



19<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

Further to my recent letter to update you regarding the impact of Coronavirus COVID-19 on St Mary's College, further Government announcements have moved the situation forward significantly.

To summarise the key messages as things stand:

- Schools across the UK, including St Mary's will be closed to the vast majority of students from Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 until further notice.
- There will remain an on-site provision for a minority of specifically identified students
- Examinations in May and June are cancelled

### **What does this mean for parents and families?**

#### On-site provision

We remain committed to supporting children and families with specific needs but must balance this with our own obligations to minimise the risks associated with maintaining an on-site provision which have been clearly outlined to us. To be clear, this will not be like a normal school experience. Students will complete their remote curriculum using on-site IT and supported by an appropriate staff presence although this is unlikely to involve subject specialists.

The students eligible for this provision will be:

#### **Children in Year 7-9 of parents who are key workers:**

It is important to clarify that this relates to families where both parents are key workers, and on the occasion where shifts, for example, mean they are unable to provide a safe environment at home between them. Given the need to minimise the associated risks as outlined above we are only able to accommodate a small number of young people with the greatest need. To this end we have identified those in Years 7-9 on the basis that older students in Years 10 and above have generally developed the independence and maturity to be at home without supervision.

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We are currently awaiting confirmation but anticipate that key workers are likely to be classified as those working in the NHS, care homes, police, fire service, teachers, education support workers and childcare staff, social workers, prison staff, local authority planners, environmental health officers, armed forces, those delivering retail goods and working in supermarkets, and those manufacturing equipment such as respirators.

This is neither an exhaustive, nor definitive list and will remain under review, however we recognise that families will be making plans to respond to the latest announcements so wanted to share our current understanding at the earliest opportunity. We also need as a **matter of urgency** to plan for demand for this service and so ask any parents/carers who have a need to access it to provide their details through a short survey which is available through the website or can be taken here:

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=qdUTV\\_BPVUGOO9qE3WcRKUIFVLwVxnZKgeDJzUw2CRhUMUoxSzVFTE1DOUNZWkJUVEJDRkZWQYV1VC4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=qdUTV_BPVUGOO9qE3WcRKUIFVLwVxnZKgeDJzUw2CRhUMUoxSzVFTE1DOUNZWkJUVEJDRkZWQYV1VC4u)

**It is important this survey is completed by no later than 1:30pm on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March.**

### **Vulnerable students:**

We will contact families and relevant agencies directly where students have been identified in this cohort, following guidance from the Government.

### Remote Learning

As outlined in my previous letter, in order to support students that no longer have access to the curriculum on site we have developed, and now launched, an innovative sharing platform called SMC Study. The platform will work through our students' Microsoft 365 account which they can access by browsing to [www.office.com](http://www.office.com) and typing in their school username and password. Details about how to log in and use the portal have been shared with students, posted home to any who have been absent in recent days and will be published on our website including a 'how to' video so that you can support children at home. Access is now live and students should log in on any device and become familiar with it in the first instance.

Work will be populated to the platform so that remote learning can begin on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March and students will have access to their curriculum, teachers, pastoral support network and key educational resources including our Reading Cloud and thousands of e-books.

It is expected that all students continue to work through their timetable as if they were in school and lessons will be set for every period of every day. We have produced guidance and tips for working remotely that will be available through the platform and also circulated to parents this week.

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We strongly encourage space for breaks and time outdoors (following Government advice) consistent with our school day and we will have mechanisms to maintain contact through our pastoral systems to support student well-being and address any concerns or anxieties. There will be guidance and advice through the core PE lessons on the remote platform for students to engage in regular physical activity, which is strongly linked to well being and health and something we wholeheartedly encourage.

### Exam cancellations

We acknowledge and share the deep frustration and concern that the announcement to cancel examinations has brought. It is not yet clear what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that students obtain the qualifications that they have worked so hard for, however we are firmly reassured by the Government and Ofqual that no student will be disadvantaged. We will ensure that all influence is exerted to impact positively on the outcomes our students receive and will post regular updates through the sharing platform to students and through our website and social media feeds to parents.

It is essential that the work ethic and commitment to study is maintained for our exam cohorts and we ask that you support students to remain fully focused at this time. Success in the next steps they take in education, employment or further training will be reliant upon the robust body of knowledge and skills that they continue to develop and refine.

As stated in my previous letter, these are unprecedented times but we remain committed absolutely to supporting the children and families we serve. We will ensure that any students who are eligible for free school meals will be provided for and will contact those families affected directly in the coming days to outline the details. We recognise the great uncertainty and anxiety that exists for many and continue to hold all of our extended community in our thoughts and prayers.

We will continue to update you regularly over the coming days and weeks.

Yours sincerely

Mr D Perry  
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