

18 December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

I want to start by saying a heartfelt thank you for working in partnership with the school this term. It has presented challenges that I know we never thought we would have to work through as teachers and parents and having your full support and understanding in the decisions we have made makes our community even stronger.

I am so proud of all the Academy has achieved over the past term and want to thank you as parents for playing a leading role in the continued success of St Marks' Below are just some of the highlights.

Despite national lockdown and rising cases of Covid across the country, the Academy has continued to achieved great things for the young people and families we serve. Last week marked the annual Renaissance Learning Awards, this year the theme was changed to recognise schools who had provided a transformational academic and pastoral offer during lockdown between March and September 2020. I am proud to share with you all the wonderful news that St Mark's Academy has been named as the winner of the 2020 Renaissance Lockdown Learning Awards for Going the Extra Mile. Please see the judges' comments below:

- The Reverend Andrew Wignal (Director of Personal Development) posted daily reflections to support staff and students of all faiths and none. He played a key role in supporting the community's spiritual development and mental health during this difficult period.
- Anthoula Glymidou (Head of MFL) designed bespoke languages resources for students on Teams which supported engagement that was 40% higher than similar students nationally.
- Rachel Sewell (Vice Principal for Curriculum Implementation) has been nominated for leading an outstanding training programme for teachers each week to support their delivery of Teams lessons. Rachel carried out this work across five secondary schools within the Anthem Trust.
- During lockdown, the school's Student Support Team truly went above and beyond by driving to pupils' homes in a minibus to make sure every child's mental health and wellbeing was supported.
- Head of PSHE (referred to as Lifeology at St Mark's), Dominique Giovannoni redesigned the curriculum based on the latest research that was released during the Covid-19 pandemic to help students take care of their mental health during a very unsettling time.

I would like to celebrate four students in Year 13 who have been interviewed for a place at Oxford and Cambridge (Oxbridge) this term. The whole community is behind them and I am sure you will keep them in your prayers as they prepare to secure the grades needed to attend these prestigious universities.

Interim Principal Hannah Fahey

Reporting COVID Cases during the Holiday

From Friday 18 December to Wednesday 23 December, please report confirmed positive Covid cases to contacttracing@stmarks.anthemtrust.uk. A member of the SLT team will be checking for reported cases between 9am and 11am during this time. Please provide your details in your email notification:

- Child's full name
- Coaching Group
- Date your child last attended school
- Date the Covid symptoms first started
- Contact telephone number

Parents do not need to contact the school if a student tests positive and has not been in school for 48 hours before the test or symptoms developed. In these circumstances the normal NHS Test and Trace processes will apply. - After the 6-day period you will not be expected to email the school.

Arrangements for week beginning 4 January 2021 including mass testing

Yesterday afternoon the Government indicated that secondary schools were going to have a staggered start to the new academic year. This is to allow schools to set up a COVID mass testing scheme. At the moment we are waiting for further guidance on how this will operate. There will be further guidance during the holiday about what it will mean for us. The arrangements for lessons from week beginning 4th January are as follows:

- Year 11 and 13 will return to school on Wednesday 6 January 2021 for a day of testing. Due to the late announcement from the Government about mass testing in schools we will provide you with further details about the time of your child's slot nearer the start of term. Staggering starts will allow us to roll out mass testing.
- Children of critical workers and vulnerable children will return on Wednesday 6 January. You can find a list of what the government term as a critical worker [here](#).
- Years 7 to 10 and Year 12 will continue with remote education at home during the first week back. Again, a more detailed plan to support testing in these years will be released when we return.

We are expecting the school to reopen for everyone on site on Monday 11th January at your daughter/son's normal time. Further details of the return arrangements will be sent before the beginning of term. Our staff INSET days will be held on:

- Monday 4 January 2021
- Tuesday 5 January 2021
- Friday 23 July 2021

PLEASE NOTE THAT PARENTS NEED TO PROVIDE CONSENT FOR THEIR CHILD TO BE TESTED. A CONSENT FORM WILL BE SENT TO YOU NEXT WEEK. PLEASE COMPLETE THIS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Important Parent Events

Following the success of our Year 7 Welcome Evening, 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.

Virtual Parents Evening Dates:

- Thursday 28 January (Year 11)
- Thursday 11 February (Year 13) This is a new revised date to one that was shared previously

More specific information regarding our imminent Year 11 and Year 13 virtual parents' evenings, including links to supportive video tutorials as how to make appointments and connect on the evening via School Cloud will be provided in a separate letter and on our Academy website in the first week of the Spring Term. Dates for other virtual parents' evenings will also be shared early in the new term.

Staff Farewells

"It has been an enormous honour and pleasure to serve you as a leader at St Marks over the last 4 ½ years. I am enormously proud of the improvements that we have made as a staff body during that time, from results that were below national average in 2016 to results that have been in the top 25% of school nationally for the last three years and matching the outstanding school locally. However, I have decided that the time is right for me personally to move on to a new challenge and I would like to thank you all for your support".

Laurence Hampton

"I have worked at St Mark's for nearly 10 years and I have watched the school and community grow from strength to strength. I have led many different areas including behaviour, SEND, pastoral, transition, personal development, enrichment and safeguarding, which I could not have done successfully without my amazing colleagues. My greatest joy has been leading on embedding our values and developing ways to assist our young people with developing academic and character excellence and securing outstanding for personal development in the last Ofsted inspection was a great achievement. In the new term, I will be moving on from working as part of the senior leadership team, but will continue as a consultant for the remainder of the academic year".

Dionne Jude

Finally, I would like to take some time to think about Christmas and what it means for the St Mark's community. Christmas is good news. After a challenging year, it is my prayer that Christmas brings hope and joy to you and to the world that is crying out for good news. I wish you and your families a restful break and pray for your health and happiness over the festive period.

With Love, Hope & Trust

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hannah Fahey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hannah Fahey

Interim Principal