Dear Parents and Carers

We have now come to the end of Week 5 of lockdown so let’s just pause and whatever you have been through in this time, give yourselves a pat on the back for the fact you are reading this and you have made it this far!  We know that some students have grown in resilience and are excelling through their independent work but some parent/carers have told us that their child is struggling and many others who have asked us to reach out to a child who has ‘closed in’ on themselves and is refusing to communicate.  Whatever you are going through, please try not to worry.  Different people respond in different ways and this time will come to an end.  You might be comforted by the reflection Mr Singleton shared on Facebook and epraise using a poem adapted by a former teacher of St Joseph’s, Mr Deady.  It is a reminder that no young person/staff member or parent should be left to walk alone by themselves.  Please see our Facebook page for the Joeys 'Footprints in the Sand' poem reminding us we are never alone and that Christ walks with us always.

We have tried to adapt our work offer to support all our students however they find themselves.  If they are over faced just keep reminding them that whatever they *can* do *will* help them as they move forward.   They may feel that others are leaving them behind but they must not let this be a reason to give up.   The message we are trying to share is that “You don’t have to *be* the best to *do* your best!” and this looks different for each young person (and old person as is demonstrated in our latest clip <https://youtu.be/3Coch_BqejY> )   Please show your child the benefit of maintaining a routine and encourage them to be up and dressed (ready for Joe Wicks at 9am!) If they complete their work earlier in the day they will feel better about themselves and more positive about the situation they are in.

On our website you will see that we have adjusted the ‘out of school timetable’ for Y9&10 to make sure that their option subjects are specified within blocks and to spread out their workload.  An additional slide is coming so that if your child is working well independently, they have next steps to really excel.  <https://stjosephsbolton.org.uk/>  Please see the Learning and Teaching newsletter from Mrs McDonnell for more information.  We are also updating the ‘Y11 button ‘as we receive more information from our partner colleges.

Some teachers may have offered acknowledgement or feedback via email or messaging and in some cases given whole group feedback but Mr Higham has produced a clip to show how you can access any feedback given by your teachers using the epraise tool <https://youtu.be/PhjZ0Aa0HV4>

You may have seen on the government briefings that there may be plans to open schools shortly after lockdown. Understandably, this is raising lots of questions in parent/carer minds.  I can’t answer them yet but rather than leaving a vacuum of doubt I thought I would share what we are working on at the moment.  I imagine that we would be given time to plan fully for this, but at present we are preparing for what might be asked of us.  In our view, it would be impossible to bring all students back at once and maintain social distancing on buses, at breaktime and in lessons. I have been asked which year groups are a priority, but the honest answer is that the education of all students is our priority. We are currently working to devise a timetable to bring students in safely.  It will be timetabled so that we have a manageable number of students in school at any one time.  It is possible that students will receive a ‘lead lesson’ and then be set work for the time that follows, while they are at home.  As I am sure you can imagine this type of timetabling is complex and we have to ensure that distance and hygiene regulations are followed.   There is no blueprint for this but I will be dusting down my notes from my headteacher training on  ‘Returning back to school following a pandemic’  I knew they might come in handy one day!

Finally, thanks to staff and students who have been sending in work, videos and messages of hope during this time.  It has been really heartwarming to read how our students have responded to the question of “Where is God in all of this?”  We have had some very honest, gritty responses and we welcome your thoughts as we wrestle with the situation we find our way in.  It reminds me, that in John’s Gospel we are told that Thomas ‘the twin’ met with the disciples who were ‘in lockdown’ fearing not a pandemic, but fearing arrest from the Roman Guards.  Thomas was the doubter.  He doubted whether God could get them out of ‘this mess’ and whether Jesus really had risen from the dead.  It is funny that Thomas was called the ‘twin’ but we know very little about his twin.  Maybe we are Thomas’ twin, doubting God’s love, goodness and grace during this time.  If we are, let’s pray that we can encounter the power of the risen Christ and like Thomas exclaim “My Lord and My God”

Until next time,

God Bless and Keep Safe!

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