

St. Mary's Catholic Primary
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*'Happy are those who hear the word of
God and keep it' Luke 11.28*

Tuesday 2nd February 2021

Dear Families,

The current COVID-19 pandemic has been massively impactful to every aspect of our lives and the current lockdown we are experiencing continues to present daily challenges to us all – whether that is worries about job security, missing contact with our families, relatives and friends alike, unfortunately catching / suffering from the virus, or for some, the deep sadness, pain and heartache of losing loved ones. Our St Mary's school community is not immune to any of these aspects.

I am also very aware of the significant double challenge many of you currently face in trying to work from home whilst at the same time delivering home schooling to your children. This is not at all easy especially as taking on the role of 'teacher' while we are in lockdown is very unfamiliar territory for most.

I know that in taking on this role, you are very reliant on the support school provides. Throughout the pandemic, Mrs Brogden and the entire staff at St Mary's, have worked tirelessly going above and beyond to keep the school open, ensure the safety of all concerned and progress learning as much as possible given the challenges faced. The entire Governing Board can only applaud the dedication, hard work and commitment that they exhibit on a daily basis, much of which happens in the background, largely invisible in most respects.

On the issue of learning, I am aware that a small number of parents have questioned the schools' approach, why we aren't using capabilities such as Zoom for live lessons, and citing general dissatisfaction with what is being delivered. While I am sure that the comments are born out of a desire to achieve the best possible outcomes for children, I'd also ask you to be mindful of comments that express dissatisfaction and the effect this can have on staff who are working incredibly hard, recovering from illness but yet continuing to develop plans even whilst being poorly. We ask for your continued patience, understanding and kindness as this will help them to help you.

I would like to re-assure all parents that developing the schools' approach to learning remains under constant review and it is worth re-iterating a number of improvements that have been made over the last few weeks including:

- A video from Mrs Brogden and each of the Teaching staff every week to provide updates, explain the activities and resources to aid learning for the children, and to provide a Wellbeing activity and links;
- An improved day by day remote learning planner organized by subject for the children to undertake, colour coded with indications of the time to spend on them. A tick box has also been added to aid children and parents alike in monitoring progress;
- Lots of links to resources to aid the children's learning;
- Individual resource packs for pupils with additional needs and those younger pupils;
- Resource packs when requested;
- Laptops for those pupils deemed vulnerable;
- Weekly calls from Counsellor Leigh;

In addition, the school is currently looking at the use of 'Google Classrooms' to aid learning and more information on this will be coming out in the near future.

On the specific question of undertaking live lessons via Zoom, the school has already examined this as a possible approach but concluded it is not viable due to a number of factors, the primary one being Internet bandwidth Live video requires a significant amount of bandwidth (approx. 10 times normal) which we don't currently have at St Mary's and equally importantly may also not exist in pupil's homes – so any interruptions or drop-outs would disrupt learning for some pupils which wouldn't be fair. It is also worth remembering that live learning might also impact parents working from home. It is also worth noting that staff cannot be in two places at once – i.e. undertaking live lessons whilst at the same time as supporting vulnerable / key worker children in the school hall.

As always, Mrs Brogden and the staff are more than happy to assist if you have any concerns about learning aspects of your children so please do get in contact. As Mrs Brogden states in her videos, all you can do is to try your best.

Finally, as a Catholic school, prayer is a cornerstone of our ethos – please can I ask for your continued prayers for all those affected by COVID-19 and that we get back to some normality as soon as possible. Stay safe.

Yours sincerely

Gerard Oakes

Chair of Governors

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Lea Town

Preston