

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

Our Ref: AB/SM

3 September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you are all well and have managed to have a good summer break. We have enjoyed welcoming all the students back this week. Year 7 and 12 have made an excellent start and it was lovely to see Years 8-11 today.

We want to start the school year as we mean to go on, so a few reminders as we begin the term are timely. At the end of this letter I have also included a FAQ section related to transport. If you or a member of your family collects a student by car, regularly or occasionally, it is important that you read this information.

Uniform

I wrote to you all before the students returned to ensure that we got this right on the very first day. Uniform is an important part of a school's identity. It reinforces who we are as a community and helps allow students to feel pride in their school. It also helps prepare students for life after school where many will have to dress smartly for work. Uniform also helps members of the wider community form a positive impression of our school and the students who attend.

Thank you to all the parents and carers who, last year, worked with the school ensuring that their child leaves home correctly dressed. The uniform policy also provides information on our expectations for facial piercings, makeup and hair styles. It is important that all students adhere to the policy. Please follow [this link](#) to our website if you require further guidance.

Our uniform policy is clear that no student is allowed to come to school with nail varnish on, this includes gel and acrylic nails. In the past, we have had students come in at the start of term with nails having been done for a summer holiday, wedding or family celebration; once they have returned to school, this is not acceptable, and no pass will be given. If a student comes to school wearing the incorrect uniform and are unable to correct it when asked by a staff member, they will work in our Inclusion Room until they are able to do so.

Coloured enamel year badges are a uniform item and should be worn on your child's blazer. Students in Years 8-11 were issued with one of these last September and, if it is in good condition, they should continue to wear it. We will replace any missing badges and issue Year 7 with new ones in September. Thereafter a lost badge will need to be replaced at a cost; we would therefore encourage students to look after their badge and avoid the need for replacement as this is a cheaper, more sustainable option.



Community Unity Opportunity



Our Uniform Policy is available on the website via [this link](#) and information about the supply of preloved uniform available from the Oaklands Friends' and Parents' Association (OFPA) can be found via [this link](#).

The OFPA welcome any good quality, clean uniform which can be donated for re-sale. This can be handed into our Reception or sent in with your child to Student Services. If you would like to contact the OFPA regarding their uniform stock, please email opa@oaklandscatholicschool.org.

Attendance and Punctuality

Our attendance figures last year were amongst the highest in the local area, well done for this. However, there is still more work to be done, so we must not be complacent. The link between good attendance in school and success is well defined. I strongly believe that being punctual to school prepares all students for the day ahead and is good training for life.

School begins at 8.50am and any pupil arriving after this time is technically late. You can monitor your child's attendance and punctuality on ClassCharts; if we see that your child's attendance has fallen below 95% we will write to you to make you aware. Once a child's attendance falls below 90%, they are classed as a persistent absentee, and we will be in contact to put support in place to help your child improve their attendance. More information about absence, attendance and punctuality can be found on the school website.

Mobile Phones

As you are aware, Oaklands is now a mobile phone free school. All students are required to place their phones in a magnetic pouch during muster in the morning. This is kept locked all day and students will use magnets along the school drive to unlock their pouch at the end of the school day.

If a child is seen with their mobile phone in school, then it will be confiscated and placed in the school safe. They will be given a sanction for contravening the school policy and the phone will need to be collected by a parent or carer; it will not be handed back to the student.

I have re-attached a list of FAQ's from July regarding the phone pouches to this letter.

Open Evening, Monday 28th September - Early Closure

Our Open Evening occurs this year on Monday 28th September. **There will be an early close and finish for the students at 2.45pm so that the school site can be prepared.** We do hope, however, that as many students as possible will stay to be tour guides. Students who volunteer to be guides will receive a free evening meal and we are considering other ways to reward students who help during this important event.

We have confirmed an early pick-up with the bus companies, however, for students who need to stay on site until the end of the normal school day, provision will be made.

Tuesday 29th September is an INSET day, the school will be closed to students.

Home School Communication for Pastoral Issues

Parents should always use the Form Tutor as the first port of call when there are any concerns about their child or if there is personal information that needs to be shared with school, eg a family bereavement. Form Tutors, where possible, stay with their tutor groups from Year 7 to 11; they see the children every morning and build up relationships with them over time so should be contacted with any pastoral issues.

We recognise that emails can be an effective and convenient way to communicate when used appropriately and to continue to promote good home–school communication, there are dedicated email addresses for each Form Tutor and Head of Year. These are on the Parents' section of the website, [Pastoral Contacts](#) with the links for ease of use.

Heads of Year / Form Tutors will check this email address once a day during the working week and parents can expect a response within two working days.

Please note that an email to your child's Form Tutor is not a suitable way to communicate if it is an emergency or if it is a matter better discussed on the phone or in a meeting. If it is an emergency, please phone Reception. We are working within the current guidance and will determine, once we know the nature of the issue, whether an email, phone call, virtual meeting or face to face meeting is required.

Calendar of Events

This year the calendar will be published on the school website via [this link](#). The dates are correct at the time of publication, so please be aware that there may be occasions where events have to be moved, so it is worth returning to the calendar occasionally.

