



St Benedict's College

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3 February 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian

As you will be aware the Education Minister announced last Thursday, that in light of the current crisis in public health, all schools would remain closed and continue to provide remote learning until at least 5 March. He suggested that his priority remained to return to full time face-to-face teaching for everyone as soon as possible and the Executive's aim would be to start face to face teaching in early March, subject to the prevailing public health and scientific advice.

We were not surprised by the Minister's announcement but like you, I'm sure, were disappointed by it. We recognise that Remote Learning is challenging for parents and students alike and want to thank all who have engaged with it, for your patience and endeavour. Remote Learning is of course new to us too. We want to learn from the mistakes we have invariably made and to do it better so we would really welcome some feedback from you at this point in the experience. We have prepared a brief questionnaire which can be accessed using the following link <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/6NMF5K5> .It would be great if you could take the time to complete it. All feedback, positive or negative, will be gratefully received and used to refine our delivery.

Accessibility to devices and/or connectivity are often issues for parents. If you are struggling in this regard, please contact me via email cmcateer744@c2kni.net and we will see if we can help. Rest assured, information shared will be treated as confidential.

As a College our biggest challenge continues to be getting our students, particularly our senior students to engage. All students should be logged on to their Google Classrooms on a daily basis and be completing all tasks set, by all of their subject teachers. Year 12s lack of engagement is of particular concern to me. The Minister has confirmed that GCSE grades will be based on teacher's assessment of student's performance. Schools will be required to produce a portfolio of evidence for each child to justify the "centre determined grades" awarded to them. Some of the work being done at home could be required as evidence. Therefore, it must be completed on time and to the best of the student's ability.

Since our return to school we have provided supervised learning for children of key workers and vulnerable children. This support service will remain in place for as long as the current Lockdown continues. If you are eligible and would like to avail of it, please contact us via info@stbenedicts.randalstown.ni.sch.uk

In relation to school transport and Free School Meals the processes currently in place will continue:

- Where children can use alternative means of travelling to school they should do so and the wearing of face coverings for post primary pupils on school transport will continue to be mandatory; and
- For children entitled to free school meals, payments in lieu of free school meals will continue to apply to any child entitled to free school meals who is learning remotely and cannot attend school as a result of the restrictions.

We have always recognised the importance of effective communication between school and home, and know how important it is in these uncertain times. We regularly update our social media pages and website so please keep an eye on them. Today, we are delighted to be launching our updated College Prospectus and a new bespoke Year 8 Brochure. Both are available on the website. I would encourage you to take a moment to review them and perhaps share them with friends and family who may be involved in the transfer process at this time. I hope both documents remind you why you chose St Benedict's for your child and why our students, your children, are happy, safe and successful with us.

We look forward to the end of Lockdown and to welcoming your child back to school but in the meantime we must continue with Remote Learning and work together to make it as positive and productive experience as possible.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Catriona Mc Ateer (Principal)