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Head Teacher: Mr A Sharpe, BA (Hons), M Mus, M Ed, NPQH

Our Ref: AGS/zmb

29<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

The Summer term is now well underway, and a range of issues have arisen which need to be brought to your notice, as the government's roadmap out of the pandemic continues through its phases of implementation.

### **Plans for Year 11**

The government has decided that the last day of compulsory education for Year 11 students across England will be 25<sup>th</sup> June. This means that Year 11 students have three further weeks of education after the May half-term holiday. These weeks are to be used for the broader education of students, as the evidence for their GCSE grades will have already been collected at this point.

The programme planned for Year 11 students at St Bernard's will include:

- our Cultural Week, a whole school event, which will include a range of activities which celebrate and promote the cultural diversity within our school population;
- the Celebration Day for Year 11, which concludes Year 11's compulsory education;
- the Induction Day for the Sixth Form, which prepares Year 11 for the next chapter in their academic progression;
- time for students to clear their lockers;
- lessons which will explore areas of each subject which are not usually on the specifications for GCSE examinations.

We hope this range of activities will be enjoyable for our Year 11 students as well as meeting the government's expectations. Please note that these arrangements may change or be cancelled if government policy or the local situation changes.

### **Plans for Year 13**

The government expects Year 13 to end their secondary school education on the same date as Year 11, 25<sup>th</sup> June. The focus for this year group will be preparing for university, further education, employment or apprenticeships. Much of this work can be done remotely, using resources on the school's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). This work will be co-ordinated by our Careers Co-ordinator, Mrs Davies.

## **Plans for Years 10 and 12**

Subject to DfE guidance, and further progress in managing the pandemic, we expect Year 10 and 12 to have end of year examinations. These will take place during timetabled lessons in June.

## **Uniform Issues**

From September, the current rule change which allows students to come to school in their PE kit when they have lessons in PE, Dance and Drama will cease, and students will be expected to change on site, as they did prior to the pandemic. Similarly, the flexibility on leggings will no longer be required in September: only the old-style joggers, or the new school leggings will be permitted in the Autumn term.

As the school continues to expand, it is no longer viable to have aprons in Food Technology that are supplied by the school. Therefore, from the May half-term, we are asking all students to bring a full-length apron from home for Food Technology lessons, please.

## **Media Coverage of Sexual Exploitation in Schools**

Many parents will have read the stories of harassment and assault raised in the media, and on the “Everyone’s Invited” website, in relation to conduct of students in schools.

St Bernard’s condemns such behaviour and is committed to helping our students to protect themselves and others, with guidance firmly based on the teachings of the Catholic Church. As a school which only admits female students in Years 7-11, St Bernard’s faces a different challenge from many of the schools highlighted in the media; however, we too have a part to play, as do parents and wider society, if this unacceptable behaviour is to be eradicated.

## **Curriculum Matters**

The pandemic has led to a range of changes in teaching and learning, including remote learning and the creation of year group ‘bubbles’. Whilst many of these changes are short-term, there are lessons to learn from the different approach that the school has been forced to adopt.

One change which will be developed further is the move to longer lessons, which allow deeper learning and reduce the corridor congestion. It is recognised that the two lesson day, though currently necessary, is too demanding for some students; nevertheless, heads of department are unanimous in their view that students’ learning would benefit from lessons that are longer than the 60 minutes that were the norm before the pandemic.

Therefore, from September, St Bernard’s will have three lessons, each lasting 100 minutes, instead of the traditional five lessons which last for 60 minutes each. The total curriculum time will not be affected, and will remain 300 minutes per day. The aim is to strike a compromise where students have each lesson more often, and each lesson will be shorter than in the current pandemic-related model, whilst allowing the development of complex topics in each lesson.

## **Other Matters**

Please also bear in mind the following points on a range of issues:

- please remember that school will be closed for the Bank Holiday on 3<sup>rd</sup> May;
- Thursday May 13<sup>th</sup> is the Feast of the Ascension, a Holy Day of Obligation. As we are currently unable to celebrate Mass on the school site, we encourage you to join a live stream of a Mass in your local parish in the evening;

- we ask parents to park well away from the school gates when dropping off and collecting students. There is a small number of parents who are ignoring this request, and creating a hazard for students as they leave the school site;
- please remind your daughter/son to wear a mask and to socially distance when using public transport. Although there is progress in terms of dealing with Covid 19, it is not beaten yet;
- in September, the end of school day will return to its usual time of 3.40pm, as it is anticipated that staggered finishes to the day will no longer be required. A longer lunch break will be part of the day, as it was before the pandemic, to facilitate rehearsals, training sessions, intervention work and social time;
- please remind your daughter/son that, should she/he forget their locker key, their mobile phone should be left in the school's Reception for the day.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Please bear in mind that further changes may take place with regard to any of the topics covered in this letter. Government guidance, and local considerations can both lead to amendments in policies and decisions. I will write to you again on these issues should further changes be necessary.

Yours faithfully



**Mr A Sharpe**  
**Head Teacher**