

4 December 2020

TO ALL FAMILIES

Dear Families

It has been wonderful to see all isolating pupils and staff back in school this week and it has very been back to business as usual. It is starting to feel like Christmas at St Dominic's and, despite COVID restrictions, we are finding creative ways to get festive!

### **Update on transport**

We wrote to you on 25 November to inform you we had sent a letter to Surrey and Bracknell Forest local authorities regarding the impact of shared transport arrangements and COVID-19. I am pleased to report that we have received communication back from Bracknell Forest, who have agreed to provide additional transport so that pupils can travel in the bubbles they are organised in at school. We are very pleased with this outcome and will update families of pupils based in Surrey when we have further information from them.

### **Arrangements for the last week of term**

As you may be aware, the Government have now announced the plans for the Christmas period. They will be relaxing the rules around socialising to allow up to three separate households to meet indoors for five days, from December 23 to 27. In order to ensure families and staff can have extra assurances going into this period, we are going to adjust our operations for the last week of term back to a Phase 2 response (the letter giving detail of what this means can be accessed here: <https://stdominicsschool.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/37b.-St-Dominics-Phased-Approaches-to-Learning-Plan.pdf>). The thinking is that this will give staff and pupils a 14-day window, before December 23, in which contacts can be kept to a minimum and everyone can therefore feel more comfortable, with less risk, when mixing with family members.

### **Understanding self-harm training**

One of the major outcomes of the pandemic and lockdown was anticipated to be the impact on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. This has been evident on a local and national level and we have certainly felt the impact at St Dominic's. By mid-November, our school staff had responded to 230 safeguarding concerns, which is an increase on the same period in 2019 when we had 198 concerns raised. By far the most significant categories of concern this year relate to mental health and, in particular, to self-harm. For that reason, we delivered a session to all staff as part of our inset day last week about self-harm, which included an explanation of self-harm, why young people might hurt themselves and tips on how to react, respond and, hopefully, help.

We would like to deliver a virtual information session for parents and therefore need to gauge interest for this. It would be most suitable for those with children in Upper School as self-harm is most prevalent in secondary age children, however you may also wish to attend for future information or if you have older children in other schools.

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If you would like to register your interest or find out more, please contact Kirsty Glaysher, Designated Safeguarding Lead, by email to [kglaysher@stdominicsschool.org.uk](mailto:kglaysher@stdominicsschool.org.uk).

### COVID 'Catch Up' Premium

This year, the government is providing funding to cover a one-off universal catch-up premium for the 2020/21 academic year. The aim is to support pupils to catch up for lost learning so schools can meet the curriculum expectations for the next academic year. St Dominic's is set to receive £240 per pupil, in three instalments (Autumn, Spring and Summer). The DfE has recommended that the premium is spent on either small group or 1:1 tuition, through the National Tutoring Programme (NTP). We are in consultation with the companies that are part of the NTP to ascertain how best we can utilise the funding available. It is likely that we will utilise remote tutoring, as this means that pupils can receive tuition individually and in small groups, both at home and in school. This will also ensure that pupils are able access smaller group sessions with their regular class teacher when others are accessing remote tuition.

### Meal vouchers

Due to COVID-19, your family financial circumstances may have changed. In order to ensure your child and the school are receiving any financial support available from the Department for Education, please check the eligibility criteria for Free School Meals and Pupil Premium on the form attached. In order to maximise the benefit of this, please return the completed form for checking as soon as possible, and **by 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at the latest**.

### Festivities in school

COVID-19 certainly isn't dampening our festive spirit at school. Over the last two weeks of term, pupils and students are making items for our first virtual enterprise fayre! Christmas lunch is being served on Tuesday and Wednesday of next week and, on Friday, it's Christmas jumper day.

Look out for more information about our pantomime and a special, virtual greeting card that will allow families to see what we have all been up to!

Yours sincerely



Vicky Perry  
Vice Principal & Head of Education

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