

11<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

As this half term draws to a close, I think it is important to begin with a thank you!

Thank you for all the support you have given your children over the last few weeks, especially as you juggle your own work and family life. This last year has presented huge challenges for families and I think credit needs to be given to you as parents for all that you have done to support your family. Well done from everyone at STM! As spring approaches, I hope that we all get the opportunity to return to some form of normality once again.

### Remote Learning

We have received many messages of thanks over the last few weeks from parents and pupils. We are very proud to have been able to offer remote education and a 'live' provision from the beginning of January. Staff have worked very hard to deliver a full curriculum to all children and our aim is to ensure that no child misses out on their education. We have also provided your child with enrichment opportunities and a chance to spend time together in form groups and year groups. I hope this daily routine and regular contact with staff has helped pupils and parents during this period of lockdown.

Pupil engagement has been extremely high and the quality of their work has been excellent. We have been showcasing some of this work on our Twitter account and celebrating pupil achievements in our celebration and reward assemblies. We are incredibly proud of our pupils and their efforts.

Mrs Galletly has sent parents/carers a link to an online questionnaire about our remote education offer at STM. Please take a couple of minutes to complete the survey, it would be much appreciated.

When school starts again on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, we look forward to seeing the children, on time, engaged and ready to learn online.

### GCSE Exams 2021

The consultation from Ofqual on the summer 2021 examinations closed last Friday. Thank you to those parents who contributed. Staff at STM submitted their thoughts along with a collective response from myself and my colleagues at the St Ralph Sherwin CMAT. Schools have been told to expect news from this consultation at the end of February. In the meantime, our advice remains the same. Year 11 pupils should continue to engage in their daily work and that what you do each day, in every lesson, matters.

### Wellbeing

Last week, the school celebrated Children's Mental Health Week with the theme 'Express Yourself'. More information and support can be found by visiting <https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/parents-and-carers/>. Furthermore, support and advice can be found on the school's website.

Whilst it's pretty chilly outdoors, fresh air is great for the soul. Please encourage your son/daughter to take some time away from sitting at a screen and to enjoy the fantastic countryside around us, albeit safely.



### February Half Term

The government has confirmed that schools will close to all pupils for the February half term holiday.

If you are in receipt of free school meals, the government has confirmed that financial support will be provided through the Winter Grant Scheme that Derbyshire County Council have been facilitating. You will be contacted directly by Council regarding your voucher. The school will continue to provide free school meal vouchers through Edenred to those families who are eligible when the school reopens on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

The government has also asked that the school continues to carry out tracing of confirmed cases of Covid-19 over the half term break. If your child currently attends school and develops any symptoms during the holiday, please let us know by emailing the school at [enquiries@st-thomasmore.derbyshire.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@st-thomasmore.derbyshire.sch.uk)

### INSET – Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February

A reminder that tomorrow is an INSET Day and the school will be closed for all pupils.

### School return to all pupils

The government plans to release more information after half term about its intention to reopen schools to all pupils. Whilst 8<sup>th</sup> March has been suggested as a potential date for restarting schools, we know that there are many factors to be considered before any confirmation is given. We are looking forward to welcoming the children back to St Thomas More, but will wait to hear what the government announces before confirming any arrangements with parents.

### Lateral Flow Testing at STM

We have been conducting lateral flow tests since the start of January for staff and pupils accessing school. Staff have completed the relevant NHS training and the testing process is now well rehearsed. After half term, we will start the process of gathering consent for testing from parents ahead of the children's return to school. I will write to you again to give you further information.

Take care, stay safe and keep well.



Mr D Redfern  
Headteacher

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