



St John Fisher Catholic High School

EDUCATING FOR LIFE

Hookstone Drive, Harrogate, HG2 8PT

Head Teacher: Mr S Mort B.A. (Hons), NPQH

Telephone: (01423) 887254 Website: www.sjfchs.org.uk Email: office@sjfchs.org.uk

4th August 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you and your families are safe and well during these challenging and uncertain times.

The Government has announced that schools should fully re-open to all year groups from the start of the autumn term 2020. This decision was based on the prevalence of coronavirus decreasing, the NHS test and trace system being in place, greater clarity regarding the measures that need to be in place to create safe environments in schools, the low risk to children of becoming severely ill from coronavirus and the time out of school being detrimental to children's development.

The Government provided updated guidance for the opening of all schools on 27th July 2020. We are currently following this guidance in preparing for the safe return of all staff and students to St John Fisher Catholic High School in September. Our preparations entail carrying out a detailed risk assessment, making improvements to the school premises, adapting the learning environment and ensuring we fully implement all the Government health and safety measures.

We will also be making some changes to the school timetable and adapting our daily operating procedures to ensure we are meeting the Government guidance in relation to minimising contact between individuals, maintaining social distancing between different groups of students and keeping student movement around the school to a minimum. Once we have implemented all the health and safety measures, we will ensure the risk assessment is made available to parents/carers.

I appreciate that some parents/carers will be concerned about their child returning to school. Whilst I have provided some initial information in this letter, I intend to provide further updates prior to the start of the new term. This will include a comprehensive re-opening guide which will be a practical guide for parents/carers and will support our student's reintegration in September.

The safety of staff and students is of the utmost importance. Therefore, we have planned for a phased start to the year in order that we can best inform and prepare staff and students for how we intend to operate, from the outset, and what we expect of each other in doing so.

Monday 7th September 2020 - Whole staff training day

Tuesday 8th September 2020 - Year 7 and Year 12 only

Wednesday 9th September 2020 - All Year groups; 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13





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To ensure we provide a broad and balanced curriculum, all students will follow their normal timetable and we will not be amending or staggering the start and end times of the school day. We will be operating with year group 'bubbles' to limit contact between students from different year groups. Wherever possible, students will be taught in the same classroom or zone to keep student movement around school to a minimum. However, students will move to specialist classrooms for practical subjects e.g. Science and Technology following a one-way system.

Attendance is mandatory for all students from the beginning of the Autumn Term. We will therefore be recording and monitoring attendance and will follow up on any absences. If your child has been staying at home due to the current shielding guidance, the government is due to pause this guidance on 1 August, dependent upon there being a continued decline in coronavirus transmission rates. This means your child should be able to come back to school in September. However, if you have received clinical or public health advice that your children should remain at home, please continue to follow that guidance and inform the school of your child's absence in September. Students who are shielding in September will be educated remotely.

The Government is encouraging all schools to return to their normal uniform policy but there is no expectation that staff or students use face coverings in schools. The Governors expect that, in choosing St John Fisher Catholic High School, parents/carers will fully support us in implementing and maintaining an outstanding standard of student dress code across the whole school - including in the Sixth Form. All students will be expected to be in full uniform from the beginning of the new term including on the way to and from school. On days that students have a timetabled P.E. lesson they will be expected to come in to school in their full P.E. kit and blazer. Students are also permitted, if they wish to do so, to wear track suit pants (not leggings) on these days. Where possible, please could students wear black or blue tracksuit pants.

The uniform policy is currently available on the school website. Please could I request that parents/carers particularly support us in ensuring your child wears formal black (non-branded) leather shoes. Trainers (including black trainers) and canvas shoes are not permitted. Girls must wear the school kilt at knee length and the length of the skirt should not be altered or rolled up at the waist. Shirts must be worn tucked in and with all shirt buttons fastened.

Uniforms do not need to be cleaned any more often than usual, nor do they need to be cleaned using methods which are different from normal. We appreciate that, due to the financial impact of Covid19, purchasing a new uniform may be challenging for some families. If this is applicable to your family, please contact your child's Head of Year for a confidential discussion regarding how we can best support you.





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There has been a lot of reference in the media to a 'Recovery Curriculum.' This term is being used to describe how schools will support students to 'recover' from the period of lost teaching and learning as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. We are considering the impact of Covid-19 on our student's mental health and academic progress with careful thought and clear determination.

The education of every secondary school student in the country has been affected by Covid-19. Therefore, we believe it is vital that we do not instil panic in our students and will avoid at all costs them feeling like they are behind. It will serve no purpose to students to start the next academic year by constantly testing students to find 'gaps' in their learning, or by reminding them of what they have missed. All children learn at different paces and all children have times where they find learning a challenge – this is healthy, and we will ensure staff are well-prepared for how to support our students during this time.

At the heart of good teaching is strong and positive relationships. Our absolute priority is to reach out and greet our students in September and to rebuild strong home-school links. Many children have been disconnected from their wider family, friends and teachers for five months. It is therefore vitally important that we support them with the transition back into school routines – both pastorally and academically. The second thing we must do is look carefully at our curriculum and prioritise what our students must learn, and the knowledge and skills they need to have acquired to move forward rapidly and succeed in public examinations.

Senior Leaders and Heads of Department have adopted an evidence-based approach to supporting our students' transition back to full time education. This has entailed engaging with the research by nationally recognised educationalists such as Barry Carpenter, Mary Myatt and James Durran. Evidence suggests children (and parents) are likely to feel anxious about the return and will need support, reassurance and positivity when they come back. We are currently producing recovery plans for all areas of the curriculum which will be implemented from the beginning of the new term, and details of which will be shared with parents/carers in September.

I hope this first update has explained some of the thinking behind our approach to addressing the lost teaching and learning resulting from the Covid-19 crisis and provided some re-assurance that we are preparing diligently and thoroughly for the safe return of staff and students in September.

Yours sincerely

Mr. S. Mort

Headteacher

