

25th June, 2021



Dear Parent/Carer

Parental update 65

I write at the end of what can only be described as an extraordinary week. Since I wrote to you last Friday, 20 members of the St Margaret's family have tested positive for the virus. Three of these 20 are members of staff, and many of the others are students in Year 9. I am sure you would want to join me in wishing all those affected a speedy recovery from the infection, and in praying for them too.

As you would expect, the high number of infections has led to many students and staff having to self-isolate – indeed, only around 300 students are onsite today. Many (but not all) lessons are taking place 'live' through Teams, and where the lessons cannot take place that way, work is being set (again through Teams). If you or your son or daughter is having difficulty accessing lessons or work set, please e-mail ITsupport@stmargaretsacademy.com and we will do our best to respond as soon as we are able.

Some members of staff are self-isolating because they have been told to do so by the NHS app – this is the case for three members of the Senior Leadership Team, including myself. Consequently the staff still onsite are at full stretch, so I'd ask for your understanding if replies to any enquiries take a little longer than usual. Hopefully things will be back to normal next week!

Pastoral support

In the meantime, though, I understand (from personal experience) how frustrating self-isolation can be. If your son or daughter is struggling in any way with their self-isolation, please do get in touch and we'll do our best to help. Dr Silverstone has sign-posted the online resources at Mind's website before, and we're happy to do provide the link again [here](#). Indeed, even for those who aren't self-isolating, there can be concerns about what is going on; children often don't have a 'big picture' to help them make sense of events. Please do hold all those who have been affected by this week's turn of events in your thoughts and prayers – for many, it's a worrying time.

Academic progress

Given the amount of time we've already lost this year, I appreciate that a number of families may be anxious about the impact this round of self-isolation will have on students' progress – especially as we were just about to go into a round of exams. As I indicated in *Parental Update 64*, if your son misses an exam, he'll simply do it the next time he's in school; hopefully this delay won't impact on the timing of the reports we had intended to issue at the end of term.

If it's any consolation, St Margaret's isn't the only school across the City that is facing an increase in the number of cases. I attended a meeting yesterday where the latest figures were shared; by most measures, the situation we now find ourselves in is the worst it's been at any point since March 2020. My colleague Headteachers across the country are also facing escalating rates of infection, and a number of us are urging the Government to think carefully about the implications for next year's exams (amongst other things).

Year 11

Year 11 students officially leave school on the last Friday in June – which is today! They've been a resilient, cheerful year group, and I've greatly enjoyed leading them (and sometimes teaching them) over the last 5 years. They leave, of course, with our thanks for being such a great group of students, and our best wishes for whatever the future may hold.

I'm very sorry that the spike we've had in infections has finally put paid to any lingering hope we had that it might be possible to hold a Leavers' Service to mark the occasion. We will be able to share some time together on Results Day, though I appreciate that's not quite the same thing! But we're optimistic that we will be able to celebrate properly their time with us – and the current Year 13's time with us too – when we come to a Prizegiving next term (restrictions permitting). Indeed, I'm conscious that the 'class of 2020' also missed out on the usual leavers' events last year – and I still cling on to the hope that we will be able to arrange some sort of event for them too.

Teacher Assessed Grades ('TAGs')

Year 11 and Year 13 parents may be aware that as part of this year's process of agreeing TAGs, the Exam Boards have asked us for evidence of how we've arrived at a sample of the grades we sent them last week. I'm pleased to be able to report that despite the upheavals of this week, we've been able to upload all the evidence they asked for within the deadlines set. We can now look forward to downloading the results from the Exam Boards for the two Results Days:

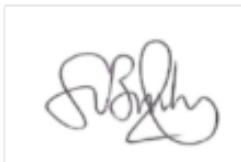
- post-16 Results Day is on Tuesday 10th August; and
- pre-16 Results Day is on Thursday 12th August.

Testing, testing...

I make no apology for reiterating a message I sent home earlier this week: *“Finally, probably the most important message: **please keep testing your son/daughter** using the LTF kits that are available from school (and elsewhere). Testing helps keep us all safe by giving us early warning of an outbreak in the school community. It's also helpful if you can upload your results onto the NHS website, but even if you don't wish to do this, **please keep testing.**”*

I appreciate that this week has been a difficult one for many of us. As people of faith, though, we know that there is always hope! I trust that many of us will be able to identify with St Paul when he wrote: *“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair”*. Do let us know if there is anything we can do to support you or your son/daughter, and we'll be in touch as usual next week.

Yours faithfully



Stephen Brierley
Principal.