



St. Margaret's
Preparatory School

Back to school

Our plans for the September return



MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD



Dear Parents

Firstly I would like to thank each and every one of you for your wonderful support and kind messages in the last week. I am delighted and privileged to be leading our fantastic St Margaret's team into the next part of our school history and look forward to welcoming our amazing pupils and families back to school.

The last few months has been something of a steep learning curve! We have guessed, second-guessed and then guessed again what the government would advise and how it would impact our school community. I do hope that one thing has been constant during this period however: our unwavering dedication to do the very best for our pupils.

We were delighted that so many of our children returned to school before the end of term – 97% of our pupils in R-Y6 came to school and it was lovely to see them learn and play with their friends. I was so pleased that the efforts made to re-open school safely for all our year groups have been recognised by you. In the recent survey 100% of you agreed that both you as a family and your child benefited from going back to back to school, 100% agreed that that the return to school process was well managed by the school, and 98% thought that every possible risk mitigation that the school could have taken was taken. Some of your lovely comments are included at the back of this document. Thank you also for the ideas and requests some of you made as we turn our attention to September.

We do not know for certain what September will bring but we have made plans based on a number of scenarios and have closely followed the evolving government advice. By imagining and then planning for the different possible scenarios we will be faced with in September I believe we are set up to step into the new academic year with confidence and vigour.

It's so important that we preserve the best that came from this period – how the pupils coped with uncertainty and change, how the staff adapted their educational methods, how we embraced a new way of doing things and how we worked closely with you, our parent body.

With that context in mind I am delighted to share with you some exciting new initiatives later on in this booklet. These initiatives will capitalise on what we have learned over the last few months, take our educational and wellbeing provision for your child to the next level, and prepare us should a second wave require a localised lockdown. Thank you once again for your support of the school this Summer Term, and for your encouragement and feedback. I wish you all a happy and safe summer and look forward to an exciting new academic year.

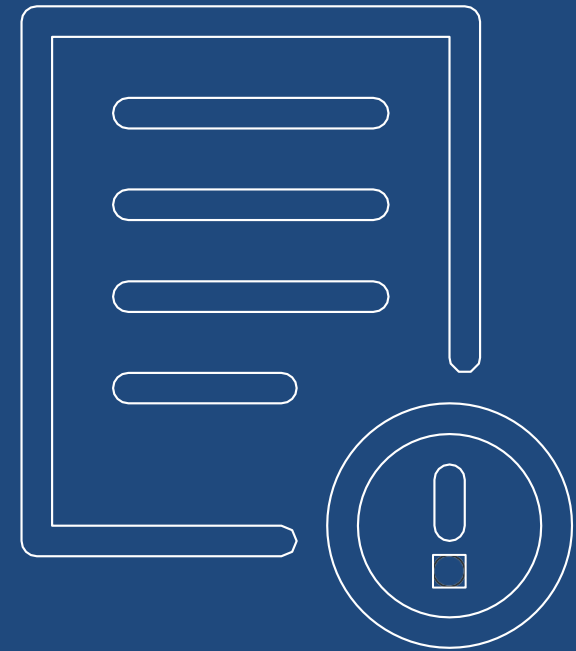
As ever, please let me know if you have any questions and we will write to again closer to the start of term.

Carolyn Moss
Headteacher



HIGHLIGHTS FOR NEXT YEAR

1. Back to normal - this means open and running a normal day for all year groups, within the government guidelines.
2. Catch up support - for any students who feel that they would benefit from revisiting any subject learning from lockdown.
3. Wellbeing - a focus on both students and staff to help them emotionally process the lockdown experience.
4. Safety – risk mitigation to include enhanced cleaning and hygiene measures with new procedures for confirmed cases and outbreaks.
5. Growth mindset - taking the lockdown experience and continuing to innovate and grow from what we have learnt.

