

St Matthew Academy

St Joseph's Vale, Blackheath, London SE3 0XX

Headteacher: Ms Miranda Baldwin

Head of Primary: Ms Joanna Chick



3rd April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I write this letter while 'working from home' – a phrase that I would never have imagined using having worked in schools for the duration of my working life. However human nature enables us to adapt very quickly to new and changing circumstances and I am really pleased that our pupils and staff have dealt with the challenges we are facing in the most resilient and caring manner. I have been overwhelmed with the messages shared by staff and pupils showing how SMA pupils are 'letting their light shine' while working from home. The SMA virtual community is thriving with numerous interactions taking place every day and so many of our pupils have thoroughly enjoyed engaging with the full range of home learning experiences on offer.

As you will be aware school is only 'partially' closed – we continue to remain open to pupils from families of Critical Workers. Our provision is a small one with normally less than 10 pupils per day – thank you to everyone that has followed the government guidance to keep pupils at home where possible. Last week it was also great to be able to support a local primary school – All Saints, Blackheath, by giving them a space at SMA when they were unable to open their own site for a number of days.

Pupils attending the provision have been involved in a range of activities - our Twitter feed highlights many of them as does the new Virtual School Newsletter. My favourite image so far is from Tuesday when pupils said thank you to the NHS by pinning pictures of the rainbows they had been painting to the school gate. Pupils and staff have also been treated to daily breakfast and lunch from the catering team – this provision has also been made available to pupils in receipt of Free School Meals while we were awaiting government guidance on how to provide for these pupils while school is closed. I am pleased that we have now moved to providing weekly supermarket vouchers for all eligible families - if you have not received your first voucher by email please do contact the finance team (finance@stmatthewacademy.co.uk) at the Academy.



I'd like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to a number of important documents/publications that have recently been published by the government/academy in response to the Coronavirus outbreak.

1. [Closure of educational settings: information for parents and carers \(updated 31 March 2020\)](#)
2. [Children's guide to coronavirus](#) – I think this is a very well written document and would encourage all parents to share it/talk through it with their children at home
3. Safeguarding Addendum - an update to our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy during school closure is attached to the email and can also be found on the Academy website.

Despite the current school closure I feel it is important to reflect on our successes this term. I am delighted to share with families the news that our September 2020 year 7 cohort will be 180 pupils all of whom have chosen our school – the majority having selected us as their first choice. This is a significant milestone in the history of the Academy as it will be the first time since it opened in 2007 that there has been a year group at full capacity. Our aim in the coming years will be to further increase the number of first preferences and also to recruit more pupils from the local Catholic primary schools.

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Successful, confident learners High expectations, outstanding achievements Inclusive, caring, Catholic community Nurturing talent, cultivating ambition Excellence for all

I encourage all families to share this good news in their local community and encourage their friends to come and visit, to see us at work – I am confident our pupil ambassadors will give them a real insight on a tour of the school

This term we have continued to ensure that our children have had the opportunity to participate in a range of activities that enrich and broaden their learning both in and outside of the classroom. We endeavour to provide the children with many experiences that enhance their cultural capital. All children have taken part in a variety of workshops, school trips, sports tournaments and had visitors to speak to them in class. The redesigning of our curriculum 2020 vision has allowed teachers to immerse children in their learning and make robust links across all subject areas. For example, children in Year 5 have visited the Horniman Museum to research The Kingdom of Benin, their topic for the spring term. They were able to explore the Ancient Benin culture, beliefs and achievements of this ancient African civilisation as they viewed the replica artefacts. The children were able to put the knowledge gained from this museum visit into practice as they celebrated African Day that created a sense of awe and wonder with pupils taking part in dance and drumming sessions. World Book Day yet again was celebrated by the whole school and continued to embed a love of reading and stories with all children through storytelling, creating book covers, dressing up as book characters and joining together in our Book Day Parade.

This term we have carried out two extremely successful Personal Development Days (PSHCE) with a focus on keeping safe at home and outside school and how to administer first aid. Children from Years 2 and 5 had a visit from the London Fire Brigade who spoke to them about how to eliminate the risk of fire at home. All children in the primary phase took part in first aid workshops and learnt basic skills that they can apply if ever needed. In the secondary phase, our Personal Development Days focused on pupils learning about the relationship between SMA and the wider world through activities supported by the Construction Youth Trust, the Metropolitan Police and the London Education Advisory Network. The second 'PD Day' saw pupils looking at how to make our community a safer place for all. Pupils worked together on an Environment Project; first aid training and heard a number of talks including one from a sitting magistrate, that were just part of a day of interesting activities.

We are fortunate that we are not saying farewell to any members of staff at the end of this term and I am pleased that before the school closure we were able to make a number of strong appointments to strengthen further our teaching team for the 2020/21 academic year. Given the increasing number of pupils at SMA, particularly at KS3, these appointments will enable us to ensure the strongest possible delivery of our Curriculum 2020 vision.

As we reach the end of the most unusual of school term's I am sure parents, carers and pupils will want to join me in saying a really massive 'thank you' to the amazing SMA staff team. Their commitment, determination and sheer hard work ensures that all SMA pupils receive a wide variety of opportunities to 'let their light shine'. Can I also take this opportunity to thank parents and carers for their continued support and partnership work with the Academy. This support is crucial as we continue our journey to becoming a great Catholic school serving the local community.

Some pupils and staff will be in over the Easter holidays ensuring we have provision for those families that need it - I'd like to say a special thank you to all the staff who have volunteered to work during their break. For pupils remaining at home with their families there will be no expectation regarding home learning during the holiday period but you will find a range of ideas for activities to complete in the newsletter being sent out with this letter. We will be in touch with you before the end of the break regarding arrangements for home learning next term – if you have any feedback regarding how we could make this even better, then do drop us an email.

Wishing all our families a safe and peaceful Easter.

Take care,



Miranda Baldwin
Headteacher

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