

15th January, 2021



Dear Parent/Carer

### **Coronavirus Update 42**

In the blink of an eye, another Friday is upon us. I trust that you and your family have coped well with the first full week of our third national lockdown; however you're coping, the team here at St Margaret's is more than willing to offer a helping hand to anyone who gets in touch with us.

The week at St Margaret's has not been the easiest: there has been a number of confirmed positive cases amongst the staff and students here in the last seven days, with a number self-isolating as a result. Our thoughts and prayers go out for all those who are struggling with ill-health at this time – we wish every one a speedy recovery, and peace at a difficult time.

This is, perhaps, an opportune moment to remind all St Margaret's families that the rules about coming into school haven't changed.

- If your son or daughter has any of the Coronavirus symptoms (temperature, cough, loss/change in taste/smell), they should self-isolate and **not** come into school.
- Likewise, if anyone in your household has any of the Coronavirus symptoms, the whole household should self-isolate and no-one from the family should come into school.

In both scenarios, anyone who is symptomatic should get a test (which is the only reason why people are allowed to leave the house if someone in the household is symptomatic).

The health and safety of all of us working on site is dependent on every St Margaret's family following these rules – and I'm very grateful to everyone who has complied with them assiduously over the last 10 months.

Educationally, most lessons are continuing to be taught online, at the same times as the normal school timetable. I know that a number of students have appreciated the structure this gives to their day. However, it's not possible for us to deliver all lessons in this way (*eg* if a teacher is absent); under these circumstances work will be set in 'Assignments'. We're finding that teaching such large numbers of live lessons is a major undertaking by our teachers (and can put significant strain on our ICT infrastructure), so please bear with us when it isn't possible to do this.

### **Onsite provision**

Following the letter from Matt Ashton (Director of Public Health) and Steve Reddy (Director of Children's Services) which I circulated earlier in the week, the numbers of students onsite has dropped from being in the 70s last week to the 60s this week, and the 40s today (as a number of Year 7s are self-isolating). Thank you to all those who have been able to accommodate their son or daughter at home for a few more days in order to help keep infection rates low. Please do remember to send your son or daughter in with headphones if they are coming into school.

We're continuing to liaise with the City Council about the provision of a testing site here at school, and I anticipate being in a position to share more details about this next week.

### **News of a former student**

Last week I mentioned former student Charlotte Walsh and her silicon straws. Regrettably the link to her website didn't work – sorry about that! This [link](#) has been corrected.

### Dr Silverstone writes...

Since school is once again closed to most students, can I please remind you of the [safeguarding@stmargaretsacademy.com](mailto:safeguarding@stmargaretsacademy.com) inbox? If you have any questions or concerns regarding safeguarding or pastoral care, please contact us at that address.

Second, in the light of lockdown and the increasing amount of time young people are spending on digital devices, I'd recommend having a look at Childnet website ([www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)), which has a wealth of resources for families to ensure children can stay safe online. A good place to start is their resource sheet, which you'll find at <https://www.childnet.com/resources/parents-and-carers-resource-sheet>.

Finally, for those parents and carers whose children are working on site, please be aware that where students are required to upload work to Microsoft Teams, they may use their mobile 'phone to do so. Using their 'phones for any other purpose continues to be prohibited.

### Free School Meals

Liverpool City Council has provided us with supermarket vouchers for those entitled to Free School Meals. The vouchers cover the weeks beginning Monday 4th January and Monday 11th January, and will be posted out to those who are entitled to them today. Please note that you will be given two weeks of vouchers even if your son has been in school at some point in 2021.

It has been announced that from Monday 18th January, we will be returning to the national online voucher scheme (run by a company called Edenred) for students entitled to Free School Meals who are not in school. I appreciate that this may not be welcome news for those of us who wrestled with their system for much of the summer... although to be fair, it did improve as time went on.

We don't have many more details about how the scheme will work this time – I expect there'll be more to share about this next week. However it would help if all families entitled to Free School Meals could e-mail [officestaff@stmargaretsacademy.com](mailto:officestaff@stmargaretsacademy.com) from the e-mail address you'd like us to use for your vouchers. Please include your child's name and form in the subject-line of the e-mail. This will hopefully prevent the difficulties that can arise when vouchers are sent to an old (and unused) e-mail address that is nonetheless still on our records!

### Calendar dates

We'd previously advertised that there will be a Year 9 Parents' Evening next week. Regrettably this will now have to be rescheduled, and the timings for the Year 9 Options process along with it. We'll let you know the new schedule within the next couple of weeks.

### Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme – a message for Year 9 families

For those who may not be familiar with the scheme: *“The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is a youth awards programme, a life-changing experience, a fun time with friends. An opportunity to discover new interests and talents. A tool to develop essential skills for life and work. A recognised mark of achievement; respected by employers.”*

Mrs Niblock, our scheme co-ordinator, writes: *“St Margaret's has been involved with the Duke of Edinburgh scheme for many years and we offer the Award at each level to students from Year 9 upwards.*

*“As with everything, the virus has affected it this year. We do however, want to introduce it to Year 9 as during lockdown, as Year 9 students can still get involved with some elements at this time.*

*“The scheme comprises an expedition (which of course is on hold), a skill, a volunteering section and a physical section. Students can still undertake these three through ‘D of E with a difference’, which has relaxed rules about the activities that can be completed. Students can achieve a certificate whilst completing activities in lockdown, for example by doing exercise or going for a run regularly for the physical element, or by delivering shopping to a neighbour for the volunteering element. There are lots of other activities, which I can share and discuss with you.*

*“If you would like more information, please follow [this link](#) to declare an interest and I will be in touch: [D of E Bronze Interest form](#)”.*

I’ll be in touch again next Friday. Until then, please stay safe, and stay hopeful; rarely has the old dictum *“the darkest hour is just before the dawn”* seemed more appropriate (even if, scientifically, it’s rather inaccurate!).

Yours faithfully

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

Stephen Brierley  
Principal.