

20th April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope that you and your families are well and coping during this time of school closure. In this Easter season I reflect on what Jesus' disciples would be doing following the first Easter 2000 years ago. Many returned back to their day jobs and experienced a visit from the risen Jesus as they returned from fishing, others hid away behind locked doors and they too received a visit from the risen Jesus. I am sure that most people in these days feel a bit like the latter, hidden away behind locked doors awaiting the threat of coronavirus to pass. The reality is though, that more and more of our community are facing difficult times due to the pandemic. Sadly, we hear that some students have lost grandparents, aunts and uncles to the disease and staff members have lost parents. Please keep these families in your thoughts and prayers at this time.



Many thanks to those who have offered feedback on our online learning program. We realise the need to make it as consistent and prescriptive as we can, whilst recognising that not all families have the same access to devices/band width. We also recognise the challenge for parents who are working as key workers and the demand on wifi as entire households try to work from home. (If it is any consolation I am writing this at 6am to ensure I get my daily allocation of wifi before 5 other people log on in my household and begin work!) We have however, noticed that some students (and staff for that matter!) are logging on epraise at 4am and some parents have commented that their child has lost all sense of routine, sometimes not going to bed until the early hours and spending their waking hours closed away in their bedrooms. Whilst it might seem laudable that a child is working at 4am we need to be mindful of how this might be affecting mental health and how they will be able to adjust to school routines when we eventually open. Please could I urge you to remove electronic devices from your child during 'sleep time' (by 10:30pm at the very latest.) Staff are trying to keep into contact with students via epraise messenger and with phone calls for some. We are considering asking all students to 'sign in' on epraise by 10am every morning so that they can have contact with their form tutor each day and to try and establish some routine for those who are struggling with this. If you have any strong feeling about this please let us know by dropping us an email to togetherapart@st-josephs.bolton.sch.uk We are working with one of our Y10 students to develop an 'Alexa type' app to keep students updated.

In school we have had between 5-10 students whose parents are key workers. The majority of staff are working at home throughout the school day with key staff timetabled to be in school each day. May we take this opportunity to thank parents and carers who are key workers for all that you are doing in the fight against coronavirus. To this end, we ask

that you send a short 3 second clip of yourselves 'Clapping' key workers to togetherapart@st-josephs.bolton.sch.uk so that we can create a Joey's tribute to key workers. Please send in clips before 10pm on Thursday 23rd April.

During our school closure we have been busy continuing with school improvement initiatives. We are delighted that Hutchinsons have won our catering contract from September. Hutchinsons have promised investment into our catering provision and impressed the panel with some creative ways to meet the dining needs of our young people. The final part of this tendering process was carried out through virtual meetings so we are appreciative of the resilience shown by governors and our business/finance team in making this happen.

As our expansion plan continues our recruitment processes for September are well under way. Fortunately, we were forward thinking and managed to recruit some brilliant teachers before they were snapped up by other schools at the beginning of the year. We still have a couple of vacancies to fill and have been interviewing this week via Zoom.

We have worked with our post 16 providers who are starting to provide bridging units for our Y11 students to prepare them for their college courses. If your child is in Y11 please encourage them to click on the red button on our website and follow the links to their preferred college. Remember that our staff in school are still available to support Y11 in their studies if they need more guidance.

If you know of any Y6 young people joining us in September please let them know that we will be releasing a series of short clips to help them prepare for starting our school. These will be appearing on our YouTube channel.



Our technology department and staff in school have been making PPE visors. Over 400 have been made and sent out to local hospitals but we currently have a waiting list for another 800 on order. Masks cost approximately £1 each to make. Staff have funded the first batch out of their own pockets but if you would like to donate to support this initiative please drop an email to finance finance@st-josephs.bolton.sch.uk letting us know how much you would like to donate and we will make this option available to you on ParentPay.

Our building work is making progress. B&E boys have been continuing to work under the government guidelines, although social distancing and the slowing supply chain have put back some deadlines. The new classrooms are decorated and carpeted and will soon be able to be occupied. The old science prep room corridor has been gutted ready for refurbishment into an extension to our main corridor to improve the flow of traffic between lesson times. The new prep room is nearly complete and ready to be decorated and furnished. Work continues on the main school entrance, the visitor accessible toilet and visitor meeting room. The next steps will be new signage around the school and mark out new parking bays and pedestrian walk ways to the new student entrance. We are looking

forward to making our school building welcoming and accessible to all. See the progress photos below!

