

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

19 October 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

It hardly seems possible that we are now at half term. In Catholic culture, October is the month of the Rosary; it provides an opportunity to reconnect with Mary, the mother of Jesus. We have a number of families and staff that are experiencing very difficult and challenging situations at the moment; they receive enormous strength knowing that we are praying for them.

I don't normally produce a newsletter at this time of year, however I want to keep the communication stream alive so this letter is a little longer than usual.

Returning to School

Like you, I am pleased that we have got to half term with schools open across the county. The number of COVID cases in school continues to ebb and flow. Fortunately for children it is very rarely serious. The new Secretary of State for Education has written to all parents reinforcing expectations. A copy of this letter can be found [here](#).

For Year 7, this is the first half term in secondary school and the students have settled really well into school life despite all the challenges. We have maintained a staggered break and end to the school day: this has helped maintain an orderly environment. A number of parents have commented favourably on this arrangement. Students also report on the benefit of a staggered breaktime, it helps to reduce stress and anxiety. We will review these arrangements at the end of the school year.

Sixth Formers are making progress with apprenticeship and university applications; we are thrilled to have been able to support early applications to Oxbridge.

Our extra-curricular programme has resumed and we have held school, form and year group Masses. It has also been a pleasure to write home to a significant number of students recognising their progress and effort so far this year. In many respects it feels like normal play has resumed.

50th Anniversary Year

We are arranging a number of events, activities and displays to celebrate the school's 50th anniversary year. After Christmas we will produce a number of small items that can be purchased to celebrate the anniversary. Our anniversary cross has been erected on the school roundabout. It is difficult to miss this when you arrive at school. In the school hall foyer there is now a permanent celebratory display describing the school's history.

Ventilation

Ventilation of classrooms remains one of the key mitigations against COVID. We have been fortunate so far this Autumn that the weather has remains reasonably mild. As we move into the colder part of the year there is a tension between heating the building and keeping windows open to aid air flow. Despite this, students are expected to wear full school uniform. Where necessary, it is acceptable to wear a plain t-shirt under a blouse or shirt. The next line of defence is then a school jumper, followed by a blazer. Hoodies and other such items will not be permitted in school. We will continue to review the situation responding as necessary to the advice provided by the DfE and Public Health England.

Sixth Form Open Event

Thank you to all families of Year 11 students who attended the Sixth Form Open Evening on Thursday 14 October. Application Forms, subject information and student/staff videos are available on the school website here: [Oaklands Sixth Form College Information](#)

If any families were unable to attend and would like to come and have a meeting with Sixth Form staff about subject combinations or application concerns, please do contact us in Sixth Form oaklandssixthform@oaklandscatholicschool.org or 023 92259214 (extension 3701). Deadline for application to Sixth Form is **Thursday 16 December**, though students will be sent their offer soon after completing their on-line applications.

Year 11 Mocks

The mock examinations for Year 11 will take place next term in December. Further details and a timetable will be published later, but in the meantime, students can prepare for these by starting their revision. Almost all Year 11 students have met with a member of our Senior Leadership Team and have analysed the end of Year 10 test results and discussed revision strategies needed to help them achieve their full potential. Towards the end of this week, our website will be updated with further information on exam topics for each subject, [Year 11 Revision](#).

Expectations

Our expectations, as you would want them to be, are high. Our teachers are continuously improving the quality of their teaching and the standard of feedback, together with target setting to ensure that your child knows what to do to in order to succeed. We continue to embed the 'Oaklands Way' which offers teachers excellent ways to be effective and to promote student learning through a consistent approach. It supports teacher planning, motivates students and re-energises classroom activity.

The atmosphere that is created within a classroom by staff and students alike is crucial with regard to maximising progress. Students must arrive ready to learn; this includes having the correct equipment and a reading book. I would ask that over half term you check your child's school equipment and replace anything that is missing or broken. We have also been focussing on punctuality.

Parents select Oaklands for a number of reasons, including the high standards we set. There are a number of 'red lines' over which children should not cross. For example, if a student uses abusive language, they will be given an appropriate sanction.

Conversely, if a child's behaviour or effort should be rewarded, we will praise them either verbally, through written comment or by awarding praise points. We are delighted with how many praise points have been awarded across the year groups already, particularly for our restorative justice approach, which sees students taking responsibility for repairing broken relationships. You can obtain a live feed of your child's approach to school through Class Charts, information on this App can be found [here on our website](#). If you have any issues logging into Class Charts or would like your login details, please email classcharts@oaklandscatholicschool.org.

Positive behaviour is a fundamental part of the school's ethos as it impacts on the daily life of everyone in the school and the wider community. The Havant Federation of Schools, of which Oaklands is a part, has issued a number of joint statements regarding a collective approach to reinforcing high standards across a range of school issues which we support. The statements can be found on our website, [Havant Federation Joint Statements](#), and focus on:

- Relational Conflict and Bullying
- Mobile Phones and Social Media
- Standards, Expectations and Attendance

I would ask that you take time to read them again as they form the basis of the approach taken by all schools in this area.

Financial Pressures

I am aware that some families are experiencing difficulty at the moment. Changes in the benefit system are confusing, alongside this, costs of everything from energy to food are rising rapidly. This situation also affects the school, in particular for the goods services we 'sell on' for example the canteen food. We have seen an increase in some wholesale food prices in recent months and unfortunately, it will not be possible for the school to absorb all of the increased costs. This situation will have to be reflected in the products we sell, but any increase will be kept to an absolute minimum.

Cycling to School

When the clocks go back and the nights draw in, the British weather invariably gets worse which leads to a loss of visibility on the roads and pedestrians and cyclists are particularly vulnerable. Whilst I would want to encourage students to cycle, they must wear an appropriate safety helmet. I know from personal experience that a cycle helmet can be a life saver.

Communication

If you change address, e-mail address or mobile phone number then please let us know. It is now a requirement for schools to have at least two emergency contacts for each child, so if we do not already have this information, you will be contacted and asked to provide it.

Attendance

Thank you for your continued support in the school's drive to maintain high levels of attendance despite the ongoing pandemic. It is essential for parents to communicate with the school if their child is going to be absent or late. This should be done as early in the morning as possible by emailing our Attendance Officer via absence@oaklandscatholicschool.org or calling 02392 248053. A message can be left if calling out of hours.

If your child develops COVID-19 symptoms over the half term holiday, it is important that you continue to follow the advice that NHS have published and get them tested. It would also be helpful for us to know when they are going to return to school. If your child receives a positive PCR test during half term please contact the school using the details above.

COVID-19 School Based Vaccinations

The NHS Vaccination Service has asked the school to make its facilities available to vaccinate 12-15 year olds on 10 and 11 November. Students in Years 7-11 will have received a separate letter passing on the NHS permission forms and associated information. The letter can also be found by following [this link](#).

Finally, please continue to use the lateral flow tests that we have provided your child and submit test results on Test Register every Wednesday and Sunday.

Thank you for your prayers and continued support for the school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Quinn', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mr M Quinn
Headteacher