


All Hallows Catholic High School



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Headteacher: Mr C Horrocks B.A.

Dear Parent / Carer,

I am writing to confirm that the school will close at 3.05 pm today, Friday 22nd May for the half term holiday week. Once again, I would like to thank the parents who are key workers who have made alternative child care arrangements, enabling the school to close and for all teachers and pupils to have a well-earned period of rest.

In recent weeks, I have been receiving a high volume of emails from parents and it has proven difficult to respond to all of them individually in turn. Therefore, I have chosen some key, common themes and questions to address in this letter, to enable parents to better understand some of our aims and objectives for teaching and learning in this period of remote education.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the many emails I have received from parents which have been sent to praise the tremendous work teachers have carried out during the last nine weeks. I have forwarded many to particular members of staff when they have received individual recognition, but many more ask me to thank the whole staff, which I have been only too happy to share in my regular updates to the staff.

Unfortunately, working from home for many families has proven to be a difficult and stressful period. As a school community we have endeavoured to respond to cries for help and to adapt our educational provision to best support pupils and their families. The conundrum for a school is to construct a model which supports all, given that the range of concerns of parents and individual home circumstances are so diverse. In some communications, parents refer to the fact that too much work is being set which is increasing pupils' levels of anxiety. Others say that not enough work is being set which in turn increases the feeling of falling behind in learning for some pupils. Some parents have praised teachers for beginning recently to conduct whole class teaching online through platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. However, other parents have pointed out that this provision has merely placed additional pressure on households where access to the internet or electronic devices is limited.

The outstanding middle leadership at All Hallows has long been one of the key factors in delivering the excellent year on year academic outcomes for pupils. At the point of 'closure' on March 20th we had chosen to allow our curriculum areas to guide the learning in their subjects, based upon an assessment of what they believed would provide the best learning experience for their cohorts of pupils. Heads of Department met with teaching colleagues prior to lock down and decided exactly which curriculum content should be covered and how pupils may access resources most effectively in their subject. This included making decisions on whether to focus on consolidation of curriculum content, to deliver new curriculum content or to use the time to guide pupils in wider study and skill acquisition.

In addition, prior to 'closure', all pupils were asked to ensure that they had access to their school email account, as this tool would become central to maintaining contact throughout the lockdown period. Furthermore, all subject areas contributed to a manual for each year group, in which details can be found about which resources can be accessed and where to find them. These booklets remain on the school website. Pupils and their parents were also made aware that the full offer of pastoral support, to which they have become accustomed in normal circumstances, would remain available at all times. Pastoral leaders have been contacted by many families but I urge parents to continue to do so if they are worried about a lack of engagement from their children, or if they begin to show increased levels of anxiety and mental stress. I would also like to request a level of understanding regarding how successful we may be in motivating individual children to engage in

work from our remote position. We have to ask that parents exert as much influence as they can at home to encourage their children to remain focussed, however difficult that may prove.

Throughout the period of time away from school, my teaching colleagues have remained resourceful and creative in the way they have sought to tutor their pupils. As previously mentioned in this letter, some have now chosen to advance their skills and to begin to teach classes on platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. However, I have no intention to direct teachers to teach in this way. In part for the reasons I have already described, in relation to the different circumstances in the homes of our pupils, but also because of the different circumstances experienced by members of staff in their own homes. As you are aware, all of the teaching staff at All Hallows are dedicated to nurturing and growing the young people in their care, but they are not instructed to offer teaching in the way described. This will remain a matter of personal choice, once fully explored through the department system.

As detailed in my most recent letters home, school will reopen on Monday June 1st to the children of key workers only. During the half term holiday, I will continue to monitor closely advice from Central Government, the DfE, the Local Authority and the Archdiocese as we begin to make tentative plans to re-admit more pupils to school in the summer term. As with the range of views on how best to teach pupils in the period of lockdown, I am expecting parents to have a range of views on whether it is safe yet to return their children to the school setting. I would like to assure you that any plans made will be finely risk assessed, thorough and made available to parents in good time for them to make judgements about sending their children to school. More guidance on the reopening of schools is expected from the Government later today and again next Thursday 28th May. As it stands, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 will not be expected to return to school before September. I am most interested to hear, however, the Government's thoughts on the return of Year 10 pupils before the summer break and the degree of clarity that will be provided to school leaders and teachers. I am hoping to be able to provide the parents of Year 10 pupils with a clear route map during the week commencing 1st June and will offer a facility to poll parents' views on the proposals we will put forward, in order to ascertain accurate numbers of Year 10 pupils who may attend if we are able to provide a safe and secure environment in which to teach them.

In conclusion, may I wish you all a lovely half term break. Let's pray for some nice weather! I remain available to respond to any questions you may have on any of the issues explored in this letter and would welcome telephone calls. Direct contact is much more beneficial as it allows for speedier resolution of concerns raised and it breaks down the barriers which can build up through isolation. We are a warm and supportive community and we must continue to hold that dear, and to guard against any hint of fracture appearing in our much loved and celebrated Catholic ethos. We will emerge from this terrible period at some point and we must all be ready to resume our business as usual. Our long held traditions and values will allow us to navigate whatever the 'new normal' may bring.

Yours sincerely,



Mr C Horrocks
Headteacher