



18<sup>th</sup> May 2020

In all things faithful

**St Damian's RC Science College**

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**Headteacher**

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

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your children are still well and keeping safe in these strange times. Unfortunately, as time passes there seems to be no end in sight to the ongoing situation. The following letter contains some updates and information for your perusal.

### **School 're-opening'**

I said in the letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> May that there was much speculation with regards to schools and their re-opening. This has intensified over the past week when the teaching profession has come under scrutiny and in some sections of the media, been accused of being deliberately obstructive with regards to re-opening. I speak only for the community of St Damian's and the welfare of both pupils and staff in saying that I wish we could open today and return to the way things were pre March 23<sup>rd</sup>. But the reality is that I, as Headteacher, need to ensure that St Damian's takes a route where safety of both pupils AND staff is paramount.

At the time of writing I await further guidance from the government with regards to facilitating face to face teaching with pupils who are sitting exams next year, ie current Year 10 pupils. This should be out this week. St Damian's will work constructively with the new guidance and with Tameside Local Authority [LA] to establish clear plans to gradually increase pupils in small numbers. Note that this does not mean Year 10 pupils will come back *en masse* and be taught their curriculum as before. I can also say that this is unlikely to happen before 1<sup>st</sup> June. This is a highly complex scenario and it is too early to outline exactly what this will look like in practice. I ask for your patience over the next few weeks suffice to say I will be discussing what a safe return to school will look like with all the relevant parties. I will communicate this clearly when it is appropriate to do so.

### **Remote Learning and pupils' work**

I repeat previous messages here. Remote learning is not ideal for all/most/some of our pupils. St Damian's many successes over the years have been built upon great teaching within an environment of exceptional pastoral care and high expectations. Remote learning cannot replicate this.

However, it is imperative that pupils do not give up on their work and do their best to attempt all work set. Furthermore, each week there are links to web sites published that pupils of all abilities can access. The remote learning platform we use, Microsoft Teams, allows subject teachers to see how much work is being completed. Year 10 pupils can communicate with their teachers, via the chat facility, to ensure that they ask their teachers for support. It is important that they do so. Doing no work, regardless of Year group is not acceptable and I repeat that this will have an impact on their future aspirations and prospects.

### **Phone call home**

After listening to the unanimous feedback from parents about the phone call to all parents in Years 7-10 a few weeks ago we are now going to set up a system where Form Tutors ring pupils in their form groups fortnightly just to 'keep in touch' and to reassure both you and your child that they are still part of the St Damian's community and that they will be returning to this community. All parents spoken to a few weeks ago were extremely grateful and that shows the strength of our community. I have to say that many of the parental comments made me so proud. I will pass these on to the great staff here at the right opportunity.

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**National Competition**

An opportunity has arisen for pupils at St Damian's to enter [The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition](#). This is the world's oldest international schools' writing competition. This competition asks young writers to consider how the Commonwealth can address global challenges and work to create a better future for all its citizens. This year the theme is *Climate Action and the Commonwealth*. This is an excellent opportunity for St Damian's pupils to develop creative writing and written English skills and share their views and experiences with a global audience. If this is something that you would like to know more about please contact [carol.fleming@thercs.org](mailto:carol.fleming@thercs.org) for further information.

**Safeguarding update**

Although challenging, the Government's advice remains **'stay at home'** as much as possible. This applies to young people, and in the interest of your child's wellbeing it is as important as ever to maintain keeping them at home and avoid meeting their friends. However, some of our pupils may not be coping well. If so point them in the direction of 42<sup>nd</sup> street. The web site is [www.42ndstreet.org.uk](http://www.42ndstreet.org.uk). This is an innovative Greater Manchester young people's mental health charity providing free and confidential services to young people who are experiencing difficulties with their mental health and emotional wellbeing during these unprecedented times.

**Year 10 and laptops**

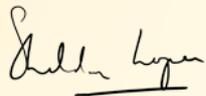
The government has launched a laptop scheme for disadvantaged pupils in Y10 who do not currently have access to them and meet the strict eligibility criteria. This national process prioritises pupils due to take public examinations. It will take some time to implement and is unlikely to be in place until sometime in June. Please note that this is Y10 only. If St Damian's receives any laptops for distribution, we will allocate them according to the strict eligibility criteria that was set.

**Brief updates**

- **Y9 Options.** Pupils in Y9 will receive confirmation of their Options choices in the post this week. Any queries, pupils are asked to email [options@stdamians.co.uk](mailto:options@stdamians.co.uk)
- **Tameside College & Clarendon College.** Tameside College and Clarendon College have launched an online resource to support *Year 11* pupils as they prepare for college. 'Get Ready for College' is a web-based service, containing a variety of activities, links, quizzes and reading lists from different curriculum areas. It is accessed via the following links: [www.tameside.ac.uk/getready](http://www.tameside.ac.uk/getready) or [www.clarendon.ac.uk/getready](http://www.clarendon.ac.uk/getready). Both colleges are still accepting online applications and encourage any learners who have not yet applied to do so via their websites. All applicants so far will receive a personal telephone call from their teaching and support teams to confirm the offer of a guaranteed place.
- **Year 11 Grades.** As a school we are in the final stages of grading Year 11 pupils in their subjects. After this process is completed I will arrange to ring the parents of the Year 11 pupils. As previously, I ask that all parents do not contact the school and ask about the grades.

Finally, on behalf of Mrs Jones, Chair of Governors and all the St Damian's staff please continue to take care as we move towards the next phase.

Yours faithfully



Mr Logue  
Headteacher