

5 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your family continue to remain safe and in good health. As you will have heard last night, the Government announced a national lockdown which has serious implications for your child and schools across the UK. Firstly, I would like to say how difficult I know these last minute announcements must be for you as parents. As a school we are working hard to now adapt the planning completed over the Christmas period and offer the best possible remote learning offer for every child we serve. This letter is to give you some important information about the changes announced and implications for your child.

Yesterday the following changes were announced by the Government at 8pm:

- Face to face education will only be available for vulnerable students and those whose parents are key workers. A survey was sent to parents last half term asking whether you believe your child falls into one of these groups and whether you would like to apply for a place at school. Thank you to parents who completed this survey. If you feel you have not received this and believe your child/children should be given a place, please contact agallagher@stmarks.anthemtrust.uk (Vice Principal in charge of Behaviour and Attitudes) as soon as possible.
- Remote learning will be offered for all other students in years 7-13 who do not fall into the vulnerable/key worker group. The school has designed an exceptional remote education offer. If you are facing any issues or have any questions about this please contact homelearning@stmarks.anthemtrust.uk so we can support you. Remote learning through Teams will be offered from Wednesday 6th January and requires your child to work for 5 hours a day.
- Public vocational exams and assessments scheduled to take place in January will go ahead as planned.
- Summer Exams will not go ahead as planned. The Secretary of State will work with Ofqual to put in place alternative arrangements and more details will be published in due course.
- BTEC exams will go ahead this week and next as planned.
- Nurseries will remain open

Interim Principal Hannah Fahey

- Changes will remain in place until at least February half term. Half term runs from Monday 15 to Friday 19 February. Therefore, the earliest date in which students could potentially return to school is Monday 22 February 2021. It is imperative to note however, that this subject to review. We will of course keep you fully updated as further Government guidance is received.

What if my child is sitting exams?

- If your child is going through the UCAS process and have any questions ahead of the 15th January deadline please ask them to email Mr Foster on sfoster@stmarks.anthemtrust.uk ([Director of English and Sixth Form](#)) as soon as possible and he will provide all the support they require at this important time.
- Exams will not go ahead in the same way however it is hugely important that students in Year 11, 12 and 13 engage with home learning because we will need to use all available evidence to accurately assess them. We will communicate more information about exams with parents as soon as we have it but please make sure your child is fully engaged with their Teams work.
- Parents who have children in Year 11 and require further guidance or support with developing their child's revision and work ethic should contact jkhan@stmarks.anthemtrust.uk (Vice Principal in charge of Curriculum Intent) Similarly, parents who have children in Year 13 and require further guidance or support with developing their child's revision and work ethic should contact sbhadare@stmarks.anthemtrust.uk ([Director of Science and Sixth Form](#))
- Please expect a letter over the coming week which will communicate the guidance around exams with you as parents.

Remote Education

Home Learning

- Students should continue to follow their normal school timetable each day.
- Students will receive coaching time resources and resources for the 6 lessons they would have had in school.
- These lessons will be shortened and simplified to 30 minutes each to ensure students are not overloaded
- However, independent stretch activities will be provided for each lesson, meaning students can work for 5-6 hours per day if they are able
- Each lesson will have a PowerPoint, usually with teacher audio on Microsoft Stream
- **Students should look at this lesson carefully and complete activities in a note book or on paper**
- Each lesson will end in a quiz to check students' understanding. **These quizzes should only be completed once the lesson has been completed, and care should be taken over them**
- Students should aim to complete their lessons within 24-48 hours of the lesson being set
- Teachers will also be working to provide students with written feedback on their work, through the assignments function
- Please be aware that when some staff are absent or unwell, there might be a slight delay to work being posted
- As with per our usual systems, teachers will be awarding points on Sims for complete and incomplete work. This will enable us to celebrate success and track where students need more support

What will happen with mass testing for students who are on site?

- The LFD testing programme will begin tomorrow where students who have been offered a face to face place and staff will be tested using LFD tests.
- Please remember that if your child attends our Sixth Form and has exams this week and next they can consent for themselves and should be encouraged to complete the forms emailed. Year 12 and 13 students who have BTEC exams will be contacted directly if they need to come in for the earlier testing on Thursday 7th January.
- If your child is receiving on site, face to face education and receives a positive LFT test, they will need to go home and isolate and take a PCR test to confirm their infection status.
- If your child is receiving remote education and you previously consented to mass testing, this process is now on hold until we have a clearer picture from the Government regarding the re-opening of schools. We believe that mass testing will happen after half term to support a safe return, however this has not been confirmed by the Government.

Free School Meals

- During this period of national lockdown, St Mark's will continue to provide meal options for all pupils who are in school. Please ensure that your child's dinner account is topped up. Meals are also available for those entitled to free school meals.
- St Mark's will also provide meal provisions for pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

Important Parent Events

Following the success of our Year 7 and year 11 Information Evenings, I am pleased to share with you our plans for our Remote Education Information Evenings for you as parents. We recognise how much you want to support your children to work from home and want to give you carefully designed training to develop your ability to do this.

Remote Education Information Evening Dates:

- Tuesday 12 January (Year 8)
- Tuesday 19 January (Year 9)
- Tuesday 26 January (Year 10)

As well as this we will be holding virtual parents' evenings when we return in the Spring term. Parents' evenings are an important part of academy life and we will be hosting these events online this year, connecting parents and teachers by video call. These will provide us with an opportunity to engage in conversations about your child's attainment and progress and engagement with home learning. We will be using School Cloud, which allows parents to choose appointment times with all their child's individual teachers, accessible by mobile, laptop or a desktop computer.

Our first dates are for:

- Y11- Thursday 14th January 2021
- Y13- Thursday 28th January 2021

Please can I remind parents that the school is working according to Government guidance which is updated regularly with short notice at present. As a school we would never want to give you such last-minute communication and I can only send my best wishes and prayers that you are managing to cope under these difficult set of circumstances.

We know you will have some questions that you still want answered. If this letter does not answer your questions, please email school@stmarks.anthemtrust.uk where emails will be picked up and passed onto the relevant colleague.

Please can I thank all parents for your support as we begin to drive remote learning together this half term. We are planning to run Teams Information Evenings over the coming weeks for parents and will be in touch regarding the date for the year group your child is in. Please can I urge you all to attend these so you have the training and tools to support your child's home learning. The Academy will remain a place where your child continues to learn and thrive this academic year and you have my word that we will continue to transform the lives of every young person who studies with us.

With Love, Hope & Trust

Hannah Fahey
Interim Principal