

18 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

### **Timing of Remote Learning**

As you are aware, I have consistently sought to follow the advice from Public Health England when undertaking any decision pertaining to our handling of the Covid 19 pandemic. You will know that current advice is that schools should remain open. I no longer believe that this is tenable, nor that it is in the best interests of the pupils or staff at this school. Recent decisions by the Government on self-isolation have meant that I am close to becoming unable to sufficiently staff the school safely or in such a way that can provide a suitable education for your children. I am also conscious that many families have taken the decision to keep their children at home and that these children are not able to enjoy the benefits of our remote learning programme, because it is impossible to run two programmes concurrently. In short, neither the children in school nor the children at home are now getting the best of St Dunstan's in the current situation.

It is with this in mind that I have this morning taken the decision to move over to our virtual learning programme sooner than I had anticipated. This decision has the full backing of the Governing Body who have been kept entirely aware of the developing situation.

From 1730 on Thursday 19 March, the school building will be open to staff only but not to pupils. Teachers will set work for Friday 20 March, and for the weekend, that helps pupils 'prepare' for virtual learning, by setting tasks on Firefly (not Teams), helping pupils organise their space and work at home. This will also be an opportunity for staff to prepare everything they need for the beginning of virtual learning and they will communicate to all pupils which lessons next week will be interactive. Virtual learning will then begin at 0850 (Senior School) and 0845 (Junior School) on Monday 23 March and will run until 1600 (Senior School) and 1530 (Junior School) on Friday 27 March. We will keep the situation under regular review over the Easter holiday.

Thursday 19 March will be an important day for pupils, who will likely need to bring a larger bag to school in order to gather together all the notes and resources they require to support their learning at home.

We are aware that there are some children in public examination classes who would benefit from accessing the College for a little longer to complete coursework. A plan for these

subjects and children is being coordinated this evening by Mr Johnson and Mr Holmes. They will communicate with you directly.

## **Communication**

Communication from me during term time will now move to a daily update through the website and will be accompanied by an email or a text to you. Where you wish to communicate with the College about your own individual circumstances relating to Covid 19, including technical issues with the virtual learning programme, please use the following email addresses where your enquiry will be passed to the most appropriate person:

Senior School – [colloff@sdmail.org.uk](mailto:colloff@sdmail.org.uk)

Junior School – [jsoffice@sdmail.org.uk](mailto:jsoffice@sdmail.org.uk)

All other communication should continue as it would normally through emailing teachers, school leaders and the pastoral team. Key members of the pastoral team have been provided with mobile phones so that they can speak with you on the telephone, as necessary. We are also providing you with the Chaplain's mobile number for all pupils and parents, in the event that you are in need of pastoral support:

07712 008426

There will be other communication in the coming days relating to specific changes within the College that will need to be enacted as a consequence of this decision. This communication will come directly from senior leaders in the College

## **Concluding remarks**

None of us knows how long this phase of shut-down will last, but for the time being we should focus on the period until the Easter holiday, monitoring the situation thereafter. It is imperative that children follow their normal timetabled routine in the daytime, and normal routines of study outside that as far as possible. This is particularly the case in examination year groups, where self-motivation and independent study will be critical to success. Our staff will be regularly 'checking in' on these pupils. I will be speaking with all pupils who are in school on Thursday to reiterate these important messages.

The systems we are trialling will not be perfect and I ask you and your children to read and follow the guidance set out in our updated Pupil Acceptable Use Agreement, and Expectations of Parents documents in order to maximise the effectiveness of all at this time. We have had to accelerate the introduction of it in a short period of time and I thank you in advance for your patience as we work through what will inevitably be a number of teething problems. I have always been impressed by the resolve, good humour and creativity of the St

Dunstan's community, and it is these characteristics that will see us make a great success of this important next phase in the education we proudly offer.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N P Hewlett', written in a cursive style.

Mr N P Hewlett  
Headmaster