>th</sup> and 11 <sup>th</sup> February
Saturday 13 <sup>th</sup> February	11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> February
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> February	12 <sup>th</sup> and 13 <sup>th</sup> February

For example, if a student developed symptoms on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February and went for a test on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February with a positive result received on 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> February, the school will have to trace students and staff in school on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> February.

**If your child develops symptoms they should be tested and school informed immediately by emailing [Provision@oaklandscatholicschool.org](mailto:Provision@oaklandscatholicschool.org)**

Please contact us again, using the same email, as soon as the test results are known. We also need to know if the result is negative for our records.

If we are notified of a confirmed case, we will contact parents as required using the email and parent text service.

Please do not use any other telephone numbers, email addresses or contacts apart from the Provision email, as this is the only one which will be monitored over the holidays between 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> February. Please do not delay in providing us with any of the information requested.

## Monitoring Attendance and Engagement

We have now moved to tracking attendance at live lessons using the SIMS System. From Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February this information will be passed through to the SIMS App. Information regarding this App, if you have not already downloaded it, can be found on the website [SIMS-Parent-App-Instructions-June-2020.pdf \(oaklandscatholicschool.org\)](#)

This will enable you to view year child's attendance marks at live lessons from next half term. Currently students will not receive a mark where PE or PDC appear on their timetables. With a few exceptions, all other subjects have a live input and students are following their normal timetables. The success of this system relies on children being present during their online lessons and a number of technical links between home, school and remote systems. Please use the information from the App to have a discussion with your child about their attendance at live lessons.

In addition, once a week, staff are also logging if a student has failed to submit work in their subject. This report is run on a Friday and parents are emailed on Monday with the details. This communication will also enable you to have a discussion with your child about their work. If, having spoken with your child, you have any questions relating to their attendance or engagement, please contact their Tutor in the first instance.

## PE Activities at Home

The PE department have been setting challenges to do at home, which will continue after half term. However, as we cannot be present with your child to ensure that they are conducting themselves safely, we wanted to remind parents that you are responsible for ensuring that your child follows the correct safety advice provided with any task or activity that is set for their PE lesson. In addition, parents should make sure that children are wearing appropriate clothing to take part in each activity and have sufficient space to do the activity safely. You should seek advice in advance if your child has a medical condition that may prevent them from taking part in physical activity. If you have any concerns, please contact the Head of PE, Mr Wade. The school does not take any responsibility for any unsupervised PE activities whilst undertaken out of school.

## Parent Support

Please find below a link to the Public Health England website with advice for staying safe over half term

[https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2021/02/09/staying-safe-over-february-half-term/?utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_source=GovDelivery](https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2021/02/09/staying-safe-over-february-half-term/?utm_medium=Email&utm_source=GovDelivery)

Finally, a huge thank you to all parents and carers for the support you have given to the school this term, and on your behalf an equally big thank you to all our staff for the work they have done in often difficult circumstances.

Yours sincerely



Mr M Quinn  
**Headteacher**