

St. Gregory's Catholic High School

Cromwell Avenue, Westbrook, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 1HG.
Telephone: 01925 574888



Headteacher
Mr E McGlinchey BSc (Hons), NPQH & NPQEL

15th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your families all continue to be very safe and well in these extremely challenging times. I repeat what I have said before, I desperately miss having your children in school and I look forward to opening the gates to fill our school with the fun and happiness that our pupils bring to the St Gregory's community.

Please forgive me for the delay in this latest update as we have been waiting for additional information from the government regarding specific plans for secondary schools. I have also been involved in discussions with the local authority, the Warrington headteachers and the Liverpool Archdiocese as we unite to discuss the safest way to welcome your children back into education.

Before I proceed with school matters, I would like to offer you a huge thank you for your donations to the 'staff laps for nurses' fund raising initiative. I am pleased to say that through your support, we have managed to raise just under £2000 which will be presented to Warrington hospital staff before the end of the month. The staff of the school have embraced the challenge well and have surprised themselves with their running ability whilst getting some healthy exercise too! If you would like to donate before we close the campaign, the 'just giving' link can be accessed via our twitter account.

I now want to provide updates on each year group so that parents are aware of the latest situation and planning for your children over the coming weeks and months, which I know is an extremely anxious time for all of us as the country attempts to get back on its feet.

Year 11

Year 11 would have been taking their GCSE examinations this week in our sports hall and it is saddening that they were not given the appropriate opportunity to do this, given the amount of preparation that had taken place in advance to the school closures. In school, the teachers and senior staff have been busy preparing the information required by the examination boards ahead of the summer results day in August.

As yet, there is no further guidance or relaxing of social distancing measures to allow our school to hold a prom night, however, if such an event is possible in the future, this will be of course be considered. If a school prom is ultimately not possible, I hope to see our wonderful Year 11 pupils when they return in the autumn term for their certificate presentation evening.

In the meantime there is a link on our website entitled '**Post 16 bridging activities**' which I fully encourage Year 11 to access to continue to study ahead of their transition to college courses.

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Year 7, 8 and 9

The government has announced that, sadly, this age group cannot return to school until September. Years 7, 8 and 9 will continue to be provided with school work that is set online via class charts from now until the end of the summer term. Whilst I understand the safety reasons for the government's decision, it is your children that make our school what it is and I am saddened that we will not see years 7 to 9 and the wonderful contributions that they make to our school each day.

The setting of online work has worked well so far and your feedback has been very positive. We do, however, appreciate that children doing school work, full time at home, is not an ideal situation and that there is a considerable strain placed on parents and carers who are doing their very best to support their children with learning whilst also attempting to work from home themselves combined with the other pressures of life in lockdown. I personally have two very young daughters and I can completely sympathise with the challenges that you face each day.

We also understand that a high volume of work can sometimes pose a challenge for a number of our pupils to complete in a home environment which is very different to that of a school based classroom environment where the day is organised in a very rigid manner.

My view is that you are doing a great job and that can only do your best as parents and that you will not be able to fully support your child with every demand. I am proud of you as a parent body and please continue to do your best safe in the knowledge that I know it is not an easy undertaking at all.

Critical workers

Since the start of the lockdown, St Gregory's has been open to all of the critical worker families that have requested our support, and we have been open over the Easter holidays including all three of the bank holidays. In the new term, which commences on the 1st June, St Gregory's will continue to support the families of critical workers with a small rota of available staff and this will be limited in capacity in line with the volume of pupils we are able to cater for at present.

As Year 10 pupils are reintroduced back into school, this will mean our capacity to expand our current staffing of critical worker children will be limited, but as always, we will do the very best we possibly can with the staffing we have available and within all safety guidance for your children and our staff.

Year 10

The government have announced that Year 10 will spend 'some time' with their teachers before the end of the summer term to facilitate their learning. We have started to plan how this will look for St Gregory's but there is still a lot of planning required as we also await further guidance.

I can confirm that St Gregory's will not reintroduce large groups of pupils in a rush to school life, this is to ensure that the government's own five key tests can be met and I will provide a 'buffer zone' of another month from now (which includes the half term period) to review both the national and local landscape in terms of the management of Covid-19 and the meeting of the governments five key tests.

Therefore, as parents, you should not expect your Year 10 children to return to school based lessons before Monday 15th June.

As the headteacher and a parent myself, the safety of all children and my staff is at the forefront of all plans going forward and I will not compromise on the safety of our community.

However, Year 10 are preparing for their GCSE examinations next summer and we desperately want them back in school as soon as it is safe for this to happen, so we have started to plan for their return so that we are ready to implement any updated advice or guidance that may take place over the next month and I include some of the principles of our thinking below:

- The pupils will return to school in a phased manner where they will undergo an 'orientation' day to do some pastoral work, review their home learning journey and establish clear protocols for their time in school that are strictly based around the health and safety of all
- Year 10 will be introduced back to school in classes of an average size of 12 pupils and certainly not more than 15 pupils, classroom size dependant

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- Year 10 learning in school will be to 'supplement' home learning and will therefore not be full time with a normal timetable. Face to face learning will provide much needed guidance and support from our subject specialists which will then help with Year 10 learning at home
- Year 10 will be allocated a specific classroom for the day that they are in school and therefore they will not need to continuously circulate the school between lessons – the teachers will circulate to the lessons they are teaching
- Time in school will be split into core days and option days
- The school day itself will be shorter, finishing around 1pm at the latest, if not earlier
- There will be no form time, assemblies or other large gatherings
- Break time will be staggered with an opportunity for fresh air for pupils in small numbers
- There will be no lunch facility as pupils will go home early, however, pupils who are entitled to a free school meal will be provided with a lunch pack to take home
- Between mid-June and the end of term, Year 10 will not return to school as a full year group, with the year group most likely returning as a half year group on a rota basis after the initial phased period is complete
- Use of the toilet facilities will be based around a 'need to go' basis during lesson time to avoid a specific time slot that would lead to queues
- Handwashing and good hygiene practice will take place over the course of the day in an organised manner, again, in small numbers

I want to be clear that this is not a final plan of action and only our initial thinking and planning and the 'buffer zone' time period will provide the opportunity to wait for further and clearer guidance.

Guidance for parents and carers

The latest government advice and guidance for parents and carers regarding school closure can be found via the link below, and this link is also accessible on our school website homepage and via our twitter feed.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

Additional school news

I am pleased to report that the school will be investing in brand new tiered seating in our theatre as the school moves into a new era in September and gets a face lift in some areas. The new tiered seating is well overdue and something that I have been keen to have improved at St Gregory's since my arrival so I am relieved to finally get the funding for this. The renovation of the schools theatre will also see new flooring for an area that hosts multiple special events for our school.

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Staffing

After half term, I will announce a number of new appointments to our school staffing body which will bring new ideas and strength to our school team and I will also formally announce the retirements of some much loved staff who have served St Gregory's and the community with distinction over many years.

That is all for now, I will continue to provide updates via school comms, our website and our twitter feed. I appreciate that not all of the questions you currently have will be answered yet, but we aim to provide more clarity as we receive more guidance from the government.

In the meantime, I wish good health and happiness to your families and loved ones and our staff will continue to pray for our community as we work towards brighter days and a safe return to normalcy.

Yours sincerely,



E. McGlinchey
Headteacher