



St Mary's Catholic School

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where everyone can succeed



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Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you and your families are well.

As we approach our October half-term break, we continue to be **delighted with the start our students have made to the new school year**. Students and staff have really enjoyed returning to some normality and students have successfully settled back into school routines. Students have also been working hard in lessons, as well as contributing very well to the wider life of the school. We have also had two highly attended remote Parents' Evenings for Year 11 and Sixth Form this half-term.

It is lovely to see a full return to the wide breadth of extra-curricular opportunities in school. We have also had our first residential educational visit since the pandemic began, with a very successful Year 13 Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award expedition. Please do see our school website for the latest timetable of extra-curricular activities. This will continue to be updated throughout the year. We have also recently established a **school twitter account, @StMarysNewc**. I would strongly encourage parents and carers to follow this school account, as every day we celebrate the achievements and work of our fantastic students and it is an excellent way of parents keeping up-to-date with lots of the wonderful work in school.

As you will know, nationally and in the North-east, there are still very high rates of COVID-19 and, as with every school, there have been a number of student COVID-19 cases at St Mary's throughout the first half-term. Thankfully, however, COVID-19 is currently having much less of an impact in school than it had last academic year, given the changes to national guidance on close contacts for children and adults.

Please continue to keep students at home if they have any COVID-19 symptoms and arrange a PCR test as swiftly as possible. As you know, as per national guidance, **if students are waiting for a PCR test result, because they have COVID-19 symptoms, rather than because they might be a close contact, they should also remain in isolation at home**. If they then gain a negative PCR test result and are well, they may return to school. If they get a positive test result, they should complete the 10-day period of isolation, with the first day of symptoms being day 0, or if the student is asymptomatic, the PCR test day is day 0. We would also ask parents/carers to **continue to test their children twice weekly at home over half term using the Lateral Flow tests provided**, as well as testing at home on the evening before we return to school after the break.

Thank you so much for all of your continued excellent support. We appreciate it very much.

I hope that you and your families have a wonderful and restful half-term break and we look forward to welcoming back our students on Monday, 1st November.

Very best wishes,

Miss Patterson
Headteacher