

17th December, 2020



Dear Parent/Carer

### **Coronavirus Update 38**

A very happy Christmas to all St Margaret's families! I know this has been a difficult year for many of us, and that even our Christmas celebrations are having to be curbed because of the pandemic – but Christians are people of hope, and Christmas is a season filled with hope, so my prayer for our community is for “*strength for today, and bright hope for tomorrow*” whatever our current circumstances.

### **Goodbye**

We're saying farewell this week to two members of staff who are leaving us for pastures new.

Miss Richards joined the Business Studies team just over two years ago and during her time with us she has worked tirelessly to ensure her students have made good progress in their lessons. I know many of them will remember her lessons with genuine affection. She's leaving us to pursue fresh opportunities after Christmas, but she leaves with our best wishes for whatever the future may hold.

Mr Stewart joined us a newly-qualified Maths teacher just over four years ago, and quickly made himself at home within the Maths team. We're naturally very sorry to see him leave us as he moves on to a new post in Wales – their gain is very much our loss! But all of us would like to wish Mr Stewart every success in his new job, and look forward to hearing about his adventures over the border in due course.

### **Important: Christmas holidays notifications**

As I commented last week, 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 develops Coronavirus symptoms (a loss of change in taste or smell, a high temperature or a persistent cough) within 48 hours of their last having been in school **and** subsequently tests positive, **please let us know as soon as possible** by e-mailing [admin@stmargaretsacademy.com](mailto:admin@stmargaretsacademy.com). Please also include the best 'phone number to contact you, so we can carry out a contact-tracing exercise over the 'phone.

It is not essential to inform us about other positive cases or self-isolation advice during the holidays, although it would be helpful for us to know. If your son or daughter has to self-isolate and will miss the start of next term, please let us know at the start of next term.

### **Stop Press: start of next term**

Whilst I've been finishing this *Update*, news has broken that the “*return to secondary school in January will be staggered in England, with some starting online rather than in class*” (according to the BBC). Reports suggest that Years 11 and 13 will return as scheduled on 4th January, but as at this point in time (1:30pm on 17th December) I have not received any formal notification about what we are supposed to do.

Update at 2:30pm: latest reports suggest that key workers' children and vulnerable children will also be able to restart on Monday 4th; all other students will restart on Monday 11th. I assume the definition of “*key workers*” (and of “*vulnerable*” children) will be the same as last term. **If your**

**son or daughter is in Year 7, 8, 9, 10 or 12 and meets either of these sets of criteria, please e-mail [sbrierley@stmargaretsacademy.com](mailto:sbrierley@stmargaretsacademy.com) if you would like them to attend school during the first week of next term.**

It would be inappropriate for me to share all my thoughts on this matter; suffice it to say (a) that the Association of School and College Leaders has commented that “*it beggars belief that this announcement is being made now*”, and (b) that we’ll be in touch as and when we receive more details. In the meantime, please accept my apologies for the uncertainty, which is (as I’m sure you’ll understand) due to circumstances beyond our control.

### **Spreading Christmas cheer...**

Our Sixth Formers have been out delivering presents to local Care homes this week, and whilst we don’t have any pictures to share, I do know that their presents were very well received. A sincere thank you to everyone in the Sixth Form team who helped this happen! Hopefully next year we’ll be able to host a full-scale Senior Citizens’ Lunch again.

### **Finally...**

I’d like to take this opportunity to thank St Margaret’s families for their unprecedented support over the last term. The number of kind messages we’ve received over the last few months have sustained me, and the whole St Margaret’s team, during these very challenging times.

I’d also like to take the opportunity to wish all St Margaret’s families a peaceful, joy-filled Christmas, even if it’s not being celebrated in the same way as usual. Speaking personally, I’ve always regarded Christmas as being so much more significant than New Year, and have celebrated accordingly; but this year I think many of us will be particularly keen to mark the New Year, even if only to say goodbye to a frankly awful 2020. But as I said at the outset, Christians are people of hope – and we all hope that 2021 is an improvement on 2020. A very happy Christmas and a better New Year to you and your family!

Yours faithfully



Stephen Brierley  
Principal.