



Diocese of St. Albans



ST MARY'S
CE HIGH SCHOOL

15 May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope you and your families are well at this difficult time. It seems some time since I wrote a general newsletter; the contents of this one are not the usual update on what students are doing, for obvious reasons, but I hope it will help bring us together as a community.

Act of Collective Worship

If you did not watch the act of collective worship, please take some time to watch, with your children, here: [Act of Worship link](#). Mr Crosby, Fr. Eugene and the students are working on another one in the next few weeks.

School re-opening

In early March we began to prepare for a prospective school closure (in case it happened we wanted to be ready); we are now preparing for the school to re-open... when it happens. We do not know the terms the Government and DfE will set out, so I won't share the specifics of the plan at this stage because they will likely change, however it is worth you understanding a few key things:

- Health and safety of all in the community is the priority over everything else, including an immediate return to education as we have traditionally known it. This *may* mean:
 - The first official day of opening *may* be to staff only to get the school, and teams, ready (remember we have not all been in school together since March 20, and if we are not given a lot of notice to open we will need this day to prepare for the students in a whole variety of ways)
 - A significant part of the first student day being given over to reminding students about The St Mary's Way, how we do things, how we need to behave during the initial opening and until all restrictions are lifted, the importance of social distancing etc.;
 - Smaller classes (to facilitate social distancing);
 - Students in school on a rota basis (i.e. not back in school full time initially);
 - Strict rules about social distancing and hand washing/hygiene (e.g. one way systems for movement round school, queuing for food);
 - Students being asked to work at home if they do not co-operate with these arrangements;
 - Staggered breaks and lunches to further reduce the number of students together on a break at the same time;
 - Class changes (to facilitate each student remaining in the same seat in the same room during the day);
 - Students attending in PE kit on days they have PE, but full and proper uniform at all other times.

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Head Teacher: Mr Nicholas Simms B.Sc. (Hons), NPQH

'A good school' Ofsted May 2018
'An outstanding church school' SIAMS May 2015

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We may not need to introduce everything listed, and there are likely to be other things we do, especially if we learn from our primary school colleagues about what works well. Whatever happens I *really* need your help drumming in to your children the importance of hygiene and social distancing when they are back. Teenagers have many, many strengths, but social distancing is not one of them (based on observing teenager behaviour in school over 25 years). The first few days will be particularly tough with lots of them wishing to handshake, 'fist-bump', hug and back slap when they meet up.

Finally on this issue, the Department for Education has asked Headteachers to share this information with the parents/carers (click this [link](#)). Please take time to read through it.

Education online

We continue to monitor work returned by students and thank you for your hard work and support. In some cases students have not returned work, or have rushed it – we are addressing that with parents/carers again over the coming week or so. Please continue to monitor your child's work to ensure they get the balance correct. Students should be following their daily timetable, following the five lessons they have each day, with perhaps some extra as equivalent to homework. It is also good for routine for them to follow the time pattern of lessons, meaning they should neither be working late at night, nor should they be staying in bed until lunchtime!

Some departments are sharing the setting of work, so a name different to your child's teacher may appear as setting it, but it is your child's teacher reading and marking it. Please remember that mental health and wellbeing is also important, so do make sure your child takes breaks and follows the guidance by getting some outdoor exercise but not meeting up in groups with friends.

Staff changes

I want to update you with some staffing changes. These were all planned well before school closure, but of course we have not had an opportunity to talk to the students about them.

At Easter, we said 'goodbye' to Ms Cunningham (the Director of English and MFL) and Mr Pigott (the English Lead). Both colleagues have served many years at St Mary's, starting work here in 2012/2013. It is always sad to say goodbye to colleagues, but they have both had a tremendous impact in English/MFL as well as the wider school, and on the back of this experience and their own talents have secured promotions to other schools. Mr Wragg, who temporarily took over from Mr Warner at Christmas, has also moved to his new, permanent role at a school in London. We wish them all well and look forward to hearing about their future successes.

In turn, we have new colleagues joining us and we welcome them all to the St Mary's community:

Mr Lee Daly, (Deputy Headteacher), permanently takes up the post vacated by Mr Warner. Mr Daly has taught in four schools and worked across one large Multi Academy Trust. He started his teaching career in 2000 at Enfield Grammar School, teaching PE and Geography, before becoming a head of year. In 2010 Mr Daly moved to a large secondary school in Luton to join SLT as an Assistant Principal in charge of Raising Achievement and Standards. He moved to a 'federal' role across three different schools within a multi academy trust implementing and leading a joint sixth form. In 2018, Mr Daly moved to Nightingale Academy in Edmonton as an Assistant Vice Principal leading teaching and Learning whilst having significant responsibilities for behaviour and attendance.

Ms Caroline Grounds, (Director of English and MFL), permanently replaces Ms Cunningham. Ms Grounds retrained to be a teacher in 2009 after working in the Media industry. She has worked in two other schools before St Mary's where she was a Head of Department, the Lead PSHE coordinator for four schools in an academy trust, a Governor and an Associate Senior Leader. She has a Masters in English Literature and tells me she is currently trying very hard to learn to speak French and play the piano.

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Ms Kay Abdul, (Teacher of English) has worked in both primary and secondary schools in the borough of Enfield for over ten years. She has spent the last few years focusing her energies on teaching English at secondary school level. Ms Abdul also has a passion for music and has led several adult and children's choirs over the years.

Miss Amelia Morgan, (joining the Hub in a newly created post, part of our Student Support Team), Miss Morgan started working in education in 2017, working with students in a SEND (Special Educational Needs) department in a college. After moving on to become a tutor for students that could not access mainstream education, Miss Morgan quickly realised that she wanted to work more with students in secondary years, being part of a team working with and supporting students to achieve their full potential in mainstream education.

I am aware some families have lost loved ones during closure, some Covid related and some not. I have made contact with each of those families to offer our condolences and ask if there is any way we can support now and later; these families remain in our thoughts and prayers. Please, all of you, stay safe and follow the guidance from the Government and help us prepare your child for return to school, by continuing to train them with social distancing and hygiene.

Yours faithfully



Nicholas Simms
Headteacher and Head of Centre

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