

St Wilfrid's Catholic School

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Headteacher: Michael Ferry BEd (Hons) MA NPQH

Diocese of Arundel & Brighton and West Sussex County Council

14 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

You will undoubtedly be aware of the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday where he stated that it was the government's "ambition" that "secondary students facing exams next year will get at least some time with their teachers before the holidays". Sunday's statement has been followed by guidance from the government, however this can be best described as being "unclear" and there has been concern expressed nationally about this. The main cause for concern is that of the safety of students and staff alike. To that end, although the date of 1st June has been seen as the "re-opening" of schools, this is dependent upon the government meeting its "5 Key tests". An announcement on this is scheduled for 28th May and given the uncertainties which still exist, I can confirm that we **will not** be in a position to invite more students back to school on 1st June.

I, along with many other Headteachers, have raised questions with the Department for Education, the Local Authority, as well as with our local MP, and currently we await more information. As well as issues of safety, a significant question which remains unanswered is that of "what does the examination season look like next year?", as this is crucial when it comes to planning what we can do this term for our Year 10 and 12 students. As far as is possible at this time, I will give a brief summary of what the announcement/guidance currently means for different groups of students:

Year 10 and 12 Students:

The combination of a lack of teaching staff (almost 25% of teachers are unavailable due to shielding restrictions) and having to maintain social distancing means that our ability to offer anything anywhere near to a "normal" curriculum is severely restricted, in fact, it is impossible. I am hopeful that we will be able to do something, but we will not be able to do everything. To that end, over the next few weeks we will be planning for what we can do once we have a greater degree of clarity over the questions raised following the publication of the guidance.

As I mentioned in my previous letter, any decision as to the "what next?" will be based first and foremost on the health and safety of students and staff alike. I will contact you again with details of what we are able to offer as soon as I am able. I fully understand the anxieties of students and parents/carers at this time and I can assure you that we will do our very best to "do what we can, when we can". One issue I can confirm is that anything which we are able to organise will not be compulsory, and should you as a family decide that you wish your son/daughter to not participate, there would be no issue of fines for non-attendance.

Year 7, 8 and 9 Students:

The guidance makes no allowance for schools to invite students in these year groups to return during this academic year, and as such, work will continue to be set remotely by the class teachers. I fully appreciate that this is not ideal and will be a disappointment to students, parents and carers alike. As we approach what would have been half term we will be reviewing the type and amount of work set to ensure as far as is possible that we can maintain levels of learning which are purposeful, whilst not overloading students, and as such prevent any undue stress and anxiety.

To offer some form of reassurance, when we hopefully return in September, we will ensure that as far as is possible our curriculum is adapted to "make up for lost time" (there is plenty of time left before the end of Year 11) and that students are supported as fully as possible as they return in their new year groups.

Year 6:

Parents/carers of students in Year 6 will undoubtedly be concerned about what any “transition” programme will look like given the current restrictions. As I mentioned in my last letter, I have held discussions with Miss Law (Year Leader for Year 7) as well as other colleagues and plans for transition are underway although, as I have mentioned previously, it will be different to what we would usually do. Again, once I am in a position to confirm arrangements I will write separately to all Year 6 parents/carers.

Finally, I would like to say “thank you” to you as parents and carers for your continued support, and to students I would like to say “thank you and well done” for all of your hard work over the last 8 weeks, and ask you to keep going. I know it is hard but rest assured that all of your teachers are really looking forward to the day when we can all come back to school and be together again. Please continue to stay safe and well, look after each other and, as I have said, I will write again in due course once I am able to confirm any arrangements.

Best wishes and take care.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Ferry', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Michael Ferry
Headteacher