



ARCHDIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM
ST. MARGARET MARY'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL
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Update letter to parents (1) in response to Lockdown.

January 2021

Dear Parents,

School began normally last Monday and bizarrely on Monday evening we were told to close. To those families that came to school on Monday, to all the children and staff I apologise for the disruption you had to, and are continuing to experience. It all felt somewhat chaotic and there was a distinct lack of communication about whether or not it was safe to open school. Suffice to say everyone is now in lockdown again and my sincere hope that the situation doesn't last too long and soon school can be open to everyone.

Key Worker provision. School remains open for key worker children and that provision has begun today. Can I once more stress to everyone to only use this very much as a last resort. There are many more children present and we are fast approaching nearly 20% of the school being here each day. The more children we have the harder it is to ensure social distancing and thus keep everyone safe. The key worker provision will be reviewed on January 15th and if school needs to change how it operates it I will communicate it to those concerned. A football stadium worth of people is testing positive each day and yesterday over a thousand people died, the country is in a very serious situation. The only way society can slow down the spread of this new variant is by reducing social contact, large numbers in school inevitably leads to greater mixing and further transmission of the virus. A reminder also that if anyone tests positive for the virus (staff or pupil) then individual year groups will have to self-isolate for 10 days. Please only use school if you have no other options available. A final reminder also if anyone displays any symptoms they are not to come to school.

Online Learning. The staff have worked incredibly hard over the last two days getting our online learning provision ready. It can be accessed via the homepage of the school website and you do not need a Twitter account to use it. There will be work/activities uploaded throughout the day at different times, in essence like a school day timetable. All the staff are in school every day and one member of the year group teams will be responsible on a daily basis for uploading and responding to the work sent in. A number of children/families have already begun using this facility and their work is displayed for all to see. An awful lot of work has gone into getting this ready so please use it, Mrs Logue and I will be checking in each day also looking for any



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outstanding work. I have also asked the staff to prepare packs of extra work for their children. If you want to use this resource please call up to the school office and Mrs Coney will get you a pack. If anyone needs any stationary, books, pens, pencils etc please also ring school and we can have them ready for you to collect from the school office. Whatever you need simply ask! I hope you find what we have put in place helpful.

Laptops for schools. Can I issue a note of caution when listening to certain announcements. With all of these things the devil is very much in the detail. Often what is announced is very different to what is actually happening on the ground. I applied for some extra devices before Christmas and a small number duly arrived just before we broke up. I must stress that it is a very small number of devices that we acquired, these now need to be built so they are compatible with school systems, they have to be made secure and home school agreements will need to be drawn up before any of them are given out. They will need to be returned to school when lockdown ends and this has implications for home insurance/storage. Finally our small allocation is based on the number of disadvantaged children we have, this is measured using how many families are entitled to free school meals, you can appreciate hopefully it is not quite as simple as handing out laptops to anyone that wants one. School is actively trying to address all of the above and we aim to be in a position to contact those that may be entitled to receive one if they need one, some time next week.

Free School Meals. Another announcement yesterday was the potential return of vouchers for those entitled to free school meals. The announcement gave no details about how the scheme will operate, who will manage it and when it will begin. Therefore a packed lunch will be available from Monday for those that want one each day from 11:30am at the school office. Please let the office know if you require a daily packed lunch so the cook can order the food she needs. As and when things change I will let everyone know.

Finally I want to formally write and thank the staff for their incredible efforts this week, it is very difficult planning and working in such uncertain times. Many of the staff have been poorly, live with vulnerable partners and have school age children themselves. Their professionalism and commitment to school has been second to none this week and I offer each one my sincere thanks and gratitude.

Please pray for: Everyone in our school family that we can stay safe.

Many thanks to everyone for their understanding, support and patience, it is much appreciated.

Mr Aldred Head teacher.



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