

11th December, 2020



Dear Parent/Carer

Coronavirus Update 37

Cordial greetings from St Margaret's as we enter the final stages of this term. As ever, I trust that you and your family are well.

It's been a typically busy week at school, but I'm delighted to report that, for the second consecutive week, we have had no new positive test results in the St Margaret's 'family'. That's something for which all of us are truly grateful!

Attendance at school

Please can I remind all parents that students should **not** attend school if they, *or anyone else in the household*, is showing Covid symptoms (*ie* a loss or change of taste or smell, a high temperature, or a persistent cough)? This guidance is as important as ever in the run-up to Christmas – I'm sure none of us would want to be responsible for spoiling another family's Christmas through an enforced period of self-isolation.

Last day of term

Earlier this week the Government announced that it would permit schools to reschedule an INSET Day for the last day of term (Friday 18th December). Having consulted with colleagues, we've decided against doing this; as you'll know from last week's *Update*, we'd already planned a much-reduced day for students at school anyway, putting in place additional arrangements to ensure we can mark one of the most important seasons of the Christian year as safely as possible.

Post-16 students should not attend school next Friday. Pre-16 students will only be on site for an hour, and start/finish times will be staggered. The full schedule for the day is appended. Each Carol Service will last for 30 minutes and whilst students will not be singing Carols, the Year 10 and Year 11 Carol Services at least will be focussing on Carols as a way of understanding afresh how the Christmas story is even more relevant for us all this year.

Regrettably we aren't able to extend an invitation to other family members to join us for the services this year, but I am very much looking forward to celebrating the reason for the season with our students.

Christmas holidays

We naturally hope and pray that all St Margaret's families enjoy the best of health over the upcoming break. However, if your son or daughter tests positive for Coronavirus during the holidays, **we still need to know** – please e-mail admin@stmargaretsacademy.com as soon as you are able to do so.

Free School Meal vouchers

Following the Government's decision to continue Free School Meal provision for eligible families over the Christmas holidays, we have today taken delivery of a number of Asda vouchers which now need to be distributed. Each voucher is worth £30 (£15 for each week of the Christmas holidays).

If your son or daughter is entitled to Free School Meals, there are two ways to collect the voucher.

- Parents are more than welcome to come into school at any point when we are open next week and collect the voucher from Reception.
- Alternatively, parents can complete the reply-slip at the end of this letter, or e-mail admin@stmargaretsacademy.com from the e-mail address we have on file for you, to give permission for your son or daughter to collect the voucher on their behalf.

Please let us know if neither of these distribution methods are convenient for you.

Senior Citizens' Christmas Party

Of all the changes that have been forced upon us because of the pandemic restrictions, the cancellation of our senior citizens' Christmas Party has been one of the saddest. However, our Sixth Formers are nothing if not resourceful; since our guests can't come to us, our students have decided we should go to them! They have been collecting presents and wrapping them up – and they plan to visit some of the local care homes on Monday so that the gifts can be distributed. Well done to all involved on an excellent idea!

We hope to have some pictures to share in the next *Update*.

Virtual Parents' Evenings

Our second virtual Parents' Evening earlier this week went well, judging from the e-mails Year 7 and Year 11 parents have kindly sent me – although I appreciate that a number of parents experienced technological 'teething issues'. One or two parents have even suggested that we might continue Parents' Evenings this way once the pandemic restrictions are lifted, and we'll certainly look into that – though we'll consult fully with both parents and staff before any final decision is made.

We're also planning to consult with you next term about changes to the timings of the school day. Officially, our school day still runs from 8:45am to 3:15pm (2:30pm on Thursdays) – the current arrangements are a temporary variation because of the pandemic. We've found that some (but by no means all) aspects of how we're operating now have worked well enough for us to consider making them permanent – though again, there will be a full consultation before the Governors make any decision on the matter.

Homework next week

We're mindful that many Key Stage 3 students have worked particularly hard with the knowledge-based homework over the last few weeks. Conscious that they need a break, we've decided **not** to set homework during the last week of term (although Maths, English and Art, which set other styles of homework, will continue as usual next week). Normal service will be resumed next term.

Assessment

Getting feedback from pupils – understanding how much they've actually learnt – is, of course, one of the most important parts of teaching. There's no point in learning about Pythagoras' Theorem if you don't understand about square-roots, for example! But getting that feedback has been very difficult for teachers this term. Circulating round the classroom is virtually impossible with social distancing requirements, and collecting students' books in at the end of every lesson (which is what we were doing before last March) is potentially dangerous as those books could transmit the virus.

To resolve this problem, next term we will be running a series of assessment days (one per month), where the normal timetable is suspended and students instead complete nine 30-minute assessments throughout the day. These are not normal 'tests', though. The results of the assessments will not

be shared with students or parents, and neither will students be moved to different classes based on their performance. The purpose of the assessment is simply to inform future teaching. Teachers will use the work that students do on these days to establish how effectively students have learnt what they've been taught so far – so that they can then adjust their future teaching to address any gaps in students' knowledge and understanding.

A more traditional end of year assessment will take place in the summer term; further details will be provided towards the end of the spring term.

The schedule for these diagnostic assessment days will be as follows.

	Assessment 1	Assessment 2	Assessment 3	Assessment 4
Year 7	Friday 29.01.21	Wednesday 24.02.21	Tuesday 30.03.21	Monday 17.05.21
Year 8	Friday 29.01.21	Thursday 25.02.21	Wednesday 31.03.21	Monday 17.05.21
Year 9	Friday 29.01.21	Thursday 25.02.21	Wednesday 31.03.21	Tuesday 18.05.21
Year 10	Friday 29.01.21	Thursday 25.02.21	Tuesday 30.03.21	Monday 17.05.21

This schedule has been devised so that the assessments don't fall on students' short day, and don't affect each day's lessons more than once.

Finally...

Best wishes to all St Margaret's families as the season of Advent continues. We'll be in touch again, briefly, on **Thursday** next week.

Yours faithfully



Stephen Brierley
Principal.

Name of student entitled to Free School Meals: _____ **Form:** _____

I give permission for the student named above to collect the Christmas holiday Asda voucher from the school office.

Signed: _____ Date: December 2020

Your son/daughter should now bring this reply-slip to the main school office where it will be exchanged for the Asda voucher.

Arrangements for the last day of term, Christmas 2020

St Margaret's Church of England Academy

	Year 7		Year 8		Year 9		Year 10			Year 11			
	7C 7L 7P	7R 7S 7W	8C 8L 8P	8R 8S 8W	9C 9L 9P	9R 9S 9W	10C 10L	10P 10R	10S 10W	11C 11L	11P 11R	11S 11W	
08:35													08:35
09:00										C Sv Dr H			09:00
09:05	Form time												09:05
09:20										Form time			09:20
09:30	Carol Service St Anne's										Carol Service Drama Hall		09:30
09:35													09:35
09:45													09:45
09:50		Form time											09:50
10:00													10:00
10:05		Form time											10:05
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10:20		Carol Service St Anne's											10:20
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School closes for Christmas													