



St Mary's Catholic School

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where everyone can succeed



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Dear Parents and Carers

I hope that you and your family are well.

Thank you again for your support so far this year. As you know, it has been a very challenging time for our school community but everyone has worked collaboratively to support each other. Our students and staff are genuinely delighted once again, to be back in school and there is already a very happy atmosphere. You will be pleased to know that the students have coped very well indeed with lateral flow testing and continue to adapt well and to behave very responsibly, in the face of the new routines and expectations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff have also continued to show amazing dedication in their support of our students, continuing to provide excellent standards of teaching and learning remotely and now back in the classroom. There continues to be a shared determination in school to ensure students catch-up with any learning missed during the national lockdown and during the first term of school. In addition, all staff in school continue to be very committed to implementing the health and safety measures and routines that are still very necessary to keep your children as safe as possible, whilst also delivering as full a curriculum as possible for all year groups in school.

Now we are back in school again, we are moving into a 'blended' learning phase, that is teachers and support staff providing excellent lessons in school, as well as providing remote education for any students self-isolating at home. We have received much positive feedback from parents and students about the quality of work provided during the national lockdown. Thank you very much for getting in touch or filling out the Forms questionnaire, we really appreciate it.

For the information of all parents, I have attached to this letter, St Mary's current plan for remote learning, for students who have to self-isolate and work from home. You will notice that the provision for those who are self-isolating is closely allied to the way we have been working on Teams during the lockdown and so your child will be very familiar with the arrangements. We will however post training materials and a training video for students in their Year Group tile in Teams during the course of the week commencing the 15th March, to explain how to access lesson materials and live explanations in lessons. I hope this information will be helpful for parents and students.

As parents and carers, you continue to play an essential role in being vigilant in identifying any possible symptoms of COVID-19 and taking appropriate action. Please continue to keep your child at home if he/she develops any symptoms of COVID-19 and make arrangements for him/her to be tested. Please also continue to let the school know immediately should your child test positive.

For your information, since the national lockdown from the 5th January 2021, there have been very few cases of COVID-19 in our student community. As always, we have followed all Public Health guidance fully and continue to liaise regularly with Newcastle Public Health to ensure our health and safety measures remain effective. Due to the lockdown there have thankfully been no close contacts identified in school.

Hopefully, the situation is looking a little more positive for the country with the vaccine roll out continuing at speed. We understand however that life is still far from normal for all of us and that your child may still feel anxious or may be struggling in some way. Please do not hesitate to let your child's Head of Year know if there is anything further we can do to support your child or your family. As always, we continue to review and update all of our health and safety routines very regularly, to make sure that we are doing everything possible to keep our students and staff safe in school.

With very best wishes.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Fisher
Deputy Headteacher



As you will be aware, government guidance requires schools to have a remote learning plan in place so that any child who cannot attend school because of COVID-19 does not miss out on their learning. Of course, at St Mary's we are fully committed to providing remote education for those students at home. We want to ensure that if your child is self-isolating, he/she does not fall behind with his/her work and is able to keep fully on track with other children in school.

Of course, if your child is unwell, naturally, he/she will not be expected to complete work at home. Your child will be able to catch up with work, as always, when fully recovered and back in school.

The government guidance also makes very clear that there are many forms of effective remote education and schools can choose which types of remote learning to use. This may include the use of online resources such as PowerPoints and worksheets, providing printed resources or textbooks for students to use at home, using video or audio recordings to support learning, providing live-streamed lessons, using online communication with students and using online assessments and homework.

At St Mary's, following the recent national lockdown, we are currently using a variety of methods to ensure excellent remote education for any students self-isolating, fully in line with government guidance. For your information, this includes the following provision:

- Providing students at home with lesson resources on Microsoft Office 365/Teams for all lessons they would normally have during the school day. For students in Years 7 to 11, this will usually be 5 hours of lessons per day and for our Year 12/13 students the number of lessons will vary as per their timetable, with most students having 3-5 hours of work per day and further time being used for independent study as normal.
- Students at home should follow their timetable in real time, as lesson resources are now uploaded to Teams as the lesson begins for any students who are self-isolating. The resources will appear in the Files folder in the relevant class tile on Teams and students should download these to use throughout the lesson. Students also should join the lesson live when they are called by the teacher to hear key explanations and instructions, in real time. In this way, they will be able to make the most of the materials they have downloaded. Students can work through the materials at the same time as being in the live lesson and waiting for explanations and instructions to help them. There may be times when live explanations are not possible, in which case students should work through the materials in the Files folder in their class tile on Teams.
- Sixth Form lessons will be full live lessons for those students self-isolating at home, who are fit enough to participate, and so students should join the lesson at the beginning of the timetabled lesson time. The materials will be shared in the class tile on Teams for the lesson. If a member of staff is not available in school for a lesson, Sixth Form will access lesson instructions and materials via their class tile on Teams or via a scheduled live lesson posted in the same place.
- We recommend that students follow their timetable as closely as possible at home, to help them structure their work and manage their time effectively. However, we fully understand the difficulties that students may face whilst working at home, therefore, they should just do their best to complete their normal lessons each day. Thankfully, a self-isolation period is now 10 days maximum, therefore, once back in school, students will be supported as always, to ensure they are on track.
- Online resources may include PowerPoints, worksheets, links to other websites, video clips, audio recordings, assessments, homework tasks etc.
- Online lesson resources are provided by your child's subject teacher, if your child is self-isolating. The teacher will know your child's teaching group well. Therefore, as with lessons in school, the lesson resources will be appropriate for the academic ability of the students in the class, thereby providing an appropriate level of work for students at home.

- Additional explanation/instructions for the lesson resources will usually be provided via live input from the teacher as appropriate, to further support students working at home. Students will need to join the lesson when called.
- Students are able to use the 'Chat' facility on Teams to ask their teachers individual questions about their work. As teachers are teaching their class in school, any questions posted during the lesson time by students at home, may not receive a response within the hour. Teachers will however either respond to students online during the school week to answer questions or, if your child is due back in school within a couple of days, the teacher may instead chat to the student in their next lesson. Of course, some questions may not be urgent and therefore, students can save these questions until they are back in school.
- Technical support can be accessed via the student helpdesk in the relevant Year Group tile on Teams.
- Teachers are also able to use the 'Chat' facility on Teams to contact individual students if they have not completed work or homework. Any missing work can also be followed up in school, as always.
- Teachers and students are also able to use the 'Posts' facility on Teams, to allow Teachers to communicate messages and further guidance regarding the subject work to the entire teaching group.
- If any assessment is planned in school, the assessments can also be completed on Teams for those self-isolating and teachers are able to share feedback on work via Teams, if appropriate.
- All homework for students in school and for those self-isolating, is also completed via Teams. We have been doing this since the start of this academic year to reduce the amount of resources that are transferred between home and school.
- If your child is without IT access at home, please speak to your child's Head of Year so that we can work out a way forward and support you with this.
- For any students with a Special Educational Need or Disability, the SEND team will continue to offer additional support where needed, with Learning Support Assistants working with families to ensure all students with SEND can successfully access remote education.

Of course, as soon as your child returns to school following their short period of self-isolation, teachers will also review progress with him/her to ensure that your child is on track with their work.

We will continue to regularly evaluate our remote learning provision, as we do with all aspects of teaching and learning in school. We will keep you updated regarding any changes.

If you have any questions about any aspect of this as we move forward, please get in touch with your child's Head of Year in the first instance. Mr McKeating, Assistant Headteacher, can also be contacted if necessary, as he leads on teaching and learning in school.

Many thanks.