



3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Last week Mrs. McGinty, Deputy Headteacher, wrote to you all regarding Remote Learning and the 'Drop Everything and Read' initiative. Thank you for your positive feedback on the work that we are doing and for supporting your children so well. We have been moved by some of the emails that we have received from parents and we do appreciate how hard it is for so many families at the moment. We are closely monitoring your children's progress and engagement in learning, and we continue to be impressed by their commitment to overcoming any challenges. The students attending school have settled into a routine and they are working extremely hard too. Many students participated in our survey on Remote Learning and I have attached the response that has been shared with students. We will continue to review our provision over the coming weeks. We all miss our students very much and it is so hard not being able to attend school together as a community.

### **School re-opening**

When can students return to school? We simply do not know at this stage and there has been a lot of media speculation. What we do know is that the earliest date students may be able to return is 8th March and that schools will be given two weeks notice. It may be that certain year groups return first or that students attend on a rota basis. As soon as we have further information we will inform you, although it is likely that you will see it on the news at the same time as we do given our experience so far. The Government is committed to re-opening schools as soon as possible and we look forward to welcoming our students back when it is safe to do so.

### **Consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021**

We recently shared the Ofqual and Department for Education joint consultation with you and the deadline was Friday 29th January. They received almost 100,000 responses and half of these were from students. We are expecting an announcement on the final plan during the week of February 22nd and we will then communicate this to you all. Our thoughts are with Year 11 and Year 13 students during this uncertain time and we acknowledge their hard work and resilience.

### **Careers Education**

Parents and carers of students in Year 9 will receive letters next week with details of a virtual Careers Fair. It is a collaborative borough wide event and will take place on Wednesday 3rd March from 2 - 8pm, so that parents can also attend alongside students. This exciting project is being funded by money from the Mayor's European Social Fund for supporting young people.

## Key Stage 4 Challenge

Year 9 and 10 students have been enriching their remote learning by participating in the KS4 Challenge. The Challenge was launched by Miss Wickenden (Assistant Headteacher) before Christmas and students have been listening to podcasts, watching TED talks, and reading academic literature on subjects of their choice. Every student participating in the Challenge has attended, or will be attending, a university-style academic tutorial where they will be questioned on their understanding and asked to articulate what they have learned. The aim of these activities is to allow our students to nurture their enthusiasm for a chosen subject and to challenge them to access higher-order thinking skills through their responses to deep questioning. The standard of work from the students participating in the Challenge has been exceptional and we look forward to celebrating their completed challenges in the Summer term.

## Online Safety

All children and young people are spending more time online at the moment and I just wanted to remind you about resources available to support parents with online safety. There is an online safety link under 'School Information' on our website and you may find it helpful to download the Safer Schools App. This is free and contains lots of useful information and short videos.

1. Download from the app store or Google play
2. Search for St Mark's Catholic School (include the apostrophe)
3. Enter the code – 7675

Safer Internet Day is being celebrated globally on 9th February 2021. This week students in Year 7 and Year 8 have explored the theme of the reliability of the online world during their PSHCE lessons. Further resources and advice for parents and young people can be found at: [www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk).

## Key dates

All events will be online and further details will be provided.

- Thursday 4th February 4 - 6.30 pm: Year 8 Parents' Evening
- Thursday 11th February 4 - 6.30 pm: Year 13 Parents' Evening
- **Monday 15th February - Friday 19th February: Half-Term (school is closed to all students)**
- Tuesday 23rd February: Year 9 Options Evening
- Thursday 4th March: 4- 6.30pm: Year 12 Parents' Evening

I hope that you have found the information in this letter useful. If there is anything that we can do to support you or your children, please do not hesitate to contact us. We continue to keep you and your families in our thoughts and prayers.

Yours faithfully,



Ms. A. Waugh-Lucas,  
Headteacher