



St Mary's Catholic School

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where everyone can succeed



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Dear Parents and Carers

19th March 2020

We continue to remember in our thoughts and prayers at school, anyone suffering as a result of the COVID-19 virus. I hope everyone is managing to cope and support each other. Following last night's Government announcement, this is a further brief update to keep you informed.

School closure and continued attendance from next week for a minority of students

As you will know, schools are to close to students on Friday 20th March, until further notice, other than for children of critical workers, vulnerable children and those with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs). We are awaiting guidance later today on who precisely these groups are and who is responsible for identifying individual children and communicating with you about arrangements for next week. As soon as we have clarity on this, we will share it.

Cancellation of public exams

This was the biggest shock within last night's announcement. Supporting Year 11/Year 13 students was, therefore, top priority first thing today, once we established staffing numbers to ensure all students were safely supervised. I held special assemblies with Year 11/Year 13 to offer support, reassurance and to make clear to them how much we feel for them and reassure them that we will be doing our utmost to support them. I stressed that the message is clear that they will receive their qualifications, despite not sitting exams, but that we don't yet know how this will be done. I told them that we are expecting an answer to this tomorrow, Friday, and this will be shared with them (and you). I encouraged them to try to stay positive, support each other and not cause themselves further anxiety by speculating about what will happen. Hopefully, answers tomorrow will bring further reassurance.

I explained to students that whatever is announced, we will maintain strong communication with them (and you), as there will be much to support them with over the weeks to come. We are thinking about how we will do this and what the issues are for students that will need our guidance and support. I hope they took some comfort from this.

Contacting year 11 and year 13 staff

Our staff continue to do an amazing job in challenging circumstances. I would be grateful if, at this time, they are not contacted by individual parents, seeking answers to general questions around, for example, how qualifications will be awarded, what will happen about university etc. I have explained to students that nobody has answers today to these legitimate questions. I am requesting patience from everyone, and, if there was a need to ask a burning question about these things, for that to be channelled through Mrs McEwan, Mr McKeating, Miss Patterson or me.

As noted in my letter yesterday, arrangements are being finalised for online learning for various year groups while the school is shut and this will be shared with you and children from tomorrow. Similarly, we are fully supporting the Local Authority efforts to coordinate free school meals support and will keep you posted.

Please look out for a further update tomorrow. Thank you for your patience with all of the above.

Yours faithfully

J Foster

Headteacher

National Teaching School
designated by



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

