



7<sup>th</sup> January 2021

lrr/jcl/stjcovid19.07012021

Dear Parents and Carers

## **ST JOHN'S MARLBOROUGH – COVID 19**

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy New Year and to welcome you to the first of the updates that I will be sending out this term. We will be in touch as often as we need to so do look out for information which could come from a variety of areas.

### **Remote Learning**

I do hope that all students have been able to engage effectively with their timetables this week and the initial evidence is showing a very high attendance in all remote lessons. We will be following up non-attendance and any areas of concern that we pick up through our Class Charts tracking as well as making the regular phone calls home to ensure that students are safe, well and coping. We know to expect that the current arrangements are likely to be in place until at least the February half term. It is really important too that we all consider the impact of working in front of screens for prolonged periods and we will provide some advice and guidance on this in due course.

### **External Exam Announcements**

Following the Secretary of State for Education's announcement yesterday, we know that GCSE and A-level exams will not take place this summer. This decision has led to a great deal of uncertainty, anxiety and frustration for students and parents. We know now that teachers will make assessments of grades, but we do not know how this will work. The exams regulator Ofqual, are expected to publish their proposals next week and everyone will have the opportunity to respond to their consultation. Our message for students in years 11 and 13 (and indeed all other year groups) is that they should continue to work as normal.

We are currently working on the assumption that we will run mock exams once these year groups have returned to school, because these exams will give us valuable assessment evidence. We will obviously tailor mock exams to cover appropriate content and treat students as fairly as possible. We regularly make judgements of the grades we think students are most likely to achieve in their final exams; the grades students achieve this summer are not limited by these previous judgements. Students who want to achieve higher grades must attend lessons, complete work and act on feedback to improve the quality of their work. We expect vocational qualifications to take a similar approach to GCSEs and A-levels. On top of this, we have written to all the students who would have been due to take BTEC or Cambridge National Exams next week to outline our position there.

We will review our plans once we know more details of Ofqual's proposals and we will be in touch with parents of students in exam years when we have more information. We adopted a rigorous and highly accurate process to determine students' grades in 2020 and we are confident that we are ready to support students to achieve their best this summer. In the meantime, the message really is for students to carry on working as hard as they can so that the results they achieve this summer are the result of as much evidence as possible.



## **Mass Testing for COVID-19**

This directive from the Government does not appear to have gone away but we do have some time to plan our response effectively. It is likely that we will be sending out consent forms and data privacy information in due course for you to return on behalf of your son/daughter. There is also likely to be a need to formalise a volunteering system to try and support this initiative so please do look out for information on that. Thank you to all of you who have expressed an interest in supporting the school already.

## **Planned Parent/Carer Events**

These will continue this term as highlighted in the school calendar and include Year 10 and 11 Parent/Carer evenings and the Year 9 Options presentation.

## **Notification of confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases**

Despite the lock down, it still remains vital you let the school know through the COVID-19 email - [covid-19@stjohns.excalibur.org.uk](mailto:covid-19@stjohns.excalibur.org.uk) if you have any pandemic related concerns we need to be aware of. This is particularly important if you need to take a test or have a positive case. We also continue to keep up to date our dedicated area on the school website which can be found at:

<https://www.stjohns.excalibur.org.uk/latest-covid-19-information/>.

We are fortunate enough to have an Academy Nurse at St John's who monitors these concerns regularly and the sooner we know, the sooner we can take action.

The Twitter feed and school website continue to be very useful ways of staying in touch with what St John's are doing in the community, so please follow that and re-tweet if you wish.

Communication between home and school remains as important as ever and I do hope that both you and your children will feel able to contact us at anytime if you need to. Assemblies this week and next for students make clear how they can get in touch and these lines of communication should naturally extend to yourselves. In the meantime, stay safe and keep well.

With kindest regards



**Mr I Tucker**  
**Principal**

