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| Badge New**St Robert of NewminsterC:\Users\Garrod.m\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Outlook\67NLO94O\St Cuthberts Cross.png** Catholic School and **Sixth Form College** |
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| **Head Teacher:** Mr. D. Juric  **Chair of Governors:** Mr. G. Moorhouse |

24th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope this letter finds you and your families safe and in good health. I am taking this opportunity to update you, as best I can, on certain developments at school. I apologise that I am not able to be more definite on certain points, but as you are aware, the situation is changing constantly and I will have to ask for your patience please. Nevertheless, I hope I can provide further clarity on some issues.

Firstly, I would like to inform you that the school has remained open this week for the children of critical workers or vulnerable children, where it has not been possible for parents or carers to provide alternative safe childcare. I have to say that the small number of children who have been coming into school on a daily basis have been magnificent. Their maturity and good nature, in what is a difficult situation for them, is to be most highly commended. They have been an absolute credit to their families. The school continues to remain open for students who fall into these two categories. We of course welcome those pupils from these two categories, for whom school is the only viable option, but please do remember the government guidance that if alternative safe childcare can be arranged instead, then parents/ carers should take that option and not send their children into school.

We hope to be a position this week to process Free School Meal e-vouchers for those who are eligible. If you are eligible and have not yet provided your email address, please send it to [**finance@trinitycatholicmat.com**](mailto:finance@trinitycatholicmat.com), along with the names of your children attending St Robert’s. Please also state that you are applying from St Robert’s.

All subjects have uploaded work for all year groups, which students can access via the link, which was sent out a few days ago, or via the tile on the home page of the school website. This work represents the amount of classwork and homework, which students would have received if they had been in school until the Easter holidays. The order in which students complete the work is up to them to a degree, but it may be an idea simply to follow their normal subject timetable day by day, doing an hour of each subject, as if they were in school. After Easter, individual teachers will begin to upload work on a weekly basis, which will follow a lesson by lesson approach. We will also be introducing a system for assessment and feedback, but we will give you more information about that next week, in preparation for after the Easter holiday. For now, students should simply work through the tasks already online.

As I said in a previous letter, we are aware that this is a particularly unsettling time for Year 11 and Year 13 students, who were expecting to sit exams in a couple of months. The government have given some outline of how this matter will be resolved:

*The Government’s priority is now to ensure affected students can move on as planned to the next stage of their lives, including going into employment, starting university, college or sixth form courses, or an apprenticeship in the autumn.*

*This means ensuring GCSE, A and AS level students are awarded a grade which fairly reflects the work that they have put in. There will also be an option to sit an exam early in the next academic year for students who wish to. Ofqual will develop and set out a process that will provide a calculated grade to each student which reflects their performance as fairly as possible, and will work with the exam boards to ensure this is consistently applied for all students. The exam boards will be asking teachers, who know their students well, to submit their judgement about the grade that they believe the student would have received if exams had gone ahead.*

*To produce this, teachers will take into account a range of evidence and data including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment – clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools and colleges. The exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student, which will be a best assessment of the work they have put in.*

However, as you can see the real detail of how this will be done has not yet been announced. Once we know more, we will be liaising with parents and students. Given the current uncertainty, the school cannot and will not enter into discussion with individual students or parents/ carers about such grades. In the meantime, it is crucial that Year 11 and Year 13 students keep any examination work, coursework, etc. safe, in case it is requested at a later date. We shall also be communicating with students over any work, which may need completing as part of this process.

We have a number of school trips, which were scheduled for 2020, some in this country, some abroad. We have already communicated with parents or carers of students who were due to travel before or at Easter to postpone or cancel trips. We are pursuing refunds with tour operators where applicable. This is proving a very involved process. As you can imagine the tour companies themselves are inundated with cancellations and are now also running on reduced staffing in some cases. We realise that this is an important matter for parents and carers, and we will update you on progress as soon as we have something definitive back from the companies. However, I think it is true to say that the travel industry has probably never known a situation like this, and so it is taking time. We are also looking at trips and visits scheduled for this summer or autumn, and will try to provide feedback on these before the Easter holidays, where possible.

Finally, during this period, I would like to ask that you only ring the school in an emergency. If you have a non-urgent query, please email [school@strobertofnewminster.co.uk](mailto:school@strobertofnewminster.co.uk) and we will respond to your message when we are able to do so.

Finally, thank you for your support and cooperation during this difficult time. We continue to keep all our families in our prayers. We urge all students and parents/ carers to follow Government and Health guidance, and we assure you that we are doing all we can to try to support our young people through the coming days.

Yours faithfully

Mr D Juric

Head Teacher