

30th April, 2021



Dear Parent/Carer

### Coronavirus Update 57

Welcome to another Friday afternoon newsletter; I trust you and your family have had a good week. It's been another week here without any confirmed Coronavirus cases – in fact, we've only had one confirmed case in total in the six weeks we've been back in school since March 8th. That's quite a contrast with the 40+ cases we had pre-Christmas!

There are a number of reasons why we've had so few cases: but I'm clear that a significant reason for our low infection rates is *the support we have enjoyed from our parents*. All our parents, and particularly those of boys in Years 8 and 9, have been inconvenienced by the changing (and sometimes late) times of the school days; but despite the inconvenience, so many of our boys have turned up at the right time, and with the right uniform/PE kit. Thank you so much for your support!

#### Face masks

The flip-side to that, however, is that a growing number of students (currently over 100 each day) are coming to school without a face mask. Some of these students are exempt from wearing a mask, but others have simply forgotten theirs. They can then end up wasting learning-time by having to go to the school office; our office staff are distracted from other tasks; and the cost of providing so many face masks can inevitably have an impact on our finances.

Please do ensure your son or daughter has a clean face mask every day they come to school!

#### Year 11 and Year 13 Leaving Dates

The following arrangements will apply for both Year 11 and Year 13.

Date	Arrangements
Up to May half-term	Lessons, and assessments, will continue as usual. All students are expected to attend school.
Friday 28th May	This will be the last day of lessons in school for Year 11 and Year 13.
Week beginning Monday 7th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some assessments will still be taking place this week. Students <b>must attend school</b> if they have an assessment.</li><li>• For Year 11 students not attending school, online transition work will be set. This is important work as it will help students for their next stage of study; given the amount of time they have missed over the last two years, many educationalists are concerned that even students with the necessary grades may struggle on their courses next year. More details on this will follow over the next few weeks.</li></ul>
Week beginning Monday 14th June	Online transition work will continue.
Week beginning Monday 21st June	Online transition work will continue until Friday, although at some point in the week we are hoping to have a Year 11 Leavers' Event. (This may be after most restrictions have been lifted). More details will follow.
Friday 25th June	Year 11 officially leave school on this date.

## Letters

- All parents should now have received a letter about the current Parent Governor election. If you haven't received yours (for pre-16 students, letters were given out on students' 'short days' this week), please check your son or daughter's bag (!), and if it's still not come to light, please e-mail [admin@stmargaretsacademy.com](mailto:admin@stmargaretsacademy.com). I would encourage you – in Local Elections week too – to use your vote!
- Year 8 parents should have received a letter about options for Year 9 (French or Spanish; Computer Science or ICT). Again, please let us know if you haven't got a copy.
- Letters confirming Year 9 option choices will be going out next week (hopefully!).

## National Reference Tests

Some students in Year 11 have been randomly selected to take part in these tests this year. Nationally, it's an important annual project – statisticians use the results to judge the ability of the year-group, and from that decisions are taken about the number of students nationally that will be allowed to get higher (and pass) GCSE grades. In this way, so the theory goes, the exams results nationally can reflect the abilities of each year-group without the risk of 'grade inflation'.

However, with all the other assessments that Year 11 are taking at the moment, we have said we will not be taking part on this occasion. Any students who were randomly selected to take part will not now be doing so.

## Duke of Edinburgh's award

As a school we continue to be enthusiastic supporters of the late Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. However the particular difficulties arising from the pandemic restrictions mean that reluctantly, we've taken the decision at this point to postpone our plans for this year. Instead we'll look to get something up and running early in 2022.

I know this will come as a disappointment to some of our students, who had been hoping to take the Award this year – please accept my apologies for that. But please be assured that this is very much a *postponement*, not a *cancellation*.

## Dr Silverstone's section

Dr Silverstone, our Director of Pastoral Care, writes:

*“This week's topic is once again to do with the dangers that can be found online. There have been several stories in the media recently of content being posted online with the deliberate intent of causing alarm and distress to young people. If anyone is aware of harmful online content, they can report it at <https://reportharmfulcontent.com/>. The police should also be contacted by ringing 101 (or 999 in an emergency) if there is concern that a crime has been committed or could be committed.*

*“Children and young people who are distressed by online content should be encouraged to share their concerns with their parent or carer and a member of staff at school. If a child or young person is distressed by harmful online content they should consider taking a break from being online for a few hours. Furthermore, children and young people should be advised that not everything they read online is true and some are deliberate hoaxes that are created with the aim of causing distress.*

*“Children, young people and adults should be aware that posting harmful online messages, including hoaxes, is likely to be a criminal offence under the Malicious Communications Act 2003. It is important that children, young people and adults **don't** forward harmful content to others as this can create further unnecessary alarm and distress. The [London Grid for Learning](#) provides excellent advice to parents and carers about 'scary challenges'. Children and young people should be advised*

*how to ignore **Block, Report and Ignore** any inappropriate messages they are sent. Each online platform often has advice as to how to do this.*

*“As always, if you have any concerns about these matters, you can contact the safeguarding team on [safeguarding@stmargaretsacademy.com](mailto:safeguarding@stmargaretsacademy.com)”.*

Finally...

There’s generally only one occasion in the school year when a Bank Holiday falls in term-time – and that’s this weekend! I hope that all St Margaret’s students and families are able to make the most of the long weekend, by (for example) enjoying a walk or bike ride outside (though the weather forecast is none too promising).

We’ll be in touch again next Friday.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Brierley', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Stephen Brierley  
Principal.