

SBR/GEN/AM037



# St Margaret's Church of England Academy

*"Achievement by faith and work"*

17 March 2020

Principal: Mr S Brierley MA NPQH

Dear Parent/Carer,

## **Coronavirus update 3**

Following on from the Prime Minister's statement yesterday, I am writing to update you about our school's response to the Coronavirus outbreak.

I'd like to reassure you that in responding to the various challenges of the last few weeks, we have acted (and will continue to act) in accordance with the advice given to us by Public Health England – as is only right, given that we are not experts in public health matters ourselves.

### School opening

An increasing number of St Margaret's teachers and support staff are now self-isolating, and this number is likely to grow further over the next few days. We are making every effort to stay open for all year-groups (by, for example, merging classes where possible, and by sometimes redeploying Sixth Form teachers), and a number of my colleagues have gone 'above and beyond' the call of duty (by, for example, giving up their time to cover extensively for absent colleagues). I'm sure you'd want to join me in thanking everyone who's helped 'keep the show on the road'.

However, at this stage it is very possible that we will have to close for at least one year-group before the end of the week. **Please keep watching our website for updates.** In deciding which year-group would need to stay at home, we will be guided by the timetables of the staff who are absent, and where possible we will close to older pupils (though not Year 11), not younger ones – we are mindful that students in Years 9 and 10 may not need as much childcare at home as students in Year 7. If staff shortages continue for several days, we will try to vary the year-group that is sent home, so that the disruption to students' education is spread across the school.

**At present we anticipate being open for all year-groups on Wednesday, 18 March.**

### Event postponements

In view of the Prime Minister's statement, we have regrettably decided to postpone:

- the Year 11 Parents' Evening scheduled for Wednesday 25th March;
- the School Concert scheduled for Wednesday 1st April; and
- Year 9 options interviews.

We will be in touch as and when we are able to rearrange these events.

Some extra-curricular activities are being cancelled – such as most sporting fixtures. Others, however, including Revise Till 5, will be able to continue. Please assume that extra-curricular activities are **continuing** unless you are advised otherwise.

### Attendance matters

We are receiving a number of calls from parents and carers asking about self-isolation, and whether their child should attend school – for example, if they are living with someone with an underlying health condition. Unfortunately, because we are not medically trained, we can only repeat the advice given on the .nhs.uk and .gov.uk websites. If your situation is not covered by that advice, please ring the Department for Education's Coronavirus helpline on 08000 468687. They are open from 8am to 6pm during the week, and from 10am to 4pm at weekends. Alternatively, if you (or someone you live with) are currently under medical care for an underlying health condition, your (or their) consultant may be able to advise you further.

### Ongoing hygiene

Please continue to encourage your son/daughter to wash their hands frequently throughout the day, and to catch coughs and sneezes. If it is possible, providing them with hand sanitizers and tissues will help in this regard.

### Mental health, and online safety concerns

We are aware that some pupils may be genuinely worried about the current circumstances, whilst others seem to be unaware how serious the messages about hand-washing *etc* are. Despite the fact that the Drama Hall is currently unavailable for Assemblies, we are continuing to help all students keep the situation in perspective. If you are concerned about your son or daughter's frame of mind at the moment, please let us know.

If schools are closed nationally, we have plans to continue providing learning online. Please do take the opportunity to discuss online safety with your son or daughter in advance of likely increased levels of online activity – we will be raising this issue in school too.

A key message is the need to "*be kind*" online. We will be telling pupils that at a time of national crisis, we all need to pull together and do everything we can to help each other – online and offline. I have read several inspiring stories telling how people have shown deep kindness to others during this pandemic – running errands for self-isolators, for example, or providing some much-needed social contact for senior citizens – and it would be great to think that St Margaret's pupils would be similarly moved to help in this way.

It is likely there will be further changes to the advice we have been given in the next few days. We will, of course, continue to keep you informed.

If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Yours faithfully,



Stephen Brierley  
Principal