



Holy Family Catholic School & Sixth Form

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Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to give you all an update as to what we understand about secondary schools re-opening. At present there is no plan for any year group as a whole to return to school on a daily basis. You may have seen reports in the media that the government would like Yr 10 and Yr 12 students to be the first secondary school students to return. They have asked us to prepare for this possibility and we are doing that at the moment but there is **no date set** when those students are expected to return to school. There are currently **no plans** for other yeargroups (i.e. Yrs, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 13) to return to school anytime soon and probably not until September 2020.

This has been a very difficult time for everyone and I want to thank all of you as parents/carers for the support you have given to your children. It is not easy trying to home-school your own children and it can seem very daunting if we don't feel confident about the material or quite sure about how to help. I know there are also other issues some families are facing including lack of access to computers and laptops, financial issues and also the strain of working from home and supervising your children at the same time. I also don't underestimate the stress that some people are going through given the wider context of lockdown, bereavement and fears about the future.

I am aware too that there is particular concern among members of the BAME communities at the heightened risk of serious illness occurring if COVID19 is contracted and the worse outcomes for members of these communities following hospitalisation. We will be doing all that we can as a school to ensure that we make the school as safe and clean as possible so that when we do return (and I emphasise again, we currently have no date for that) the risk of infection is absolutely minimised and we help everyone to stay safe and well. We are reviewing the health risks of all staff to ensure that we minimise the risk to everyone.

We will be carrying out a thorough risk assessment of every aspect of the school this week. This will enable us to begin planning to minimise risk at school. This will include maintaining social distancing and keeping the school environment hygienic and clean. We will be employing some cleaning staff who will be on site throughout each day so that they can be continually wiping surfaces, door handles and other high contact areas of the school. We will be monitoring the health of all staff and students and referring anyone with symptoms for a test under the government's testing programme. We shall be limiting class sizes to a maximum of fifteen students and we will be placing signage around the school to indicate where to line

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up, how to queue for lunch etc. We shall be staggering social times and lunchtimes to avoid crowded situations. We will be amending the timetable so that we do not hold assemblies for example and so that the timetable is simplified to enable students to move around as little as possible.

I hope this will provide you with some reassurance that, **if and when**, we are required to re-open for some students the school will be as prepared as it possibly can be. As you will be aware we have, in fact, been open every day since the lockdown to cater for the children of key workers and students who need support. We have about 25 students attending each day so we have already gained some experience of how to deal with the issues that COVID19 places on us. Over half of our teaching and support staff have taken part in our rota to provide care and support for these students and to keep the school working. Other staff have been working from home, setting work, contacting students and grading assessments for Yrs 11 and 13. There will clearly be greater challenges to accommodate if we open the school to more students and that is why our risk assessment and planning process is so important.

My view is that we will have to accept that COVID19 is going to be with us for some time and that a vaccine may well take a year or more to produce and distribute. We are therefore going to have to live with a degree of risk. We will have to find a way to ensure that our young people receive the education to which they are entitled, are kept safe and that our staff are too. I am confident that we can do this if we work together. It is very important for our young people to be able to come back to school and that is what everyone in the school community wants to see. Home learning will never be an effective substitute for the face to face teaching and support that goes on in school. In addition students are missing the structure and support they gain from being at school and also the social contact and opportunities that school provides for them.

Next week is the May half-term week. It is our view that everyone needs a break and therefore the school will be closed to students next week. If you are a key worker and this causes you particular issues then please get in touch and we will advise you as to what other options are open to you. I know that you as parents/carers, the students and the staff will appreciate a break so I will be directing staff not to set work or expect it to be submitted during the half-term holiday.

Thank you for your continued support of the school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Stone". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'S'.

Dr Andy Stone
Headteacher