Finally, we have had many questions about how and when we will reopen. The honest answer is that at this current moment the government are not able to commit to when things will revert to normal. Gavin Williamson has stated that schools will not reopen until the following conditions are satisfied:

- First, we must protect the NHS's ability to cope and be sure that it can continue to provide critical care and specialist treatment right across the whole of the UK.
- Second, we need to see the daily death rates from coronavirus coming down.
- Third, we need to have reliable data that shows the rate of infection is decreasing to manageable levels.
- Fourth, we need to be confident that testing capacity and personal protective equipment (PPE) are being managed, with supply able to meet not just today's demand, but future demand.
- And, fifth, and perhaps most crucially, we need to be confident any changes we do make will not risk a second peak of infections.

When the infection comes under control and we can be sure that opening doesn't put anyone at risk it is likely that we will reopen in stages so that we can maintain social distancing. This might be in half year groups, on alternate days or a phased transition. We are hoping that it will be this side of summer but in reality no one can be certain. One thing we do know is that we may be working from home for a long period of time so we need to make sure that we are completing the curriculum and continuing with our learning as well as possible. It is unlikely that there will ever be time to spend going over the intended learning during this time when we return. In times of uncertainty about the future let's make sure that we do our best *today*.

Please keep in touch with staff in school, especially if you are struggling or know of a family struggling in any way. Please see Mrs Yorke-Robinson and Mr Singleton's recent communication of where to find help if you are going through a difficult time. Information from the DfE for parents and carers can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers

In the meantime, please remember that we are here for you and each other. You are all very much in our prayers and thoughts during this time. We pray that the risen Lord, will be present with you all, offering comfort in your time of need. (And remember that the risen Lord may need to use your voice or hands to comfort those in your life!)

Kind Regards

Mr T McCabe

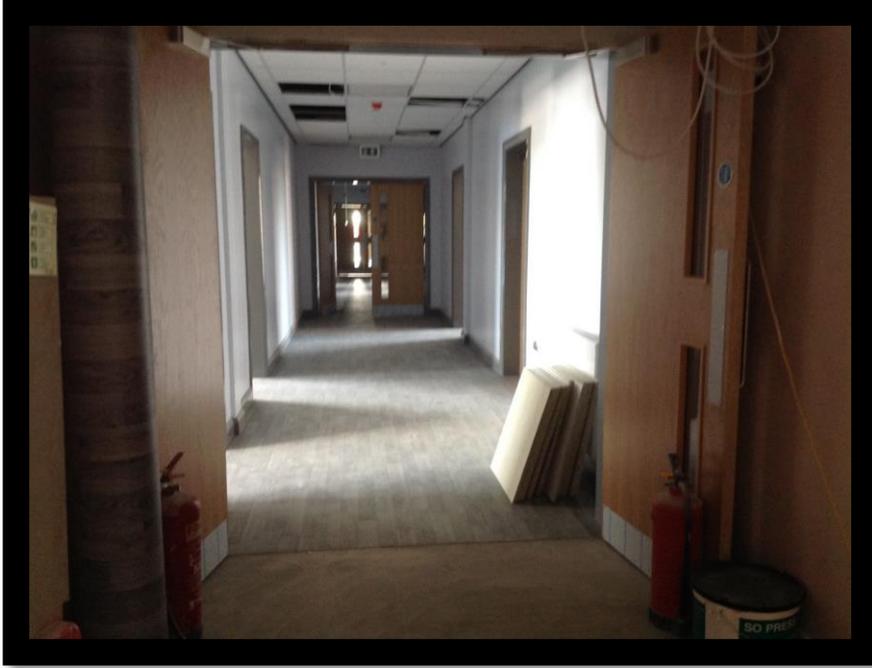
Our new Prep room is ready to be decorated and furnished.



