



5th June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your families enjoyed the half term break and the lovely weather. Before half term, I explained that we were waiting for further guidance regarding the government intentions for Year 10 and 12 students and this was eventually published on 25th May. The government guidance is very clear that schools should decide how they want to use face-to-face support in the best interests of their pupils, for example, additional pastoral support, academic support, practical support, or a combination of these. There is also a clear expectation that remote education will continue to be the predominant form of education.

At this stage, we are not planning to have all Year 10 and Year 12 students in schools for lessons, but we are aware that some students would benefit from completing the remote learning in school under supervision. Our initial priority is to complete the meetings/phone discussions with each Year 10 and 12 student to see how things are going and find out what further support they might need. This process will start on 15th June and further details will be available next week.

The health and safety of students and staff is our first priority and this is central to all decision making. We are continuing to work with DOWAT (our Trust) and governors to complete all of the necessary documentation and processes that we are required to have in place before we open our school to more students. We are also making plans for the next academic year, and this is a particular challenge because there is so much uncertainty regarding COVID - 19. It seems unlikely that school will be 'back to normal' for some time, however we will schedule events, parents' evenings and other activities knowing that these could be cancelled at short notice.

Home Learning

We understand that remote learning is very challenging for students, particularly as the weeks and months progress. I want to acknowledge the overwhelming number of students who are working hard and doing their best to complete the work set by their teachers. Teachers are continuing to develop ways of further engaging students and they will be communicating with students through Google Classroom as usual. Year 9 students are now focusing on the subjects that they have chosen for GCSE, together with their core subjects of RE, English, Maths and Science. This work will be important in supporting the full transition to GCSE study in September and the timetable has been posted in the Year 9 area. Please ensure that your children are checking their school email and Google Classroom each day so that they do not miss important communication.

Live video lessons

As a school, we made the decision not to teach using live video lessons. Safeguarding is a priority at St. Mark's and live video can lead to a number of potential issues. We are also aware that live lessons can increase the pressure on families who may be sharing devices, internet bandwidth and physical space. We have tried to maintain a flexible approach to home learning and avoid any student being disadvantaged by being unable to access a live lesson. We will continue to review this regularly and may adjust our policy in the future, but safeguarding will always be our main priority.

Support for Students

The Pupil Progress Leaders and other members of staff are continuing to provide a range of support for students, for example:

- Wellbeing and pastoral resources and information on Year Group Google Classrooms.
- 'Wellbeing Wednesdays' provide support, inspiration and practical activities.
- Online safety guidance for parents and students (under 'School Information' on our website).
- Miss O' Connell, Assistant Headteacher for Sixth Form has been in frequent communication with Year 12 students and there is extensive support available for UCAS.
- Careers guidance via the Careers Newsletter and BeReady platform that is available on the School Website in the Careers Area.

Please encourage your children to make use of these resources and do not hesitate to contact us if there is anything we can do to further support you or your child/children.

We continue to hold you and your families in our thoughts and prayers.

Yours faithfully,



Ms A. Waugh-Lucas,
Headteacher