

6th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Following the Latest Government Announcement Regarding Education

It is only a few days since my last letter and once again I am writing following further changes to government policy on schools. As I am sure you are aware, schools have been instructed to close to all but the children of critical workers and vulnerable children. I am sorry that we find ourselves in a position yet again of our children having to work from home, but with infection rates rising as they are, it is without doubt a reasonable decision under the circumstances, sad as we are to not be seeing the students each day.

As it stands currently, all students are due to return to schools after the February half-term on Monday 22nd February.

Home Learning

Guidance will be given in a separate e-mail today from Mr McBain about our home learning provision for KS3 with subsequent information being sent for students in KS4 and KS5. We would really appreciate your support in keeping them positive, focused and motivated to complete all work as well as they can.

Department for Education - Laptops for Schools

The DFE have allocated St Augustine's a number of laptops which have recently been delivered to the school. These laptops are to be allocated to students that fall into a set of criteria in order to support students with their access to online learning. The criteria is very specific, including those who are Pupil Premium, those with no device at all, and those sharing with at least 3 other members in the household. We completed a survey with all of our students in September in order to identify a priority list of students who will be loaned a laptop to use at home. Although we would like to be in a position where every student could have a laptop to use, this is simply not possible, and our allocation of laptops from the DFE covers around 10% of the entire school community.

Parents will be contacted by year teams if their son/daughter is eligible for a laptop and when collection will be arranged. We are currently waiting for various passwords and log in details from the DFE in order to get into the laptops and make secure for home use. We are expecting to have these by the early part of next week and then we will hope to start issuing laptops to student's the week beginning 18th January 2021.

Exams, Assessment and Tracking

Assessments will take place remotely and tracking points reported to you as we normally would. In terms of public examinations, with regard to the GCSE and A-Level Summer Examinations, I am sure you will have heard the announcement in the media that it will not be possible for all exams to go ahead as normal this summer, and that the Government will be working with Ofqual and exam boards on alternative arrangements. We don't have any more detail to provide you with at this stage, but will of course ensure that you are kept fully updated as soon as we know more.

We understand how disappointing this will be for many of our Year 11 and 13 students who impressed us all with their incredible hard work and resilience last term; we would really appreciate your support in keeping them positive, focused and motivated to complete their courses and continue making the excellent progress they have demonstrated this academic year. Through continued hard work, students will give themselves the best chance of success this year whatever the method of assessing grades is used.

Free School Meals

We have yet to receive any further information about how families who would usually receive a free school meal are to be compensated, but will be in touch with you as soon as we are informed. Many families' circumstances may have changed during the pandemic, so it is always worth a quick check to see if your child may be eligible.

If you think your child may be eligible for Free School Meals, please use the quick eligibility checker www.fsm.lgfl.net to receive confirmation of eligibility. Once you receive confirmation, please complete Westminster Council's FSM application form provided in the link <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/free-school-meals>

There have also been changes to Free School Meals eligibility under Universal Credit. Please see Westminster Council's letter to parents regarding changes to Free School Meal eligibility under Universal Credit. https://www.westminster.gov.uk/sites/default/files/letter_regarding_uc_and_fsm_-_april_2018.pdf

For any other queries regarding Free School Meals please email Mail@stahigh.org quoting your child's full name and Tutor Group.

Lateral Flow testing

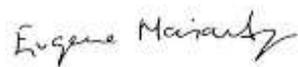
We continue to believe that conducting lateral flow testing will help to reduce risk for students and staff while they are on site and in the community. A lot of time and effort has gone into staff training and preparation to enable us to carry this out. If you have not done so please can you fill in the consent form which can be found on the website at <https://www.stahigh.org/news/consent-and-registration-for-covid-lateral-flow-tests/>

Communication with Families

We are mindful that, with children and parents working from home, email in-boxes will become very busy, however we will be aiming to keep you as informed about events as we can. Most letters we send can also be found on the school website. Individual correspondence will carry on as normal. As mentioned before, we are still here every day, so if you have any concerns or queries, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

May I finish by thanking you for the many kind messages of support during this period. The St Augustine's community is strong and we will get through the next challenging period by working together. News about the vaccines brings hope and we look forward to a time when our community can have school back to as close to normal as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Eugene Moriarty
Head of Federation