Key Dates for the Autumn Term

Monday 7 September	OFPA Meeting (7.30pm)
Thursday 10 September	Year 12 Welcome Evening (6.00pm)
Friday 18 September }	Whole School Nasal Flu Vaccinations
Friday 25 September }	(More information to follow)
Monday 28 September	Early finish for students (2.45pm) / Open Evening (4.30-7.30pm)
Tuesday 29 September	Inset Day – school closed for students
Monday 5 October	Year 10 Assessment Week / OFPA Meeting and AGM (7.30pm)
Wednesday 14 October	Year 7 Disco and OFPA Social Evening (6.00pm)
Thursday 15 October	Open Morning (9.30-11.15am) / Sixth Form Open Evening (5.30-8.00pm)
Monday 19 October	Culture Week
Friday 23 October	Non Uniform Day / Culture Week Show (5.00pm)
Monday 2 November	OFPA Meeting (7.30pm)
Thursday 5 November	Year 7 Parents' Evening (4.30-7.00pm)
Monday 9 November	Year 9 Tests Week
Friday 13 November	Community Mass (8.00am)
Wednesday 25 November	Year 11 Mocks begin (to Friday 11 December)
Thursday 3 December	Year 9 Parents' Evening (4.30-7.00pm)
Monday 7 December	OFPA Meeting (7.30pm)
Tuesday 15 December	Carol Service (7.00pm)
Friday 18 December	Inset Day – school closed for students

I would like to thank parents and carers for your ongoing support for the Oaklands community. We look forward to working with you again this year to support all students and ensure they have a successful school year.

Yours sincerely



Mrs A Bonnington
Head of School

Transport Related FAQs

Where do I drop my child off in the morning?

Children should be dropped off on the school drive by the bus shelters. Please note that this is a 'drop off' area only as access is required by buses and other parents. Please only use the visitors' car parks if you have an appointment or need to visit Reception. No parking is permitted in other areas of the school.

What time do students finish?

At the end of the day, the dismissal of Key Stages will be staggered (KS3 at 3.25pm, KS4 and KS5 at 3.30pm). Students will be escorted down the drive by their class teachers. Students will need to leave the school site as soon as their day ends in order to clear the buildings. Students should go straight home. Key Stage 3 students will be permitted to board buses as soon as they arrive. In the event of bad weather and a known delay to buses, students will be given the option of waiting in the Hall.

What time are the school gates open?

The school gates will not open until 3.50pm, as the buses need to vacate the drive. Please do not try to park in front of the school gate before 3.50pm as you could obstruct buses that are trying to enter the site.

What time do the buses arrive?

The buses should be on site by 3.20pm ready for the first students. If a bus is late, the school will contact the bus company.

If I am collecting my child by car where do I pick them up from?

You will drive on to the school site at 3.50pm (no earlier), around the roundabout then back down the drive. The pick-up point is on the playing field side of the drive. Parents must not stop on the bus shelter side of the driveway or on the roundabout.

Where can I park locally to wait for my child?

Parking approximately 10 minutes walk away from the school site is the best option if you are picking up your child by car. Please park with consideration for local residents. If you park in roughly the same area each time your child will become familiar with this. You will then be on your way by approximately 3.40pm rather than waiting until 3.50pm for the gates to open.

Am I permitted to collect my child from the school site on foot?

No: the school drive is very busy and parents will need to wait outside of the gates.

Phone Pouch FAQs

Why implement this now – can't current policies just be enforced?

Traditional policies are often difficult to apply consistently. The pouch system ensures fair enforcement across the school and removes temptation entirely. We've seen excellent results in schools where this has been introduced.

What if a child forgets their pouch?

Students will hand their phone into the Inclusions Room where it will be kept in a safe until the end of the school day.

What happens if my child loses or damages their pouch?

If a pouch is damaged or lost, a replacement will be issued, and parents/carers will be charged.

Should we put our child's name on the pouch?

Pouches may be named if you wish to do so; as pouches should remain in students' bags for the whole day, we would not expect them to get lost.

Will my child keep the same pouch throughout their time at Oaklands?

Yes, the pouches are designed to last if they are looked after properly. At the end of Year 11, or sooner if a student leaves, we would encourage you to donate the pouch to the Oaklands Friends' and Parents' Association for their nearly new uniform stock.

How will my child be able to check their timetable?

We will continue to provide all students with paper copies of their timetable, so there will be no need to do this on their phones.

What about paying for food and drinks in the Canteen?

As previously communicated, only fobs or bank cards may be used to pay for goods from the Canteen.

What about phones used in subjects like Art, Media or Design & Technology?

If needed for learning, staff can temporarily unlock pouches and relock them afterwards. PCs and laptops are also available in all departments.

What if a child tries to cheat the system (e.g. uses a second phone)?

Students attempting to bypass the policy will receive an Internal Exclusion. Repeated breaches will result in increased sanctions.

Does this only apply to smartphones?

No, the policy applies to all mobile devices, regardless of make or model.

Will my child still be able to use their smartwatch?

No, the pouch has a signal blocker for any other devices linked to the phone.

When will my child's pouch be unlocked?

Pouches will be unlocked when students leave at the end of the day (3.25pm for KS3 and 3.30pm for KS4). It is an incredibly quick process so learning time will not be lost. Students should unlock their pouch at a fixed unlocking location and then continue moving before taking their phone out of the pouch. Some end of day supervisors will also have handheld detachers to assist.

Are there enough unlocking locations?

Yes, the external company providing the pouches carried out an extensive site survey to ensure we will have sufficient unlocking stations in the right places.

What if my child forgets to unlock their pouch?

Reception has an unlocking device and will assist if needed.

Will this delay students getting to school buses?

No. The unlocking process is swift and won't cause delays. Local bus services are being informed as a precaution.

Who holds the unlocking devices?

Key staff will have access to unlocking devices.