

Thursday 16th April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you are all keeping safe and well in these difficult times.

As you will be aware, Miss White ended her fourteen-year career at St Margaret's at the end of the Spring term. For over a decade, I have had the pleasure and privilege of working closely with Miss White and have witnessed first-hand the difference she has made to pupils who have attended St Margaret's. Miss White leaves St Margaret's in a significantly better place than it was when she arrived. I am sure you will all join me in thanking her for her efforts and wishing her all the best for the future. We will be inviting Miss White back to school for a leaving assembly once we are all back in school.

I am incredibly proud and privileged to have the opportunity to lead St Margaret's at this time. Having worked in the school for almost twenty years I know first-hand what a special place our school is. I, along with the excellent staff team, will be striving to continue to take the school forward on the next steps of its journey.

I am sure many of you wish to know when school will be re-opening. The honest answer is no one knows, all I can say is each day which passes by is a day closer to this situation being over. School remains open for a small number of pupils who meet the government criteria for attending school including opening during the Easter holidays. This has allowed us as a school, in a relatively small way, to support those critical workers who are doing such a heroic job at this time. I would also like to thank the members of staff who volunteered to come in during the holiday period.

As a school, we will try to support our school community the best way we can during these strange times. This will primarily be through the school website, parent app and social media. Today we have launched a school twitter account @StMargaretsWR and a school facebook page. We hope that as many of you as possible will follow us on these platforms. If you have not already signed up for parent app, please do. Going forward, all future letters will be posted on the school website in the letters section. I will provide regular updates to keep you informed on the on-going situation.

The school website <https://www.stmargaretsmanchester.co.uk> has a 'Home Learning' section where the teachers will be uploading activities for pupils to complete. I have enjoyed looking at the wonderful Easter projects pupils have been completing and posting to the Padlet. For the duration of time school is closed, we will continue to provide a range of activities on the website. Acting Deputy Head, Saira Fazal is leading this area and she can be contacted by email about any aspects of the online learning including suggestions of how it can be improved.

Home learning is new to everyone. Where possible we would recommend that you try to establish a routine that is realistic however there may be some days where it is appropriate to have a break. It is important to remember that we all learn in different ways, especially if your child has additional needs. Whilst it is important to expect all children to be 'the best that they can' it is equally important that your child is learning at a pace where they are happy. Remember, some children might take longer to finish activities than others because they may need a break or may need the task breaking into smaller steps; that is okay and it is how we work in school. Over the forthcoming weeks, your child's class teacher will be contacting you to check in, say hello and see if there is any way they can help your children with their learning. These calls may come up on your phone as a private number.

During this period of extended school closure, we would where possible encourage children to limit their exposure to electronic screens. When children are using screens, particularly ones that link to the internet, we would advise parents and carers to discuss staying safe on the internet. The 'Online Safety' tab on the school website provides further guidance in this area. The Manchester local offer has examples of lots of creative activities for parents and careers to enjoy with their children. A link to this site can be found on the school website.

As a school we have adopted the Department for Education national vouchers scheme for pupils who are eligible for free school meals. I can not thank enough the administration staff who have worked throughout the Easter holiday period to ensure this scheme is up and running for our families. If you think you qualify for free school meals and have not been contacted by us about this scheme, please telephone school.

The current period is a trying time for us all, and as a school we do not want any member of our school community be it a family, parent or child to feel alone. If you find yourself struggling for whatever reason, school is here to support you. We have a range of staff who have expertise in different areas and will try and help you. If in school we do not have the skills to support your needs, we will probably be able to refer you to someone who can. The school website has a number of links to support both parents and pupils. School can also be contacted on the school telephone number 0161 226 2271 every day between 9am and 3pm. Below are the email addresses of staff who can be contacted around specific issues and they will endeavour to help you the best way they can.

Online learning and support – s.fazal@st-margarets.manchester.sch.uk

Special needs learning & support – a.coleman@st-margarets.manchester.sch.uk

Welfare support – h.shaw@st-margarets.manchester.sch.uk

Wellbeing support – Deborah.Henry@place2b.org.uk

Acting Headteacher – d.hunter@st-margarets.manchester.sch.uk

We are living through strange, uncertain times but we will get through this period and normality will return. All of the staff team are looking forward to seeing all our pupils and their families back in school as soon as it safe for this to happen.

Stay safe and look after yourselves.

Best Wishes,

David Hunter

David Hunter
Acting Headteacher