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**St Joseph's Academy**

**Head Teacher: Mr Joseph Kane**

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Dear Parent/Carer,

We very much look forward to welcoming young people back to school tomorrow (Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> October). Please find enclosed a general update covering a range of school matters.

### **COVID mitigations**

Despite some speculative press coverage, there has been no change to COVID mitigation guidance for schools. As such, all mitigations remain in place as detailed below.

- One way system
- Staggered Break/Lunch
- Face coverings to be worn when using school transport
- Face coverings to be worn when in the school building unless eating lunch
- Break/Lunch to be spent outdoors where possible (weather dependent)
- No unannounced visits from guests, including parents/carers

As and when restrictions change, we will notify you via the school app. We would urge caution when interpreting press coverage, as sometimes local decisions are also taken around implementation dates and mitigations. Any and all updates will be sent to you from the school.

### **Parent Council AGM**

Our Parent Council AGM will be held on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October at 7pm. Our Parent Council would be delighted to welcome new members, and in particular parents/carers of those within our latest S1 cohort. The Parent Council is a fantastic forum to help support the work of the school for the benefit of our young people. If you would like to attend the AGM, are interested in joining our Parent Council or have reason to make contact with our Parent Council, please email [stjosephsacademyparentcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:stjosephsacademyparentcouncil@gmail.com) .

### **Extra-Curricular Activity**

In general terms, ongoing mitigations prevent some extra-curricular activity from taking place. In recent weeks, we have received enquiries around formal sport/sporting events. At the moment, competitive fixtures/meetings cannot proceed, but by way of reassurance, we are registered to compete in Scottish Athletics, Tennis Scotland and Scottish Football Association (Senior Team) events this session. Actual participation will be dependent upon local and national guidance at the time of fixtures/meetings.

## Reporting to Parents/Carers

Last session, we could not proceed with face-to-face parents' evenings, and instead moved to a model of interim and full reporting. This session, interim reports will be issued for all year groups by January, with approximate release dates shown below.

Friday 22 <sup>nd</sup> October	S4 to S6 Tracking Issued
Friday 29 <sup>th</sup> October	S1 to S3 Tracking Issued
Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> November	S4 Interim Reports Issued
Friday 26 <sup>th</sup> November	S3 Interim Reports Issued
Friday 10 <sup>th</sup> December	S5/6 Interim Reports Issued
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> December	S2 Interim Reports Issued
Friday 28 <sup>th</sup> January	S1 Interim Reports Issued

Thereafter, we will either issue Full Reports or host Parents' Evenings in the New Year. Hosting Parents' Evenings is dependent upon COVID mitigations at the time. We are working with colleagues across EAC schools to determine the viability of online Parents' Evenings as a potential alternative to face-to-face meetings but appreciate that online evenings are more challenging in a secondary school than in a primary setting.

A further update will be issued later in the session, but for now, the following dates can be regarded as indicative (the day of the week may need to change allowing for hall bookings).

If proceeding with Parents' Evenings:

Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> February	S3 Parents' Evening
Wednesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> February	S5/6 Parents' Evening
Wednesday 9 <sup>th</sup> March	S4 Parents' Evening
Wednesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> March	S2 Parents' Evening
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> May	S1 Parents' Evening

In the event that we cannot proceed with face-to-face or online Parents' Evenings, full reports will be issued around two weeks after the dates stated above. Staff will work to the dates shown above, but there then follows a period of internal quality assurance before reports are released to families.

Please be assured that confirmation in respect of reporting/parents' evenings from February onwards will follow as soon as possible.

## Attainment

Scottish Government released school level data to schools shortly before the October break. Pleasingly, upward trends across almost all measures are evident again. In particular, more of our young people in S4 are attaining three, five or seven SCQF5 (National 5 or equivalent) qualifications. In S5, a higher number of our pupils are attaining, one, three or five Higher awards. In S6, more pupils are leaving with one or more Advanced Higher awards. Of particular significance is improvement in the attainment of those pupils for whom engaging with school is a challenge. There is a clear pattern of stronger attainment for these pupils which coincides with wider improvements as detailed above.

Significant strategic decisions that have contributed to improved attainment in recent years can be summarised as follows:

- Revised Curriculum Pathways from S2-S6
- Revised standard of materials shared with families to support correct course choices
- Significant increase in alternative SCQF qualifications on offer beyond those offered by SQA
- Introduction of our Alternative Provision base to support those struggling to attend timetabled classes
- Significant recruitment and retention of staff/removal of temporary contracts
- Focus on high standards and expectations
- Internal 'Challenge 100' mentoring initiative led by Miss Quigley for those at risk of not attaining

Scottish Government publish public facing data in around March of each year. At that time, we will be able to share the specifics of upward trends in the attainment of our young people. I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff, pupils and families for their support as we look to maintain the strong attainment record evident across the past few years.

