



12th June, 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Coronavirus update 16

Welcome to another weekly update to keep you informed about what is happening at St Margaret's during our 'repurposing' period.

Possible partial re-opening in June

Last week I set out our plans for partial re-opening for Year 12 from Monday 15th June, and for Year 10 from Monday 22nd June. I indicated that the plans were still subject to change, and so it has proved!

Our original plans for Year 12 had involved inviting each teaching group in for two full days, working within the Government's guidance for secondary schools that "*mixing between different groups of pupils should be kept to a minimum*" (but, by implication, it's permitted – minimally!). However a different Government document states that we must "*ensure that children and young people are in the same small groups at all times each day, and different groups are not mixed during the day, or on subsequent days*" – as a result of which, we were advised to reconsider what we're proposing to do. In light of that advice, and of ongoing concerns about infection rates in the north-west, we duly decided to change our plans – whilst at the same time seeking timely clarification of exactly how those two seemingly contradictory passages should be interpreted!

We have, therefore, regrettably pushed back the date, and the number of times, that Year 12 will be able to come into school: we are now planning for some pastoral support, and some academic support in one nominated subject, to be offered onsite from Monday 22nd June. We will write to Year 12 students and parents with more details about this next week.

I indicated last week that we would be writing to all Year 10 parents during the week beginning Monday 15th June to set out when Year 10 boys would be able to come into school. That is still our intention, although we may seek to adjust the plans we previously published in light of the further advice and guidance we are now expecting to receive.

I can only apologise for the changes that have been necessary, and for any inconvenience or anxiety this may cause. Please understand, though, that the wider context of our decisions is changing daily; and please be assured that we are all working ambitiously to ensure the damage to our students' education is minimised.

Online learning

For some time now, the online learning team has been considering how best to include an element of online teaching in our remote learning offer. We have been working with a local consortium under the Department for Education's [EdTech demonstrator programme](#) to provide a secure online offer to students, and training for our staff, through our Office 365 platform and the Microsoft Teams application.

One early benefit of this work has been that we now have more capacity to offer non-interactive online lessons (eg where a teacher is recorded narrating a power-point presentation). Such online lessons are increasingly a feature of the work teachers are setting every day.

Alongside this, we have been considering how to offer more interactive online lessons – and having this week had to scale back our onsite plans for Year 12, these discussions have assumed an added urgency. We are now planning to pilot an element of interactive online teaching for a small number of our post-16 students very shortly. The pilot will involve a teacher meeting virtually with a group of students at a scheduled time – but with the video capability disabled at both the teacher's and the students' ends. We are keen to understand, through this pilot, how different teachers' individual styles will transfer to this medium, so we have selected a group of Year 12 students who are all studying the same three 'A'-levels to take part in the pilot.

We are cautiously optimistic that before the end of term, this pilot will pave the way for a wider offer for Year 12 (including a follow-up programme for those not in the pilot) across all the subjects that each student studies. Once we have been able to establish this as a viable means of providing more teaching, we will look to roll it out to other year-groups, starting with Year 10. Given the increasing speculation nationally that September is likely to see an ongoing blend of online learning and some more limited onsite support, we have accorded this work an even higher priority.

Free School Meals

Hopefully all qualifying families will now have received their half-term Free School Meals voucher, and their weekly voucher for this week too. As ever, if you have any difficulties with your vouchers, please get in touch.

Year 8 and Year 9 options

We have now posted out letters to all Year 8 families confirming what subject options each student will study in Year 9. Happily we've been able to give almost every Year 8 student the combination of subjects they requested, and I have spoken personally to the parents of the five students for whom that has not been possible. If any boys have since changed their minds, we may be able to help; please e-mail scbrierley@stmargaretsacademy.com if this applies to you.

I have spoken to some (but not all) Year 9 families where there are still some Options issues to resolve. If you're waiting for a call, please be assured that I will ring shortly!

We are able to offer some appointments with our Careers advisor if any student might find this helpful at this time. We will naturally prioritise students in Years 11 and 13 first, then students in Years 8 and 9 – but if *any* student would appreciate a conversation to help focus their thinking on 'next steps' (even if those steps aren't immediately imminent!), please e-mail our Careers team at careers@stmargaretsacademy.com.

With best wishes for a peaceful weekend,

Yours faithfully



Stephen Brierley
Principal.