

FROM THE HEADMASTER
MR IAN MURPHY
BA HONS, PGCE (DURHAM)



STONYHURST
ST MARY'S HALL
1999-2019 Celebrating 20 Years of Co-Education

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CLITHEROE
LANCASHIRE BB7 9PU

AMDG

Dear Parents

I want to take this opportunity to write to you as we reach the 'end of term'. I have been reflecting upon writing this note for several days now. My overriding intention is to stay in touch with you as a parent and try and keep you and your family at the heart of our tight knit SMH school family. At present the members of this school family, right across the globe, are navigating the some of the most challenging and most unpredictable waters of our adult lives. Many children and their families had to bring their term to an end very suddenly and on many occasions there was no opportunity to say a proper 'farewell'. We are mindful of this and cannot wait for the day when we can all be back at school and as 'one' again. There is so much still to do and still to enjoy this academic year! A brief summary of our efforts and achievements since January is enclosed. This is a nice reminder and is something to build upon as soon as we return.

As I write it is not yet possible to give any accurate indication of when we might be able to open the school and the Stonyhurst facilities to the children in the summer term. I am always hopeful and forever optimistic that this may not be too long after Easter but at present it is just too early to tell. We will keep in close contact with you over the weeks to come so that we can all spring back action here quickly and smoothly.

Over recent weeks we have been working tirelessly behind the scenes at school, and increasingly from a remote location in order to do our best to provide the children and our families with as much guidance and support as we can. This is set to continue from all academic and pastoral perspectives as we look ahead to next term. As a staff community we are thinking of all our children and their families wherever you may be – from our beautiful setting here at Stonyhurst and homes around the Ribble Valley to Mexico City, from London to Hong Kong, and from Madrid to Kazakhstan ... None of us are unaffected. Since last Wednesday the teaching staff, like you as busy parents, have been doing their best to help the children and enable learning from a distance - whilst balancing their own challenges and demands. Some with their own isolation restrictions and/or illness and others also caring for, supporting and increasingly protecting their own families.

This is an anxious time in our lives and all of us are, no doubt, finding the restrictions and challenges of adapting to the 'new normal' difficult. School and learning focussed remote activities, although a timely distraction, can help to build in a sense of purpose and routine into our daily lives for both the children and staff, alike. It can also, in equal measure, add to anxiety and stress levels in SMH family households. Staff have been encouraged to be very clear when posting learning activities and



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'work' in terms of expectation and also to allow copious amounts of flexibility around how/when it is returned for comment or assessment. We are also very clear in our professional minds, as well, that the simple fact is that it is not the end of the world if all of the children (and their parents) do not engage. Remote working cannot replace the physical interaction of a thriving classroom environment and all of us (teachers, parents and the children) need to recognise and appreciate this. We are building in a range of approaches and measures that are going to mitigate as much of this as we possibly can as we look ahead. The learning environment for the beginning of next term will be increasingly visual, individualised and interactive as we strive to capture as much of the academic rigour alongside the warmth and sensitivity of our child/adult human interaction across SMH as we possibly can.

Always be clear that the last couple of weeks has not been home schooling. This is an unprecedented emergency situation impacting the whole world. Home schooling is different to our children's learning opportunities in this period - as it is an active choice, prepared and planned for, where you have considered your child's needs and how you are going to meet them in the longer term as your child's school teacher. You are, and always have been, your child's teacher throughout life. If you feel that your child could not or just has not engaged with anything set by school until up to the end of term (yesterday) please do not be concerned or let this add to your burdens. There are many pressing and important things to concern ourselves with at the moment, and a sense of perspective is important, although far from easy at present.

It will not have been possible for those of you to facilitate this remote learning and also 'work from home' full time, at the same time. As a school we appreciate the demands upon the family and this is very much in our thinking as we plan for learning at the beginning of next term, and how we will structure, encourage and facilitate an increasingly relevant learning experience for the children. Academic development alongside well-rounded aspects of spiritual and wider personal growth will be as differentiated and individualised as possible. In some respects, the new and urgent demands upon us linked to teaching in this new technological frontier is nurturing some wonderful innovation and excellent creativity. We will be back in touch towards the end of the holiday with all the practical information that you need.

Please do remember that you are doing enough. You are loving your children and supporting them through a difficult time. Look after yourself and try hard not share your anxieties with your children. Please keep an eye on Microsoft Teams for the prayer and spiritual reflection posts. These are there for you. Also look out for the 'Pray As You Go' app from the Jesuits including the brand new 'Pray As You Stay' link.

<https://pray-as-you-go.org/article/pray-as-you-stay-week-1>



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Please find attached/enclosed a specially prepared parent focussed resource that might help provide another small layer of help at this time.

We maintain a focus upon our core mission and Jesuit identity to be the guide and a support at this time. One of our Governors here at Stonyhurst – Fr. Roger Dawson SJ wrote very recently ‘As many of you know, Ignatian spirituality can be summed up as ‘finding God in all things’. This sounds easy and attractive when life is smooth but becomes deeply challenging and act of faith when life is difficult. Any spirituality has to be able to work in the dark times, and the conviction from our Christian faith is that, however hard it is, God is with us. As we live through this period of crisis, St. Ignatius would ask us to seek the signs of God at work, labouring for us: these signs are there. Fear, even with good reasons to be afraid, does not come from God and does not lead to God, and we trust that God can bring good out of this crisis.’

Easter is soon to be with us and in many respects the situation of late reminds us that there can be no Easter dawn without the anguish, pain and suffering of Good Friday. Easter Day is a bright, faith-filled and hopeful new beginning – and a reflection of this will come soon as we emerge from this crisis as a tighter knit, kinder and more compassionate society. Our children can grow to be true leaders of this. The Jesuit Pupil Profile is helping form them.

Wishing you a peaceful and Holy Easter season when the time comes.

Please also remember we are still here. If you need to talk over the next few weeks to any member of staff, please do email. Most importantly, look after yourselves and take great care.

With every best wish,

Ian Murphy



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