### **Standards and Expectations**

We rely on and appreciate your support in respect of standards and expectations. Please continue to encourage young people to wear school uniform and complete homework activities to the best of their ability. There will be a general staff focus on uniform and expectations in the weeks ahead. If you require any support in respect of sourcing uniform items, then please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

### **Vision, Values and Aims and LearnWell**

Our S3 pupil leadership team have worked with Mrs Shearer to collate values that they believe are important to them. As part of a much wider project to revisit our values and aims, our pupils will now present to all other pupils in the school. This will lead to identification of values which best capture our Catholic ethos and account for our local context. In tandem, pupils have worked with RE staff to review our House Patronage. We will shortly survey all pupils and families to select three of the following saints (one from each category shown) to replace St. Andrew, St. Columba and St. Margaret as our House patrons. The list shown below was determined in collaboration with our chaplain and pupil leaders.

#### *Patronage: Youth*

Blessed Carlo Acutis or St. Bernadette

#### *Patronage: Care of the Environment*

St. Francis of Assisi or St. Kateri

#### *Patronage: Social Justice*

St. Theresa of Calcutta (Mother Theresa) or St. Oscar Romero

Upon completion of this exercise and wider work on our Vision, Values and Aims, signage and all communication from the school will be updated to reflect our revised vision and house

patronage. Thereafter, our Catholic ethos will be more overt with a range of materials focussing on the patronage of the above saints available to pupils and referenced regularly in school.

## **LearnWell**

Mr Boyle is a leading a review of wellbeing provision in four arenas:

- Mental and Emotional Wellbeing
- Physical Wellbeing
- Spiritual Wellbeing
- Social Wellbeing



The aim of this review is to ensure that pupils and parents/carers can clearly understand our school's approach to each of the above. In the coming months, and in tandem with a review of our Vision, Values and Aims, you will receive information detailing school support in each area. Pupils will also receive a pupil friendly overview of support on offer. You will notice the logo shown above on letters issued by the school. All pupils will receive a LearnWell badge that can be attached to blazers. Signage across the site is also changing to reflect our LearnWell priorities. This is to increase the profile of the extensive support already on offer in school and to ensure that access to support is known and understood by all stakeholders.

## **Support Services**

Many organisations and departments continue to work closely with school staff this session. Input from Educational Psychologists and ongoing support offered via SDS (Careers), Counselling (both Upstream and Exchange Counselling) and school nurses are invaluable facets of school life. Pastoral Care staff continue to refer pupils to various support services on a daily basis. Should you have any queries in relation to wider school level support, please contact your child's Pastoral Care teacher in the first instance.

## **Transport, Catering and IT**

At the start of a new academic session, there are always administrative tasks associated with transport, catering and IT that need to be addressed. School staff have spent extensive time in ensuring that transport records correlate with school records. We have also worked to ensure that all young people can access the online catering portal.

We appreciate your support in ensuring good conduct when young people use school transport and ask that you continue to encourage pupils to order food via the online portal.

In terms of IT, we have audited pupil IT access, and understand that around fifty pupils have no device that they can use at home beyond their mobile phone. These pupils will be issued with school iPads as soon as possible.

We will also ask that all pupils with a school iPad bring their device to school at least once during the week beginning Monday 1<sup>st</sup> November. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, we are required to conduct an annual audit of IT equipment, and secondly, we need to see first-hand that pupils can access Glow as necessary. We will send a reminder out nearer the time.

For those pupils in S1 and S2, iPads are no longer routinely issued to pupils (other than where there is no other device accessible at home). The Scottish Government will, in the

coming months, look to work with local authorities to formulate longer term plans to deliver a one pupil, one device model. We have made a return to the local authority in this respect and will keep you informed as more information is released to schools.

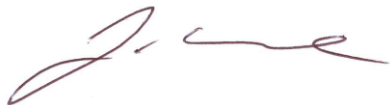
### **Term Ahead**

A natural part of the school year cycle is the challenge that a longer term can bring, particularly as the clocks change and weather deteriorates. We fully appreciate the importance of the term ahead and the impact that it will have on attainment and progress.

With this in mind, we seek your support to ensure that young people attend school when at all possible. We appreciate that COVID isolation is outwith the control of individual pupils and families but are concerned by transient non-COVID absence levels. Please continue to always encourage attendance.

Thank you as always for your ongoing support of our school.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'J. Kane', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr Kane