



3 April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

This letter I am writing to you all today certainly wasn't what I was anticipating a couple of weeks ago as we approached the end of this Spring term.

It's certainly a term, or indeed a period in time that none of us will ever forget and will probably feature on GCSE/A Level History and Science examination specifications in years to come.

Our Year 11 and Year 13 have obviously felt the impact of COVID-19 more than most. I can promise that Bishop Milner Catholic College will make sure no one in Y11 or Y13 suffers as a result of this national crisis. I have every confidence in OFQUAL that they will ensure the 'Classes of 2020' get the qualifications they so richly deserve. We will keep students and parents fully informed whenever we receive information from OFQUAL or the DfE regarding their plans for Summer 2020.

Our other year groups, whilst not physically in college, have been remarkable. Fortunately, we anticipated the possibility of school closures relatively early on, so our staff were brilliant preparing the remote/online learning materials and crucially training themselves and the students how to use it. The response from the students whilst at home has been fantastic and I would like to thank all those parents and carers out there who are encouraging (or forcing) their children to engage. Whilst it's not ideal in their learning journey, it's certainly different and hopefully they'll come back, whenever that may be, motivated and possibly a little more independent in terms of their capacity and ability to complete tasks online and at home.

Many teachers have been saying in recent weeks that this period of school closure and the culture of online learning could change how education and certain other industries work moving forward. Certainly, we have recognised that now we have a system set up using 'Microsoft Teams', homework and independent work could easily follow a similar model once children return to college.

Believe it or not, we do actually miss the students. We hope they miss us! The social interaction they have in college is key to their development and maybe this accounts for some of the huge numbers who appear each day for the live online lessons. They clearly want that opportunity to chat, ask questions and importantly enjoy a little piece of normality.

Life at Bishop Milner Catholic College behind the scenes, and within the St John Bosco Catholic Multi-Academy, won't be stopping. We will try our very best to keep you regularly updated with news and information so when we do re-open, it takes as little time as possible to adjust and return to normal. I hope you have felt well informed to date and our presence on Social Media has naturally increased, so I encourage you all to follow our Facebook page and twitter page, along with our website.

Many of you will be following us on our social media platforms already, so will be aware that on 1 April 2020, after many months of planning, we officially welcomed two new schools into the St John Bosco Catholic Multi-Academy.

Stuart Bathurst Catholic High School and St Mary's Catholic Primary School both in Wednesbury, Sandwell, join our already successful Catholic multi-academy alongside our Dudley schools - Bishop Milner Catholic College, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School and St Chad's Catholic Primary School.

We very much look forward to working with our new colleagues and sharing our expertise across what is now five Catholic schools within the Black Country.

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The big question we are all asking is when will Bishop Milner Catholic College re-open? No one knows. We will continue to do our very best and provide your sons and daughters with a structure of remote online learning so that when they do return to our classrooms, they won't have had a huge gap in their education. I will say this though, children are put under enormous pressure in today's modern society. As parents and teachers we must not forget that they are children and let's make the most of a terrible situation and turn it into a positive. Let them be independent with their work (as long as they do it!) and don't worry too much about 'down time'. Encourage them to try new things, for example cooking or new hobbies, they may even help you out around the house more (wishful thinking?) Family time is so precious and time for most of us is no longer an excuse, let's try and enjoy it.

Talking of cooking, please keep your eye out for '100 Milner Meals' coming very soon. We recognise many families in our community are now under pressure to provide food on the table and prices are forever increasing and shopping can be difficult, depending on where you go. The '100 Milner Meals' will be based on a price of £1.00(pp) and provide a wide variety of choices and ideas for families. We'll notify parents and carers once this has been published on our website.

I am very proud to lead Bishop Milner Catholic College and in testing times for us all, our students and staff never cease to amaze me. I've talked already about the remote online learning and how teachers and students are engaging with one another, but beyond that, there are so many other heart-warming stories from the past 14 days. These include staff delivering over 500 food parcels to our Free School Meal families, our catering staff making a huge cake for our NHS Ambulance Service friends across the road and then a week later cooking them and the Dudley Fire Station staff a fantastic lunch. We also delivered 20+ food parcels to the Salvation Army in Dudley to help feed the homeless. These acts of kindness and charity epitomise the culture we have amongst our college community.

As a Catholic community we have entered the most holy season in our Liturgical Calendar. It's very strange that we are not able to attend Mass especially during Lent, but if ever there was a time when our faith can provide us with hope and support, it is now. The symbols of Easter that we see everywhere (when not in a lockdown) in the form of Easter Eggs, lambs and chicks signify newness, rebirth and are for us, the start of a journey rather than the end. Whilst this journey is somewhat unknown at present, I want to wish you all a happy and Holy Easter. You and your families will be in our prayers and as a community we must continue to support and look after each other.

Stay safe and God bless,



Mr R May
Principal

RMA/JGI