



Friday 8th December

Dear Parent/Carer

Parental Update 131

Good afternoon! As ever, I trust our fortnightly *Update* finds you in good health and spirits. And I also trust you received our 'special edition' *Update* earlier this week, which outlined arrangements for our Carol Service in just under a fortnight's time. If you didn't receive it – or if you ever want to check out a back issue – all *Parental Updates* are available on line [here](#). And if you would like receiving the *Updates* in a different format (eg in Braille), please e-mail us through [this link](#) and we'll make the necessary arrangements.

Attendance

Mr Gibbons writes: *"You may have noticed that there has been a much higher focus on attendance this year compared to previous years. The national picture tells us that school absence nationwide remains at a worryingly high rate since the pandemic. Research has proven a link between school absence and reduced outcomes in adult life.*

"Here at St Margaret's, our year-to-date attendance figure for Years 7 to 11 is 91.1%. At the same time last year it was 93.6%. So I'd like to stress again the importance of school attendance. A single missed day, for example, is 5 hours of education lost that needs to be caught up.

"A common cause of absence this year so far has been illness. While we appreciate that in a numbers of cases, the symptoms some bugs and viruses may best be cared for at home, please do consider the severity of the illness before opting to remove children from education. After all, one of our school values is resilience! If in doubt, please send your child in and we can always call and ask for them to be collected if they absolutely cannot cope.

"At St Margaret's, we are proud ourselves in supporting all students to reach their full potential. Please support us in doing so by making school attendance a matter of priority with your child(ren)."

A new School Management Information system

In recent months, the school has begun the process of changing IT systems with the aim of using only one system for all our various school functions. This is an exciting development for us as it will streamline a range of different activities for us as a school and for you as parents and carers. At the moment we use several different apps or systems such as ParentMail and Class Charts. From 9th January 2024 onwards, we will begin a phased introduction of some new software called Arbor.

Parents and carers will still be able to use ParentPay to deposit money on their child's account. The option to add money *via* Arbor will not be available until later in 2024. Please be assured that all money left on your child's account will be automatically transferred to your new accounts on Arbor.

Arbor will become our main form of communication between home and school, it will be our payments system for school meals and trips, it will share attendance and behaviour data, it will set out homework for pupils, and it will share reports on attainment. This will allow you to use one app for all matters relating to school.

We are asking that all parents and carers download the Arbor app (available from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#)) before the end of the year as, from January, we will be rolling out the new functions.

Detailed instructions will be emailed out to parents and carers from January, but there are a few things to keep in mind before attempting to log in for the first time.

- To log-in, parents and guardians must have an email address on file with the school. If you have not currently supplied the school with a contact email address please get in touch via admin@stmargaretsacademy and let us know your child's name and date of birth.
- Parents and carers have separate accounts to access, but this will only work if you have unique email addresses. If you share an email address this may cause difficulties for the system.
- If you have more than one child in our school you should be able to access all of their details via the one account. If, when you log in in January, you cannot see all your children on Arbor, please contact school and we will link the accounts correctly.

Please download the app as soon as possible and look out for an email with instructions on how to access Arbor from 9th January!

Charity appeals

Thank you if your son or daughter supported our Christmas Jumper Day today! It was good to see a number of students taking part, and early indications are we've raised a good sum of money for Save The Children. (At the time of writing it hasn't all been counted!).

Thank you too if you've been able to contribute to The Stable Project, a project for the homeless run by St Mary's, Grassendale. We're proud to be supporting them this year in their work, do please keep sending in items such as toiletries, gloves, socks, or pre-loved back-packs/sleeping bags! The deadline for all donations is this coming Tuesday, 12th December.

A special guest article from Jonathan Dickson, Head of Liverpool's Music Service

"It has been a magical couple of days for #100Voices United, our choir made up of secondary schools and the fantastic Ukrainian Children's Choir. After months of rehearsing we travelled down to Wembley Arena to record a performance for the ITV New Year's Eve Big Bash hosted by Jason Manford and a star-studded cast including Take That, Cheryl Cole and headlining, our very own #100 Voices Choir. Ten talented students from our school took part and at every stage represented the school brilliantly. It was an experience they will never forget.

" Well done to all and don't forget to tune in, ITV New Year's Eve!"

Thank you to Mr Dickson and to the Music Service for such an amazing opportunity – and a huge thank you to Miss Smith too for her commitment and dedication in enabling it all to happen!

Christmas concert

Continuing the musical theme, our Christmas concert will be held at 6:30pm on Wednesday 13th December. These events are always amazing, and you would be very warmly welcome if you are able to attend!

Message for Year 7 Parents: Christingle Service

Our annual Year 7 Christingle Service will take place in St Anne's Church (just next door to St Margaret's) on Tuesday 18th December at 9:00am, and will last about 45 minutes. **All Year 7 parents are welcome to join us for the occasion**, and also to join us for some seasonal refreshments afterwards. We look forward to seeing you if you're able to join us!

Light up a Life

For many years, St Margaret's has welcomed applications from Christians of all denominations – and in particular, in recent times a number of boys from local Roman Catholic churches have gained places at St Margaret's. Through our connections with All Saints Multi-Academy Trust we've been made aware of a "Light up a Life" service at the Metropolitan Cathedral – as part of which there'll be an opportunity for attendees to place a star on the Christmas tree in the cathedral and 'light up a life' as a gift for someone who may be away from home this Christmas, or in memory of a loved one.

The service is open to all, regardless of faith commitment or denomination; it takes place from 12:30pm to 1:30pm on Friday 15th December. If you son or daughter has experienced the loss of a loved one in the last year and would like to attend the service, please contact Mrs Harding at kharding@stmargaretsacademy.com by the end of school on Wednesday 13th December. I'm delighted we're able to offer this opportunity to our students; as I often say, our work as Christians is even better when we work together.

Finally...

Our Assemblies this week have focussed on our value of 'Respect', exploring the idea that *everyone* is worthy of respect regardless of age, gender, race, religion *etc*. Please do reinforce this message if you have the opportunity to over the next few days!

We'll be in touch again just before the end of term.

Yours faithfully,



Stephen Brierley

Principal.