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Tuesday 8th December 2020

St Margaret Mary's Letter:

Dear Children, Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you with important information about changes to the end of term date following DfE Guidance & Advice received just this afternoon [Tuesday 8th December 2020].

Please see the DfE Information in bold & quotation below, alongside further school information.

"We know that school and further education leaders, teachers and staff, as well as nurseries and childminders, have worked tirelessly over the last term. This has included their important role in contact tracing, to help in the national effort to limit the spread of the virus. We are aware that this has led to additional work over weekends and holidays and we are incredibly grateful for this.

We recognise the challenges of this responsibility at the end of term. Public Health England has agreed a 6 day window after the final day of teaching in which schools and further education providers are asked to remain contactable so they can assist with contact tracing where necessary. This will allow enough time for positive coronavirus (COVID-19) cases to be identified and confirmed by a test and for relevant contacts in the education setting to be traced. We are clear that beyond 6 days after the final day of teaching, school and further education staff are not asked to play a role in any contact tracing. It is also likely that the need to support the tracing process will reduce dramatically over the course of the 6 days as the majority of cases should be identified earlier in the week.

End of term – advice for schools

To ensure that staff get the time off they need and deserve, schools may wish to use an INSET day, making Friday 18 December a non-teaching day and using the day for staff training, which could be delivered online. Where term would normally finish in the week commencing 21 December, schools may wish to consider adjusting term dates to make Friday 18 December the last day of term (which could be an INSET day), and bringing forward the start of term in January by the same number of days. In all circumstances, teaching time must be made up at another point in the academic year. You should not limit attendance at school before Friday 18 December. It remains vital for all children to be in school up to the last day of teaching.

We recognise this communication has arrived with schools late in the term but would ask schools to be as helpful to parents as they can by sharing any changes to end of term arrangements as soon as possible, particularly where schools choose to make Friday 18 December a non-teaching day. Your support with this is appreciated.

We recommend all schools ensure staff, parents and carers are aware of the following information and



relevant arrangements regarding positive cases in the holidays:

- Where a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, the school should not be contacted. Parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace.
- For the first 6 days after teaching ends, if a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, the school is asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school.
- School staff are not asked to remain on-call or conduct any contact tracing more than 6 days after the final day of teaching. Where a school's last teaching day is on Thursday 17 December, there should be no pupil contact tracing asks beyond Wednesday 23 December.

For the first 6 days after the end of term, schools are not asked to be on-call at all times. Staff responsible for contact tracing may designate a limited period in the day to receive notification of positive cases and advise close contacts to self-isolate (this can be done by text or email). The Department for Education coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline and PHE advice service are available to support with any queries you have about positive cases in your school.

Where pupils are required to self-isolate due to contact with a positive case after the first 6 days following the end of term, schools do not need to be informed about their absence until the first day of the new term."

What this means for St Margaret Mary's Pupils, Families & Staff

Following this guidance the term dates will be adjusted as follows. I apologise in advance for any difficulties that this may cause for you & your families.

- School will close on **Friday 18th December at 3pm for all children**
- School will be closed for the Christmas Holidays from this period onwards.
- **School will now re-open for all pupils on: Monday 4th January 2021 for the start of the Spring Term**
- The two Staff INSET Days will be taken at a later date through the academic calendar year. I will confirm this with advanced notice moving forward.

Social Distancing, Test & Trace:

Now more than ever we are all being asked to do our very best to maintain social distancing & to minimise contacts. This is something that I know all staff are very aware of & the importance of this has been confirmed by the guidance & direction given to all schools this afternoon by the DfE.

I also know that you as parents are fully aware of this too, as we all wish to have some form of Christmas given the year that we have all experienced.

As such I ask that everyone involved with the St Margaret Mary's Community, now-more-than-ever continues to carefully adhere to social distancing around the school gates & the playground areas over the next few weeks. I also include in this parking legally on the road, as I know that a number of parents have expressed their frustration that cars mounting the kerb are causing blocks & hazards that are resulting in bottlenecks on the pavement. Once again I ask that all parents park & drive safely & respectfully, showing an awareness of others.

A reminder also that if your child, you or a family member display COVID-19 symptoms you should arrange for a test immediately & are explicitly advised not to come into contact with others. Following this school is to be notified to monitor & support Public Health Contacts [Track & Trace] if required.

As I am sure you can appreciate, wherever possible we do not wish to be sharing the news that a child, class or family need to self-isolate for 14 days as we move towards the Christmas holidays. As highlighted in the DfE information above all schools have been asked to be available to communicate this news beyond the 18th December. I know that in some cases this may well be unavoidable unfortunately, but please may we all be mindful of one-another, our space & the contacts we are having to minimise the chances of this happening.

I am very proud of how our school family have worked through this extremely difficult & very testing time. Now more than ever I know we will continue to be responsible in our actions, as we think of & support one another. We will continue to have our Advent preparations as our focus as we journey together towards Christmas.

Once again many thanks for your continued support

Mr Sutton
Headteacher