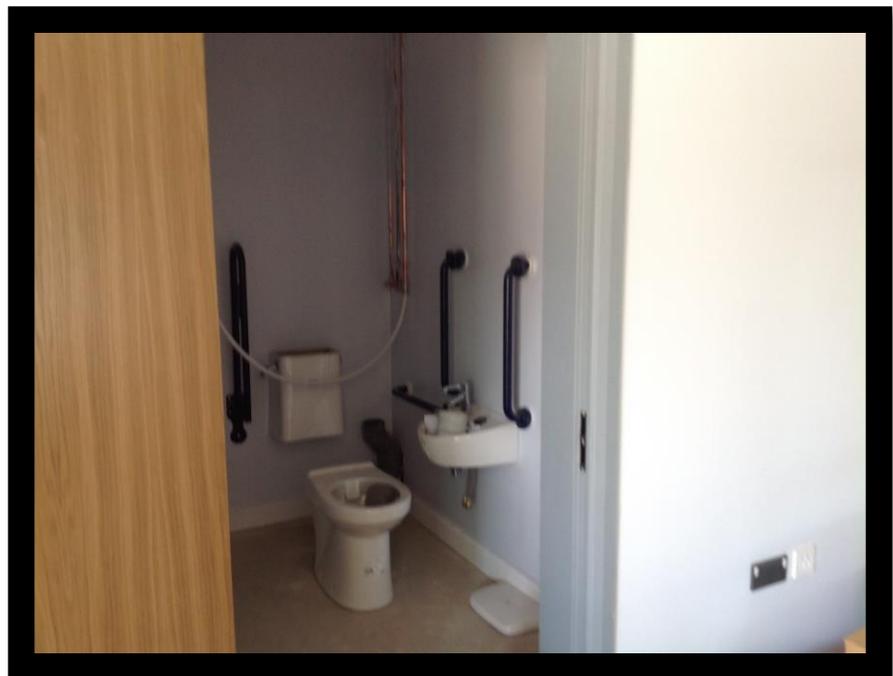
The new maths classrooms are carpeted and decorated in the new building.



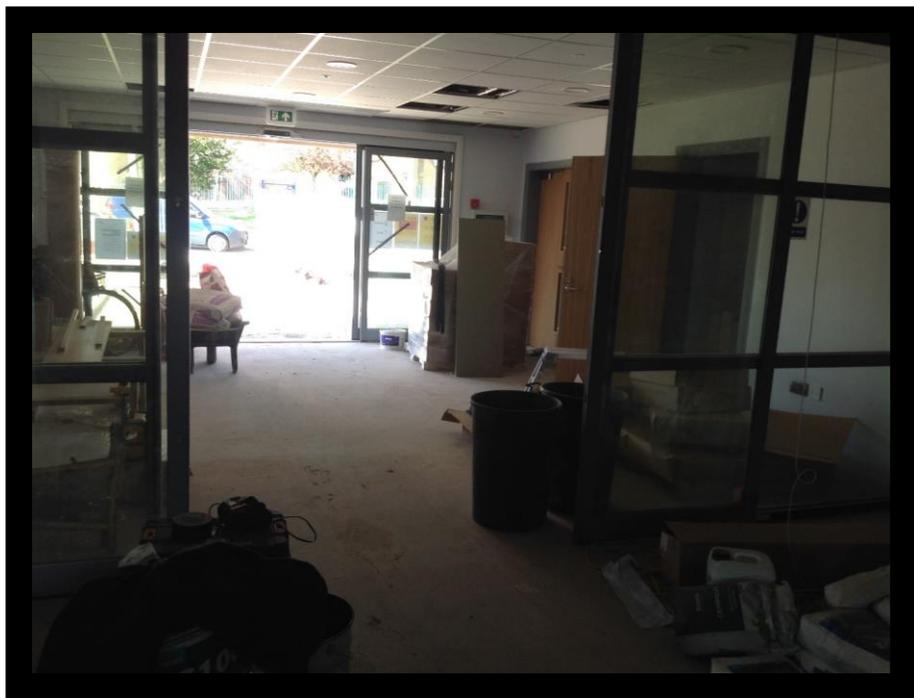
The new Maths corridor joins up with the top of the Brady building near the old Learning Resource Centre.



The visitor accessible toilet and meeting room join onto our new entrance lobby.



The new visitor entrance starts to take shape.



Our old prep room is removed ready for it to be renovated into an extension of our main corridor:

