

# St-Margaret's Academy

15<sup>th</sup> January 2021

## Dear Parents/Carers

With week 2 drawing to a close, we have started to find our new lockdown rhythm to the spring term. Although it is a very busy time for teachers, juggling in-school and home learning, it feels like we're making the best of difficult situation. Our amazing teaching assistants are supporting at school and at home. Thank you for your feedback on the home learning and for your appreciation for everything we're doing in this area.

Numbers of pupils attending school has increased over the last 2 weeks and we are trying our best to accommodate the need of families as we do appreciate the pressures you are under at home. Having more pupils in school does present a challenge for us in having to provide more space and more adults while also maintain the home learning provision. If you can care for your child at home, we really appreciate you doing this and also to only book the days you actually need if you are a key worker. For any children with an EHCP, you are entitled to a place in school which is actively being encouraged by the government so please do let us know if you need a place and are unable to book one.

Thank you to the office staff for managing all the logistics behind the scenes. I'm sure you can imagine the amount of red tape and planning which is considerable. Thanks also to our site staff who are doing a really thorough job with continued high quality cleaning. Thanks too to the MTAs who attend school at lunchtime and give staff an invaluable breather and interact with our children so well. A huge thanks to our IT team who are supporting you and staff considerably; it sometimes feels like they are on call 24/7 and I don't know what we would do without them.



## School Meals

*If your child is in school, we are offering hot school dinners again from next week. There will be a 2-week simplified menu available for you to book via the school Gateway as normal. Please help us by booking in advance – booking by today (and future Fridays) will help us to plan ahead with food orders thank you. This is obviously free to those families with children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 as part of the Universal Free School Meals offer.*

## Free School Meals

**Information for parents of children who are entitled to a free school meal because you are in receipt of benefits:** *vouchers are available from next week but if you don't receive them in time, you are welcome to collect a food pack as well. Just give us notice. In addition, if your child is not in school and you want a hot meal for them, you can order a hot lunch take-away which you can collect from school. Please do contact the office for any help.*

# Home Learning

Thank you for your feedback on the home learning provision which was overwhelmingly positive. We had 94 responses. Almost all of you find it easy to access and you rate academic progress and enjoyment as the two main priorities. You are happy with the amount of work provided, the range of activities and the coverage of the curriculum. You are happy with the communication and are most interested in joining the weekly celebration assembly. You find the teaching videos useful.

The main barrier you have with home learning is when you have more than one child.

From your written comments, some of you would like to see more interactivity between the teachers and your child e.g. with a live lesson. We don't currently do live lessons or teachers record lessons because we feel the quality of the Oak Academy lessons are very good and it makes sense to signpost to these rather than the teacher reinvent the wheel. It also helps with teachers' work / life balance. Also, we are aware that not all children will be able to attend a live lesson at the same time so signposting helps you to juggle your commitments at home to do the learning when it suits you best. Feedback from a recent report by Ofsted has also stated that live lessons are not necessarily the best way of providing the teaching.

We are however exploring more ways to increase the interactivity. For example, some teachers are exploring live lessons so we can evaluate this as we go along. We are also working towards having some type of interaction available every day for children. This might be in the form of a fun 10 minute activity such as scavenger hunt or a quiz. In the last lockdown, we noticed that

children regressed in their social skills, especially the younger ones, so this type of interaction will help to mitigate against further negative effects.

Like you, we are also acutely aware of the negative impact on academic progress. In the last lockdown, we found that writing suffered the most. This time round, we are trying to increase our offer on writing as you will have seen with the writing books that have come home. Some of you will also receive greater contact from teaching assistants and myself as we experiment with more online bespoke style tutoring 1:1 and in small groups.

Some of you also commented on how feedback on work can be a challenge. While we have improved how we do this via the Interactive Learning Diary for the younger ones and monitoring Google Classroom more frequently with the older ones, we are also exploring how we might gather together common areas of difficulty and then offer a live and / or recorded session of the teacher modelling these tricky areas. Mrs Kerswell in Year 5 has been experimenting with this this week.

We look forward to hearing your views again at the next survey. Thank you for taking the time to provide the feedback.

Just a reminder that you can find home learning information under 'Curriculum Information' – ['HOME LEARNING'](#). There are a range of resources in there to support you as parents. For example, there is excellent, easy to digest, information on how you can best support reading at home. You can also find our policies for remote learning on here.

## Celebrations

Keep an eye on our ['Smiles in January 2021'](#) page under 'Well-being in Action' where you can catch up with good news stories and photos in lockdown, and see the newsletters produced by our teaching assistants. The 'Curriculum in Action' page is running as normal and this week you can look in the [Science Blog](#) to see how Year 2 used the cold weather to explore freezing.

# IT devices, support & online safety

As of today, unfortunately the Chrome Books ordered from the DfE have not yet arrived. The system says the order has been despatched and we were expecting them by Wednesday. As soon as they arrive next week, we have a system in place to get them set up and we will call you to say they are ready for collection.

In the HOME LEARNING section of our website (under 'Curriculum Information') you can find a useful page called '[Support for IT](#)'. Here you can find a guide to getting on to RM Unify and there is a guide to how you can use your Smart TV, X-Box and Play Station to access Google Classroom which might be especially helpful. Remember that if you need some IT support from our excellent IT team, you can email them directly

*[IThelp@st-margarets.torbay.sch.uk](mailto:IThelp@st-margarets.torbay.sch.uk)*

[Online safety at home packs](#) can be found on the *Think U Know* website. The latest information from this trusted site can also be found on the home page of our school website which is regularly updated.

Happy weekend everybody. Stay safe.



Tim Hughes (Head teacher)

## REMINDERS

### Singalong

If you enjoy a good singalong look out for weekly live singing from home at 9.00am every Tuesday. Just follow [this link](#).

### Office Hours Reminder

Office hours next week are 8.15am until 3.30pm

### Attendance

If you have booked a keyworker session and you no longer need the provision, please cancel the session on the school gateway or inform the office. This will enable the sessions to free up quickly for other parents that need them.