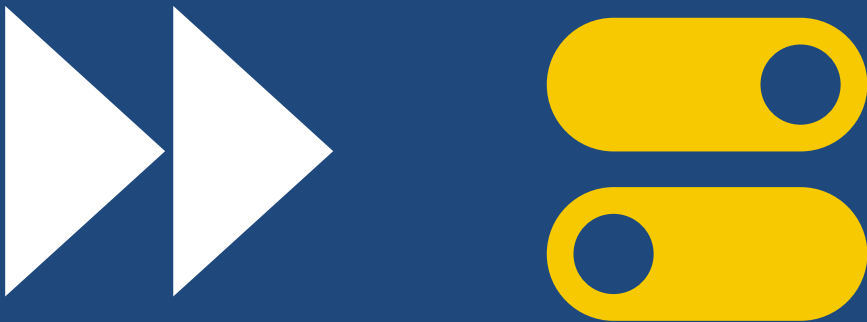


HOW WILL IT WORK?

We have done a large amount of scenario planning and we're confident we can get back to normal.

The latest government guidelines have significantly reduced the need for social distancing and as a result schools will be encouraged to return to a full timetable for all year groups.

This is great news and to the right is a summary of what we know now. This is, of course, conditional on the continued downward trend of the infection rate.



GUIDANCE SUMMARY

Based on the government guidance released on 2nd July this is what we are basing our planning on:

- The bubbles will be increased to incorporate 'whole year' bubbles. This will enable us to deliver lessons as per normal with full classes. Specialist teachers will be able to move between classes provided they maintain social distancing.
- Some of the features from this term may need to remain such as staggered timings and one-way systems, as will a focus on hygiene and cleaning. More detail will follow before the start of next term.
- School services such as catering and transport can return to relative normality with some adaptations to mitigate viral spread.
- The infection protocol is due to be reviewed over the summer including how we align with the NHS Test and Trace scheme.

NEW INITIATIVES FOR NEXT YEAR

During the lockdown period we also took action to develop a number of other initiatives which have enabled us to lead the way in online learning and teaching and we intend to build on this next year.



- **Masterclasses** - our teachers have benefited from working with global experts on how to build curriculums that offer a **blended educational experience** and how we can approach **assessment** of student's progress in new ways.
- **Partnerships** - with innovative learning platforms that use artificial intelligence to create adaptive and personalised learning paths for students – more 'books' on our shared 'virtual bookshelf'.
- **Wellbeing monitoring** – we will introduce **AS (Affective Social) Tracking**, an adolescent mental health tracking tool that enables schools to identify pupils' hidden risks early. This equips teachers with targeted action plans to reduce pupil mental health and wellbeing risks and is part of our global commitment to putting mental health and wellbeing at the centre of a well-balanced education.
- **Collecting the best content from our global family** - as a Group we are developing an online platform which will host bespoke content curated from our expert educationalists from across our 80 schools. It's early days for this exciting project so more to follow soon.
- **Continuing to work with our new skill set** – we have all learnt a great deal about how to make distance learning work, and we will continue to use these tools and skills to benefit the pupils during the year.

FAQS



WILL THERE BE AN ANNUAL INCREASE TO FEES NEXT YEAR?

No. Given the exceptional circumstances, the economic situation and the value we place on our relationship with our parent cohort there will be no fee increase for the 2020/21 school year.

ARE SPORTS, CLUBS & TRIPS RETURNING?

Yes, where possible. We are keen to return to 'business as usual' as much as possible, and this component of education is important.

Certain non-contact sports are approved, and clubs can generally re-start, although there are some restrictions in the latest guidance that we will work through over the summer. We are also planning to have the wrap around care offer of our Larks & Owls, and before and after school clubs.

Domestic trips are permitted, but not residential. We keep a sharp eye on government advice on these topics as guidance changes frequently.

WILL SCHOOL TRANSPORT RESUME?

Yes. We are following government advice closely on this and working with our transport suppliers. Risk mitigations we are investigating are the suitability of face coverings (like on public transport), cleaning regimes, and route reviews.

WILL CATERING RETURN TO NORMAL?

