



Our Lady's Catholic High School



A National Teaching School

Friday, 18 December 2020

The theme for week commencing 4 January 2021 is the EPIPHANY. (Matthew 2:1-12)

Wise men came to Jerusalem from the East. 'Where is the infant King of the Jews?' they asked. 'We saw His star as it rose and have come to do him homage.'

In order to find Jesus, we also need to follow a different path, His path, the path of humble love. And we must persevere. (Pope Francis on the Epiphany).

The Magi (the three Kings) may have taken an unusual route, but God draws all sorts of people to Him by many different routes. They were led by wonder and became symbols of hope for those who struggle in their journey to find God. Let us journey in love, in compassion and in hope. Don't be surprised if the most unexpected person leads you to know Him.

Dear Lord

As you led the three Kings to you by the light of a star, please draw us ever closer to You by the light of faith.

Amen

TRAVEL ABROAD

If your child travels to a country that is not 'on the permitted travel corridor', then your child must not attend school until their legally enforceable isolation period is complete. Please contact school on Monday, 4 January 2021 to confirm such arrangements. You have a duty to check the Foreign Office web site for the most up to date advice.

RETURN IN JANUARY

Following government announcements, the following will apply at our school:

Year 11: all year 11 pupils attend from Monday, 4 January 2021 and follow their normal taught timetable in school.

Year 7: we are unable, at such short notice, to establish which of our Year 7 pupils have key worker parents or are vulnerable. Considering their age, we have decided that **all** of our Year 7 children are vulnerable and that the best and safest place for them to be is in school. Hence all Year 7 pupils are welcome to attend school as normal on Monday, 4 January 2021 and attend lessons as normal.

Years 8, 9 and 10: the only pupils who should attend school from these three year groups are those who were previously attending during 'lockdown' as either a vulnerable child or a key worker child. If your circumstances have changed please contact us on Monday, 4 January 2021 at 8.30am and we will try to help. All pupils from these three year groups are expected to follow their normal timetable, either by logging on to Teams at the appropriate time or attending the actual class within school. If you do not have IT facilities then your child would be considered to be vulnerable and you may send them into school, having first made contact as requested.

If you are anxious or have questions, do please make contact but remember that we do not have staff in school over Christmas. Staff have worked very hard and need a break with their families too. However, we really will try our best for everyone.

TESTING IN SCHOOL

I am sorry but at this stage I am unable to share with you any plans as we have received nothing like sufficient information to be able to implement testing. Neither have we received any equipment or training. If and when we are in a position to engage with the testing programme, we will make contact and provide full details. The earliest that this would be is toward the end of the first week back.

If you have any feelings that you would like to express about what is being expected of schools, positive or negative, then please consider making direct contact with your local Member of Parliament.



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM MR RANSON

We began in September knowing that this term would be very different, and our aim was to try to make our school run in as recognisable and normal a way as possible. With the overwhelming support of our families and our pupils, along with the outstanding commitment to going beyond the call of duty by our staff, I believe we have achieved our aim. Learning has continued at a strong pace and where interruption has occurred due to the need to isolate, we have become increasingly adept at using blended learning methods. This has involved filming lessons live; recording lessons; the teacher teaching some of the class in the normal room and others joining the lesson from home; the teacher being at home (as was the case for me when I tested positive in November and had to isolate) and using Teams to deliver a live lesson to the class at school; and a whole variety of other imaginative ways to try to ensure that, 'the show goes on'. I can only express my sincere thanks and admiration to everyone who has contributed to helping us create a strong, purposeful and caring school environment which, above all, has been safe.

In a positive spirit of openness, during this term we have had:

- 5 pupils who have tested positive who had been in school and therefore resulted in others having to self-isolate
- 4 pupils who have tested positive while not in school, so no other pupils had to isolate
- 2 support staff who tested positive
- 2 teaching staff who tested positive

In all instances, our risk assessment planning was implemented in as efficient and as thorough manner as possible.

I should like to thank all of the staff who have worked incredibly hard to still try to offer to our pupils activities outside of lessons. While these have been necessarily fewer in number, they have been appreciated greatly by pupils. Christmas pantos, film nights and reward events, all conducted under strict 'bubble rules', are just some of the events. In many ways our Christmas lunch was one of the real highlights of the term and we were determined to provide this for our pupils. The effort and quality from our catering team was outstanding and was supported fully by our site, admin, and IT teams (yes, it did need all of them!) along with teachers supervising. Thank you to all of them.

We now reach the Christmas break and return to life with our families. This will not be the same as usual as we all have restrictions on our gatherings and, while this causes sadness and upset, it is all for a greater good: overcoming the COVID virus. Christmas 2021 is only a year off and with the Vaccine in place, we should all be able to make up for everything that has been sacrificed during 2020. When looking for guidance it can be very tempting to turn to 'celebrities' and 'Twitter'. A person who 'has something to say' can be quite different from a person who is 'worth listening to'. I therefore offer to you Pope Francis and a small section from his Papal Encyclical, *Amoris Laetitia*, published in 2016. He talks of 'family life as an educational setting', telling us:

The family is the first school of human values, where we learn the wise use of freedom. Certain inclinations develop in childhood and become so deeply rooted that they remain throughout life, either as attractions to a particular value or a natural repugnance to certain ways of acting. Many people think and act in a certain way because they deem it to be right on the basis of what they learned, as if by osmosis, from their earliest years: "That's how I was taught". "That's what I learned to do". In the family we can also learn to be critical about certain messages sent by the various media. Sad to say, some television programmes or forms of advertising often negatively influence and undercut the values inculcated in family life.

I wish to all of you a very happy, safe and holy Christmas and a New Year where the world comes together to eradicate this virus from our lives.

Nigel Ranson
Headteacher



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ONLINE SAFETY

School has been made aware of an App which potentially may encourage recruitment into gangs/drug running/grooming. This is just a reminder to parents and carers to continually monitor their child's phone, check parental controls and privacy settings and always have the phone on charge downstairs overnight. This particular app is called 'Cunch Line Chronicles'. If your child has it, you should delete it. Ensure all App requests come through you and that you check the content of the App before approving purchase.

More information and guidance can be found via the following links:

<https://swgfl.org.uk/magazine/online-safety-alerts-think-before-you-scare/>

<https://safeblog.lgfl.net/2018/11/parents-scare-or-prepare/>

OPERATION ENCOMPASS

Attached with this Newsletter is an information letter which provides details of Operation Encompass and Our Lady's involvement in the programme.

Dates to remember

Monday, 4 January – School opens for the Spring Term
 Wednesday, 6 January – Year 11 Mock Interview Information Assembly
 Wednesday, 20 January – Year 9 Careers Day
 Tuesday, 2 February – Year 11 Virtual Mock Interviews 3.00 pm until 5.00 pm
 Friday, 12 February 2021 – School closes for half-term
 Monday, 22 February INSET day School closed for all pupils
 Tuesday, 23 February – School opens
 Wednesday, 24 February Year 7 Careers Day
 Friday, 26 March - School closes for Easter at 12.45 pm
 Monday, 12 April - School opens for the Summer term