



St Mary's Catholic School

Benton Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne. NE7 7PE

where everyone can succeed



Tel: 0191 2153260 Fax: 0191 2153279

admin@st-marys.newcastle.sch.uk

www.stmarysnewcastle.co.uk

6th December, 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you and your families are safe and well.

I wanted to thank you for your continued support throughout this term. We really appreciate it. Despite the impact that COVID-19 continues to have locally and nationally, thankfully, the autumn term has felt much more settled. Students and staff have really enjoyed returning to some normality and students have been working hard in lessons, as well as contributing very well to the wider life of the school. Unfortunately, due to the current context, we have had to limit large in-school gatherings of parents and carers during this term, and therefore, we are not able to invite parents and carers to the usual, in-school Christmas Music Evening at the end of term. However, all students will attend a lovely Christmas Music Service in school next week, in their year groups, as well as attending an Advent liturgy. We also plan to upload a recording of the Christmas Music Service to the school website, so that parents and carers can watch this at home. It will include music performances by students in our school choir and orchestra, as well as readings by students. Therefore, in a measured and safe way, students, parents and carers will be able to enjoy some lovely Christmas festivities.

Last day of term

I also wanted to let you know some details about the end of term. School closes on **Friday 17th December, 2021** for Christmas. On that day, Sixth Form students will leave school by 12.15pm and students in Years 7 to 11 will be dismissed between 1.15pm and 1.30pm, staggered by year groups, as has been our practice for many years, to help ensure a smooth end to the last day of term.

Health and Safety

As you know, we have returned to wearing face masks in communal areas, as per national guidance for schools, and we continue to review and update all health and safety protocols in school very regularly, to ensure that we keep our students and staff as safe as possible. Thank you for your continued support in ensuring that your child continues to test twice weekly at home, using the lateral flow tests provided. Also, thank you for keeping your child at home, should he/she have any COVID-19 symptoms, and arranging a PCR test as swiftly as possible. Students should continue to use the lateral flow tests throughout the upcoming school holiday. The government have also advised that students should be tested once on their return to school, following the Christmas break. Therefore, we will need to implement a short staggered start to the new school term, in order to test students in school in a safe manner before they attend lessons. More details are below.

Staggered start to the new term

In order to facilitate the lateral flow testing of all students on their return to school in January 2022, as per government guidance, we are implementing a short staggered start to the term to ensure that students can be welcomed back to school and tested in a safe, measured manner before attending lessons. Therefore, the year groups will return to school on the following dates:

- **Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 will return to school on Wednesday, 5th January 2022**
- **Years 7, 8 and 9 will return to school on Thursday, 6th January 2022**

Students should wear full school uniform or Sixth Form dress code on this return date, as following a negative test result, they will begin their normal lessons. If any students should test positive, we will, of course, be in touch with parents or carers to get the student home safely. Miss Lague, Director of Student Support, will be in touch with parents and carers in due course regarding parental consent for the in-school testing, and to give your child a specific time to arrive at school on their first day back in January, given that we will be staggering the arrival times on these days. We will continue to keep parents and carers fully updated, should there be any further changes to government guidance.

School Uniform/Dress Code expectations

Many visitors comment on how smart and well turned out our students are and I am very grateful to all parents and carers for your support with this. Unfortunately, in the past, we have had the odd student returning after a holiday without full uniform or dress code, or with inappropriate shoes or an extreme hairstyle. I would be grateful if everyone can ensure that all students, without exception, adhere to the school's expectations in this area. The students will be reminded about this too. Please contact your child's Head of Year for any clarification of uniform and appearance expectations.

Many thanks again for your ongoing excellent support. I wish you a happy and peaceful Christmas with your friends and families.

Very best wishes,



Miss Patterson
Headteacher