



5th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

I am sure that you will be aware the Prime Minister has announced that the country will be entering a second national lockdown. Despite the new challenges this will bring to us all, I urge you to remain optimistic about the future. With everyone following the guidance to stay at home and protect the NHS, along with roll out of the vaccination programme, I firmly believe that a level of normality will return for us all at some point in 2021.

Indeed, we are in quite a different position to the one that faced us last March when we entered the first national lockdown. Health care professionals are far more experienced at treating people who have contracted the virus and schools have implemented a wide range of measures that ensures we are doing all we can to protect children, staff and our families. Please be reassured that we will continue to prioritise safety of everyone at Stafford Manor High School for as long as is necessary by doing everything that is feasibly possible to be COVID secure.

The latest Government guidance has stated that schools will remain closed until at least February half term for all pupils except vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. Throughout the pandemic, we have been proud to support all frontline workers and those providing valuable care to the sick and the elderly. If you are a key worker then please contact us at school and we can discuss how we can support you and your child. The Government have requested that parents inform us if they are a critical worker but do not require school provision for their child. If this is the case, please could you confirm this with school by contacting us via c19@smhs.staffs.sch.uk and provide the following information:

- Child's name
- Parents name and contact number
- Parents occupation

During the period of school closure we will be providing work for your child to complete at home in line with their existing timetable. Since September, teachers have been developing resources and approaches to engage and support pupils at home if needed. We will continue to set all work on Show My Homework and use Microsoft Teams to provide support and advice for each class and individual. Pupils can communicate with their teachers through Microsoft Teams, but can also send a message through Show My Homework, and email teachers directly through their school account if necessary. It is an expectation that your child will complete the work set whilst at home and access the support that is available if they are unsure about what to do.

We know that every individual family will have their own challenges when supporting children to complete work at home. We do not expect parents to be experts in every subject but there are still plenty of ways you can support your child. For example, you can make sure that your child continues to wake up on time every morning and has something to eat before they start

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their school work. Providing a quiet space for them to complete their work will be a great support. Encourage a change of scenery at break and lunch time by moving to a different room or stepping outside for some fresh air. It is a fine balancing act when supporting children to work at home but aim to be as positive as you can and use simple rewards to motivate and celebrate your child's achievements. Finally, remember that staying hydrated and completing exercise is always good for the mind and the body! As always, we are here for you if you need any help, advice or support. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need to talk.

We are also doing all we can to provide additional support for those in most need. In line with Government guidance we have been in contact with all families where a child is in receipt of free school meals with details of how they can collect their food parcel. Furthermore, we appreciate that access to technology can be a significant barrier for some in their home learning. The Government have supplied us with a limited numbers of laptops that will be available for some children to use at home. Initially, we will be communicating with families of children eligible for free school meals and on the SEND register to target this provision. Unfortunately, we have not been provided with enough laptops for everyone and appreciate your understanding if we cannot meet every request. We will also be providing all children entitled to Pupil Premium funding with a resource pack for use at home. This will include a pencil case with lots of stationary and work book to complete school work. If you do not fall into any of these categories mentioned, but still require some help with resources for home learning then please get in touch with the main school office and we will see what is possible.

Finally I would like to offer reassurance to all our pupils who are in Year 11 and 13. You will be aware that the Prime Minister made reference to the fact that the Government feel it is not possible for exams to go ahead fairly this summer. At the moment we have no further clarification on what exactly this means or how pupils will be allocated their grades this year. What I can guarantee is that we will be doing everything possible to support every single youngster to achieve a grade that they deserve. It is important that pupils continue to complete all their work at home through this closure period as we wait for confirmation from the Government on how grades will be awarded. It must also be understood that completing all work will also make for a much more successful transition to the next stage of a child's education whether they intend to attend The Sixth Form Partnership or Stafford College. As soon as we have further details regards exams, we will share the information with you.

Although you may feel anxious about the weeks ahead, you should also take comfort from the fact we are more prepared and in a much stronger position this year to deal with the challenges that lie ahead. Working together will mean we can ensure we are doing everything to support you and your child until school reopens. If we all believe we can do it, then we are half way there. We are here if you need us. Stay safe and stay positive.

Yours sincerely



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