



# St Robert of Newminster Catholic School and Sixth Form College



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Head Teacher: Mr. D. Juric  
Chair of Governors: Mr. G. Moorhouse

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Dear Parents and Carers

Each year I write to you at the end of the summer term. Given the year we have had, the focus of my letter this July is somewhat different to the norm. Nevertheless, I do want to take this moment to reflect on the 2020-21 school year, and to give one or two important messages for September.

## This Year

The first thing I want to do is once again to congratulate our wonderful students on the resilience and determination they have shown this year, during what has been in so many ways a difficult, unusual and at times frustrating year for them. Students have coped admirably with all the changes, remote learning, and new guidelines. Their conduct and compliance with the new rules have been excellent and they have done everything asked of them and more. After a steadier period following the return of students from lockdown, recent weeks have unfortunately seen increases in case numbers right across the region. However, we are hopeful that the new school year will see a much more settled experience in schools and students will be able to get back to a much more normal way of doing things. Well done to each one of our students, and I wish you all a restful and enjoyable summer.

I also want to share my thanks with you, the parents and carers of our students, for your cooperation and patience throughout the year. We greatly appreciate all that you have done to support the students and the school during this period. As a parent myself of two school-aged children, I know how frustrating and inconvenient periods of self-isolation can be, not just for students but for the wider family too, especially when this occurs on more than one occasion. Thank you for your understanding this year, and for all you have done to help facilitate the safe running of the school.

Finally, I would ask you please to join with me in thanking all staff at the school for their immense efforts this year. Staff have had to adapt extremely rapidly to new ways of working and have put so much hard work into providing for the education and well-being of students, while having to deal with all the frustrations and concerns of the current situation. I am very grateful for all that they have done.



## Next Year

### COVID Testing:

Home testing is being paused nationally for students in secondary schools and colleges over the summer holidays. If you wish to access rapid lateral flow testing, you can continue to do so by ordering LFD test kits from GOV.UK or by collecting kits from your local pharmacy. Home testing will restart on their return in the autumn. We will also offer students two tests on-site before home testing begins. We sent out last week details of arrangements for this process and how the start of term will be very slightly staggered to allow this to happen. If you have not yet filled in the online consent form and wish to do so, please ensure it is completed by Friday 23 July. We will provide students with new home testing kits at the start of next term.

### Arrangements from September:

I wish to briefly address the new government operational guidance for schools for next year. The guidance advises a return to normal practices in many ways but keeps some of the preventative measures which have been in place this year. We shall be sending out another completed risk assessment for next year over the summer. However, in the meantime I wish to give you a brief indication of the direction of travel.

The government guidance makes clear that local infection rates may necessitate regional changes to the national practice at times and we will continue to work with local Public Health to assess whether any variations are advisable. However, below is the starting point, as outlined by DfE.

Certain measures will remain in place, namely the enhanced hygiene measures, enhanced cleaning, ventilation, twice weekly testing of students at home. Starts and ends of the day will come back very close to normal, with no staggered end to the day. Year group bubbles will no longer apply, and lessons will be timetabled across the school, including in specialist rooms. Break and lunch time will again be back very close to normal. Schools will no longer be involved in contact tracing, and so although we will still deal with positive cases or students with symptoms, it will be NHS Test and Trace who contact trace. The guidance is that face coverings are no longer recommended in schools. We will of course monitor this alongside infection rates and decide what position is appropriate in consultation with Public Health. We will have to liaise with NEXUS to see what the position will be on school buses and public transport from September. Alongside these guidelines we will also have a contingency plan in place, should we have to return to stricter measures.

As I say, we will send out a full risk assessment, as well as a shorter more practical checklist style sheet, over the summer so that you are fully aware of how arrangements will function daily from September. However, we hope that this gives a broad indication for now of how things will be.

### Further news:

I also need to inform you of another development for next school year. St Bede's Lanchester, a fellow secondary school within our Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, has been unsuccessful in its attempts to recruit a new head teacher for September 2022. Consequently, the Trust has approached St Robert's to ask whether I would be prepared to act as Head Teacher across the two schools for the coming year. While we are aware of the duty to try to help a fellow Catholic and Trust school, both the Governing Body and I myself would only be happy to do so, if we felt sure that this would be without detriment to St Robert's. Upon reflection and following discussion, I have agreed to take on this role in addition to my current responsibilities for next school year. This will mean that I will be working across both schools next year and Mrs Bowen, Deputy Head, will be in the position of Head of School, on the days I am at St Bede's. I can assure all parents and carers that my commitment to St Robert's, its students and its staff, will not diminish in any way, and I remain completely Head Teacher of our school both next year and for future years. Please do rest assured that my determination to continue to work for the ongoing improvement of St Robert's remains as strong as ever. This short-term arrangement is designed to help one of our Trust schools at their time of need.

It remains for me to wish you and your families a good summer. Plans may be slightly disrupted from the norm, but I hope you all still manage to find the opportunity to enjoy some time together and to have something of a rest, where possible. We are looking forward to seeing our students back with us in September, ready and refreshed for a new year.

With my very best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Juric'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping tail for the 'Juric' part.

**Mr D Juric**  
**Head Teacher**