

10th December, 2021



Dear Parent/Carer

Parental update 79

Welcome to another edition of our *Parental Update* – the last of this term. I trust this edition finds you in good health and spirits as we journey through Advent and prepare for the Christmas holiday.

Welcome

I'm delighted to be able to begin this *Update* with a warm welcome to Mr Baron, who is joining us on a permanent basis as a teacher in the Modern Foreign Languages Department. An outstanding linguist, he brings with him considerable knowledge about the teaching and learning of foreign languages, and we're very much looking forward to working with him over the months and years ahead. Welcome to Team SMA, Mr Baron!

Ofsted report

You may recall that we hosted a team of four Ofsted inspectors last month. We've now received their final report, and I'm sending it out to you with this *Update*. In addition, you can find a copy on our website.

We're delighted with the many encouraging comments the inspectors were able to make. Our students spoke very positively to the inspectors about life at St Margaret's – to be frank, they were magnificent throughout the inspection – and we're delighted the inspectors were able to conclude that St Margaret's students "*are happy and enjoy coming to school*", and that they describe St Margaret's as "*a safe and friendly place to learn where everybody is welcome.*"

However, we're bitterly disappointed with some of the judgements the inspection team arrived at – particularly the overall judgement, which is that St Margaret's is a school which "*requires improvement*". Ofsted's [handbook](#) states that in their opinion, a school with this judgement "*provides an acceptable standard of education*", albeit not one which meets Ofsted's current (2019) definition of "*good*".

As you would expect, since the inspection we have been revisiting the whole-school plans we have to improve our school. These include, for example, revising and developing our learning plans for each subject – a process that was already in place, and that has inevitably been slowed by the pandemic. (Nowadays those subject plans are an important part of Ofsted's inspection process). The Governors will be meeting early in the new term both to discuss Ofsted's report and to review our whole-school plans. Once those plans have been agreed, I will outline them to you in a future edition of this *Update*.

Schools which "*require improvement*" are normally subject to another full inspection "*within 30 months*" of the publication of their report – *ie*, for us, by June 2024. Because "*senior leaders, including governors, are taking the right steps to improve the curriculum*", we are confident we will be able to demonstrate we meet Ofsted's "*good*" criteria well before then.

Pandemic update: 'Plan B'

Earlier this week the Government announced the implementation of 'Plan B' to counter the spread of the omicron variant of the Coronavirus.

There are very few changes as far as schools are concerned. Our site remains open to all students; our ongoing staggered starts afford an extra level of protection against the risk of catching the virus within school. All students should wear masks in communal areas of school, and must wear masks on buses and trains – the latter being a legal requirement. Please ensure your son/daughter brings a mask to school every day, and reinforce the messages about hygiene and sanitation at home – we don't want anyone to have to self-isolate over Christmas!

Over recent weeks, the message about hand-washing doesn't seem to have had the priority it deserves. I mentioned it to students in my pre-16 Assemblies with them this morning (in the context of an Assembly about the Christmas story! – hopefully your son will be able to explain the connection!), and I'd be grateful if you could reinforce the message at home.

Do you live in Liverpool? Is your son/daughter entitled to Free School Meals?

Liverpool City Council is providing some vouchers to help Liverpool families entitled to Free School Meals with their food and fuel over the Christmas holidays. I'm sorry, but this assistance is not available to families who live in other local authorities.

Our Office Manager, Mrs Deveney, will shortly be e-mailing those who are entitled to this support to explain how you can claim the vouchers. If you are entitled to Free School Meals and do not receive her e-mail, please contact her at sdeveney@stmargaretsacademy.com

Please also note that there is a short expiry date on the vouchers – you'll need to make the necessary arrangements to get the vouchers before the end of term.

Punctuality

Dr Silverstone writes...

"Can I please take this opportunity to remind parents of the importance of punctuality to school in the mornings? Arriving to school on time is important in terms of hearing key messages in registration time and assembly; further, it helps foster good time-keeping habits which will be valuable for the students' futures once they leave us.

"If pupils do arrive late to school on a non-assembly day, they are to sign in on the late sheets in reception before making their way to registration. On days when they are in assembly, they should go into assembly and, on the way to their next class, sign the late sheets in reception.

"Students who are late to school regularly will be issued with a lates detention."

Christmas Jumper Day

Over recent years, we've supported Christmas Jumper Day as a fund-raiser for Save The Children – a very worthwhile charity! This year, though, we've decided to hold the day a week later than 'national' Christmas Jumper Day, as we felt it would be more appropriate to hold it nearer the end of what has been a very busy term.

So: next Friday, 17th December, main school students will be more than welcome to wear a Christmas jumper to school. Please note that it's *not* a non-uniform day – students should still wear their school trousers, school shoes, school shirt and school tie. However, if they wish to support Save the Children, they may wear a Christmas Jumper in place of their school jumper and/or blazer.

Students choosing to do so will be expected to contribute £1 to this very worthy cause as part of the day.

Our Sixth Form students have also arranged a Christmas Jumper Day; their day is taking place today.

I believe it's desperately important to teach students about the importance of giving, so do please support us if you're able to next Friday! Thank you.

Reminder: last day of this term

A quick reminder that our last day of term, Wednesday 22nd December, is a half-day. As advised in *Parental Update 78*, students should come into school at the following times:

Year	Time to arrive in school	Expected dismissal time
Year 7	9:00am	10:55am for those in the school choir 10:00am for those not in the choir
Year 8	9:45am for those in the school choir 11:00am for those not in the choir	12noon
Year 9	11:30am	12:30pm
Year 10	9:30am	10:30am
Year 11	10:00am	11:30am

First day of next term

The Government has announced that all students should have the opportunity to be Covid-tested on their school's site before the start of next term. We'll be providing this opportunity on the morning of our first day back (Wednesday 5th January), which means that some year-groups will have a later start than usual.

For each year-group there is a window during which tests can be booked. Once again we'll be using the Parents' Evening booking system to book appointments – you can do so through [this link](#). A short document guiding you through the process of booking is attached. Once your son or daughter has been tested, they should go to their normal lesson in school, where they will be registered and supervised until the time at which normal lessons start. If you are maintaining your home-testing routine and so do not wish to book an onsite test here, your son or daughter **must** be in school by the time indicated in the final column.

Year	Tests may be booked between these times	Normal lessons will start – <i>ie</i> everyone must be in school – by:
Year 7	8:30am to 9:15am	9:30am
Year 8	10:00am to 10:45am	11:00am
Year 9	10:30am to 11:30am	11:45am
Year 10	9:30am to 10:15am	10:30am
Year 11	9:15am to 10:15am	10:30am
post-16	8:30am to 9:45am	10:00am

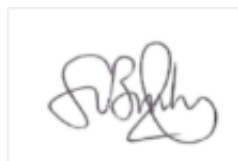
Finally...

This is our last *Update* before the Christmas holidays, so I'd like to take the opportunity not only to thank you for your support throughout another testing year, but also to wish every St Margaret's family a peaceful, happy (and omicron-free) Christmastide.

Throughout the darkest times of this year, I've been sustained by hope – a hope that things can only, eventually, get better because (as St John put it) “*the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*”. Amidst all the Christmas distractions, I trust you and your loved ones will be able to celebrate the real ‘reason for the season’ – the hope that came into our world 2,000 years ago.

Happy Christmas!

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script, enclosed in a thin black rectangular border. The signature appears to read 'S Brierley'.

Stephen Brierley
Principal.