

St Thomas Becket Catholic Primary

Update on Return to School

Dear parents

As you are no doubt aware, over recent days the plan for all primary school years in England to go back to school, for 4 weeks, before the end of term has now been dropped by the government.

This comes as no surprise to many school leaders who, before bringing back the year groups that are now in school, have worked so very hard to implement, at very short notice, a complete restructure of schools. This has involved a complete revision of policies, procedures, and protocols as well as development of physical spaces, which adhere to the raft of guidance papers issued by the government.

For some parents it will be a relief not to have to make the difficult decision as to whether to send their child back to school. For others it will be a disappointment, as I suspect is the same for most of our children who are naturally missing their school friends and teachers.

No-one would argue with the fact that all children need to be back in school as soon as possible. In order to make this possible will require another complete restructure of schools and we need to start planning for this now so we are prepared to bring all classes back in some form in September, whatever the restrictions in place at the time. No government plan has yet emerged on how to do this, but schools will need to be proactive and work collaboratively to share ideas and practice which will allow us to plan for a safe and effective resumption of school for children in September.

St Thomas Becket is working closely with other schools in our Catholic Umbrella Trust to this end.

With regard to the question of whether we have the capacity to bring back other year groups at present, it is important to recognise that by far the greatest majority of pupils are still at home, including within the year groups that have been allowed to return. Based on current availability of staff, social distancing rules and maximum class sizes, to try and bring back even another year group would mean having to use staff who are providing online learning for those children at home and inevitably impact on the quality of home learning we can provide.

That said, while we are not able, at this point, to bring back any other year groups, we are going to create one more group (limited to 15 children) and target children across year groups, who we feel would benefit most from attending school for 3 weeks in July. We will use a range of criteria to decide this including our assessment data and contact parents of these children next week to offer them this opportunity.

We will also be offering the opportunity for all Year 6 children to return for a few days during the final week of the summer term. This will be for specific activities designed to mark the children's end of primary career. We will be contacting Year 6 parents, setting out dates, safety protocols and a timetable of events.

Teachers will also be contacting all families in their classes over the next few weeks. You will receive a message from your child's class teacher indicating when they will call.

For all other children at home we will continue to develop online learning and teaching, improving consistency in the quantity and quality of support across years and introducing better use of technology to support lessons. Hopefully the recent use of Google classroom and Tapestry has proved beneficial. Where children are struggling to access the online resources please contact the school via admin email to request a pack of materials and we can arrange a time for parents to pick it up.

There is still a huge amount of planning required as there is a strong possibility that we will still be using an online curriculum in September and employing a 'blended learning' approach, involving children attending school for some days and remaining at home with online resources for others. It is critical that we now identify the barriers to learning in this way, which exist for some families, and begin to address them where we can. This includes online access or availability of devices to engage with online resources.

We will be carrying out a survey in the coming weeks to capture feedback from children and parents about their online learning experiences in order to help inform future home learning support.

All proposed plans are subject to alteration due to evolving circumstances. We will update you if the current situation changes or new information becomes available.

We have a massive challenge ahead but one we will face together. Our greatest asset is the strength of our St Thomas Becket School Community, with amazing children, committed and talented staff and supportive parents.

I recently wrote to Year 6 and quoted the words of St Francis. Now more than ever they resonate with me as we plan for the future to ensure our children are not disadvantaged by the effects of this terrible virus.

We shall, "start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you're doing the impossible."

Thank you for your continued support and understanding.

Mr Campbell

Birthday Cards

We have been busy identifying all the children whose birthdays have occurred over the period since the school closed in March. We will be sending the children their birthday cards by post (except for children who are in school and can receive them) and will continue to send cards up until the school closes at the end of July.



Pupil Reports

These are currently being completed and will be sent out to all parents by the end of the first week in July.



Year 6 End of Year

We will be offering the opportunity for all Year 6 children to return for a few days during the final week of the summer term. This will be for specific activities designed to mark the children's end of primary career. We will be contacting Year 6 parents, setting out dates, safety protocols and a timetable of events.



Music and Arts Week

Our recent music and Arts week produced some stunning entries and as well as being on our gsuite these are currently being put on to our school website and so can be shared with wider friends and family.

Well done to all those who took part.