Yes. We may need to operate staggered lunchtimes, and apply some other operational safeguards, but we intend to return to catering as it was before as far as we can, within the guidelines.

WHAT ABOUT LOCAL LOCKDOWNS?

We are planning in detail what happens if the school needs to temporarily close in the case of an outbreak or localised lockdown. If the call comes, we can respond quickly, following a pre-agreed plan.

WHAT ABOUT INFECTION CONTROL?

We will continue our robust cleaning regime next year and work closely with our cleaning staff to ensure every possible risk mitigation is taken.

We are also reviewing our infection control procedures over the Summer to allow us to track confirmed or suspected cases and communicate with parents in the smoothest way possible.

CAN MY CHILD USE THEIR OWN DEVICE?

We have consciously and purposefully decided against a so-called 'bring your own device' policy. Research indicates that it can have a negative impact because the broad range of devices means teachers spend too much time supporting students to fix issues, a role teachers should not be doing as it takes away from valuable teaching time. It also presents a security risk to the school network, will not necessarily be suitable for academic work, and will not always have replacement insurance.

FAQS



WILL CHILDREN AND STAFF BE EXPECTED TO WEAR FACE COVERINGS IN SCHOOL?

No. Face coverings are primarily worn to prevent the wearer from spreading the virus rather than catching it. Primary age children are likely to be distracted and discomforted by the wearing of such an item and cannot be expected to do so safely.

If a student or member of staff wishes to wear a face covering, then they will be allowed to do so. We request they follow guidance on the safe method of using and when removing it should be placed carefully into a sealed plastic bag.

IF MY CHILD, OR A MEMBER OF OUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY IS UNWELL, CAN I SEND MY CHILD TO SCHOOL?

Children who are unwell are best staying at home to recover. If your child, or a member of your immediate family, demonstrates Covid symptoms then you should keep your family at home, seek medical advice and keep up updated on the situation.

WILL MY CHILD RECEIVE FRENCH AND MUSIC LESSONS?

Yes. Teachers and other staff can operate across different classes and year groups in order to facilitate the delivery of the school timetable.

CAN THE TEACHERS MARK MY CHILD'S BOOKS?

Yes. The guidance states that teachers can take books home in order to mark work.

IS SINGING ALLOWED NOW?

The guidance tells us that singing is allowed in small groups in music lessons. Singing should not take place in larger groups such as choirs or assemblies at this point.

IS SWIMMING ALLOWED NOW?

We are working closely with Halstead Leisure Centre regarding school swimming lessons and aim to resume these at the point the guidance deems it safe to do so.

WHAT SHOULD THE CHILDREN WEAR?

Normal school uniform please every day!

WILL SCHOOL FIXTURES BE HELD?

The guidance does not give specific information on playing against other schools. We have pencilled in fixtures as usual and are seeking ongoing guidance from Sport England.

WILL Y3-Y6 RESIDENTIAL TRIPS TAKE PLACE?

We are keen for our Y3-Y6 residential trips to take place this academic year as we feel they are of enormous value to the children. We are looking for trips to run in the Spring and Summer Terms in the expectation that they will be logistically more successful at this point.

DO WE NEED TO KEEP OUR OFFICE365, TAPESTRY AND SEESAW LOGINS SAFE?

Yes please. We have found this new way of working very useful and will continue to use Seesaw for homeworks and information for the children. Please also keep their Office365 logins safe!

RETURN TO SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS

100% of parents agreed that their child benefitted returning to school

98% of parents agreed that their family benefitted from the return to school

100% of parents agreed that the return to school process was well managed by the school

98% of parents agreed every possible risk mitigation that could have been taken was taken by the school

THANK YOU FOR THE POSITIVE FEEDBACK

- *I cannot praise the efforts of all involved in the return to school enough. It was very well organised and it was clear to see that all staff were happy to return and welcome the children back.*
- *I could not have wished for a better return to school. This pandemic has made it clear that St. Margaret's really is family. They have gone above and beyond.*
- *All the support provided to the children has been wonderful and our son has thrived being back at school.*

