



In all things faithful

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Headteacher

Mr S Logue BA (Hons), M.Ed., NPQH

29th June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I trust that you are well. Welcome to the latest fortnightly letter that contains some updates and information for your perusal in these strange times.

School re-opening for Year 10 pupils

After extensive planning and preparation to reopen to a small number of pupils we warmly welcomed Year 10 pupils back to St Damian's last week. It was great to see so many happy faces. Throughout the week my staff and I have been really impressed with their attitudes. We know that they have missed a lot of work, but I must stress that their positive attitude, alongside their resilience in such challenging times, is great to see and bodes well for the future. It is vital at this time that pupils are reassured about their futures and attending over the next few weeks will go a long way in addressing any anxieties. Just a gentle reminder to ask that pupils bring their books for Maths, English, Science, MFL and History/Geography.

Can I say a massive thanks to all the parents for their understanding over the past few months. When I say that the St Damian's staff are all 'fired up and ready to go', I mean it. We love the 'buzz' around school when pupils are attending. On Monday I received an email from a Year 10 Form Tutor. The email said that she was speaking to a Year 10 parent and mum said her daughter

"was really nervous and worried about coming into school today, but she's come home, full of the joys of spring. She said she's had a great day, was really appreciative of the interaction with teachers and she particularly enjoyed the PSHE lesson with the worry cards. In her words, she can't wait to get back in next Monday".

I hope that this sentiment is reflective across all pupils and parents of Year 10. However, I do understand, and accept, that the arrangements are not 'perfect' for every child.

Longer term

As you are aware, the ongoing situation is changing daily and there have been announcements that may have an impact on St Damian's. The first bit of good news is that it has been officially announced that alert level has been reduced from 4 to 3 which is great news for everybody. Also, the British Prime Minister said that money would be allocated for catch-up but at the time of writing the details are not yet known and thus I can't comment on what this will mean for St Damian's. However, what I can communicate is that St Damian's has no plans to open up over the summer and will be closed for all pupils. Many pupils have worked really hard over the past few months and need a well-deserved break. Likewise, staff need a break too and to recharge their energy for September. Finally, we now know that the government's intentions are to bring all pupils back in September, but again I am waiting for the guidance on this announcement.

Phone calls home

These are continuing and as time passes, we are more informed about how much work your child is doing at home. Whilst many pupils are doing extremely well, there are still a few who are not doing enough work. I ask that you support your child and the school in ensuring whatever you can to address this. We know that there will be gaps in learning and pupils' knowledge but working at home will make this gap much less as we move forward.

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Praise letters

Following on from the above, this week I asked staff to give me names of pupils in Years 7-10 who have excelled in their work. I have been inundated with emails from staff from all subjects telling me about the wonderful work that many of our pupils have been doing during lockdown. I will be posting nearly **200** letters to these pupils to congratulate them on their work. It is great to see so many pupils being congratulated, and some in many different subjects. I trust that this will give them hope. I appreciate, and fully understand, that 'remote learning' is not ideal but if your child does get a letter it is because they deserved it. Please praise them on behalf of the St Damian's staff. May I also take this opportunity to remind pupils and parents that remote learning is unlikely to 'go away' and that it is important that the children continue to complete the work set by their teachers.

Year 6 transition update

We are really looking forward to welcoming our Year 6 pupils in September. Details outlining this year's virtual transition were sent out to our pupils in the post last week. Each week, between now and the 16th July, they can look forward to finding out a little bit more about the school and some of the staff that work here.

Safeguarding message

Despite the news that the alert level has decreased lockdown restrictions do continue, it is important that children understand that life will return to some form of 'normality' and that they will return to school at some point in the near future. To help with transitions it is important that parents and carers ensure that there is some structure to each day and that sleep and exercise are prioritised. This website gives simple information on supporting teenagers through lockdown and only takes 5 minutes to read whilst providing you with a wealth of knowledge! We hope it helps!

<https://www.mytutor.co.uk/blog/teen-wellbeing-finding-the-balance-during-lockdown/>

Covid-19 is still here and still having an impact on our community as illustrated by the fact that it is with great sadness that I have to report another death because of Covid-19. Mr Lonsdale, the stepdad of Kyle Dodson tragically passed away on 17th June. I ask that, at this difficult time, you remember him and his family in your prayers.

Brief updates

- **Remote Learning.** Please read through the Remote Learning Update on the school web-site under School Closure Learning Resources. This week's edition will include a feature from the Expressive Arts Faculty
- **Loreto College Virtual Taster Events for Y10 Pupils.** Loreto College will be hosting Virtual Taster Events for Y10 pupils w/c 29th June. Pupils interested need to get in touch with Mrs Henshaw and will be given access codes via Microsoft teams.
- **Year 11 Results day.** At the time of writing we are planning on what this day will look like in practice. A letter will be sent to all Year 11 parents when the plans are completed to outline the process on results day. There is talk of some schools emailing the results to pupils, but St Damian's will not be doing this. We owe it to the pupils that they collect their results. However, collection will be staggered to ensure appropriate social distancing and hence, the safety of pupils, parents and staff. I hope that you understand this and the possibility of plans changing between then and now.

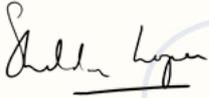
A Message from Mrs Jones, Chair of Governors

I hope that you are well in these surreal times. On behalf of the Governors I would like to add a few sentences to what Mr Logue has said above and pass on my most sincere thanks to the Community of St Damian's. As you know, I often say that we are just like a large family. The pupils, staff, parents and Governors are working hard together to ensure that we are 'doing our best' under the most unprecedented times I have ever known in over 40 years of being involved in education. Next week, Mr Logue, on behalf of the Governors is attending five days of appeals as many parents put us down

for first choice but didn't get in. We are heavily over-subscribed and continue to be very popular with parents and pupils alike. I have no doubt that the community of St Damian's will, once again, rise to the challenges ahead, united and strong to ensure the pupils get a 'first-class' education. And to reiterate, I believe we have the best staff in the country who are committed to your children.

Finally, I end by reiterating that it was great seeing Year 10 pupils in school this week. I know that there is a long way to go to bringing back other year groups, but I hope and pray that this is the 'start' of the return back to some normality. Take care and God bless.

Yours sincerely



Mr Logue
Headteacher