



Diocese of St. Albans



14 July 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope this last letter of the year finds you and your families well.

Staff and students have been working on the latest on-line collective worship of the year. The focus is the Black Lives Matters movement, but the underlying theme is that all lives have equal value, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, disability, or any *perceived* difference. The link for it is here: [COLLECTIVE WORSHIP](#) and I commend it to you.

Thank you for your support over the last few months - we all know how tough it has been. We have used the last few days of term to continue our planning for re-starting in-school education in September, and Teaching and Learning areas are well aware of the 'what' and 'how' we need to do this. Our strategy and planned practice is strongly based on national research into the effects of school closure on children and young people and their education.

Whilst we know that students may be returning to us in September, we will be focusing on nurturing them and re-building relationships, whilst we assess any 'gaps' in knowledge, and there will be very little in the way of high-stakes assessment early on. All the research suggests this is the right approach, and it fits well with our Christian ethos. That is not to say there will not be challenge and high expectations; just that we will do this with care and compassion.

We feel that the language used with the students is critical; we will be avoiding words that imply there is a significant gap, and use language that points to hope and an expectation that everything will be fine. The following ideas for positive language swaps are not our own, but are ones we will be using and you may find useful as well:

Instead of **recover/recovery**, try **resume/resuming**

Instead of **catch up**, try **restart**

Instead of **gaps**, try **bridges**

Instead of **lockdown lost/missed learning**, try **lockdown resilience**

Instead of **post-traumatic stress**, try **post-traumatic growth**

Instead of **being behind**, try **being present** (as in, 'you are present now' or will be present in school in September).

In terms of safe practice around school, we will be finalising the plans for this over the summer and letting you know the details, as we have done before. Good hand hygiene and following the 'stay at home' if you have certain symptoms will definitely be a feature. It is highly likely that other aspects of school will be different (for instance there may be a different approach to grouping students to help maintain 'bubbles'). We will do what we need to, to keep the community as safe as possible. Your role is to repeatedly explain to your child the importance of following the regulations we establish for the safety of the community.

ASPIRE • CHALLENGE • SUCCEED

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

'Students feel happy and safe at school' OFSTED 2019

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I encourage you and your child to take part in the Lockdown Reflections activity by emailing LockdownReflections@st-maryshigh.herts.sch.uk

You can write:

- a thought/piece of extended writing
- prayer (they could be linked to our Christian values of, trust, hope, endurance, thankfulness)
- reflection
- or poem

of your experiences, fears, hopes ... etc. during pandemic/lockdown.

These reflections could include experiences and thoughts on:

- impact of COVID on families and communities
- home schooling (student/parent/teacher perspective)
- working from home
- separation from friends/colleagues
- how has our life changed
- impact on learning, and include students from year 11 and 13
- what we have not been able to do and missed out on (exams, prom, sports day, trips etc)
- what have we realised we take for granted
- what have we realised we don't fully appreciate
- what do you think the new norm will be
- what are we looking forward to as restrictions lift
- messages of thanks

I hope you have a good summer, whatever you do. There will be no new work set over the holiday, but your child may use the time to resume aspects of their education ahead of the September start – it is important to remember though, that we all need to come back in September refreshed and ready for the year.

Thank you once more for your support, as well as for your messages of support to me and my colleagues.

Yours faithfully



Nicholas Simms
Headteacher

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