



**St Saviour's
& St Olave's
School**

An 11-18 Church of England Girls' School

HEADTEACHER: CATHERINE MAY BSC (HONS) MBA

New Kent Road, London SE1 4AN Tel: 020 7407 1843

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11th June 2020

Silver Linings 9

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well. I have been really pleased to be in school this week, meeting with all our staff members and planning for the return of some of our year 10 students next week. It's a long way from normal but it is definitely a step in the right direction. This week, the government announced a reversal of their aim to have all primary students back in lessons before the summer holiday. Our primary colleagues in the community have struggled to think of a way this could have happened whilst maintaining the appropriate social distancing measures in classrooms; you may have also shared their bewilderment. It's safe to say that everyone feels a sense of loss and disappointment that most of our young people will finish the academic year at home – but there is no risk worth taking with the health and wellbeing of any individual. We wait to hear more of Boris Johnson's plans for September with hope and a willingness to do all we can to make this happen, whilst ensuring the safety of our community.

Staff were in school this week to attend a briefing on the extensive risk assessment process that has taken place, using a rota system to ensure they could be addressed in small groups. The risk assessment is a crucial step in our slow but measured journey back to normality and has been openly shared with union representatives and modified in light of their queries and insights. Staff were surveyed to gauge their response to the briefing and many reported that they felt less anxious than before the meeting. It was heartening to see some semblance of what we took for granted: staff members talking to each other (albeit at a distance) and sharing words of kindness and encouragement. In this sense, having staff back in the building was just as much about reconnecting with the school and the people who do so much to serve our community as it was about hearing information; this was especially true for those staff members who have experienced a range of challenges during the pandemic, not least those who have had to manage the tragic loss of a family member.

Part of the presentation staff were given addressed the Black Lives Matter protests. We are encouraged by our students' responses, many of whom have shared their feelings with their teachers – feelings of anger and frustration, but also of hope and a desire to see this moment instil lasting changes in society. Two of our school values that strike me as especially relevant now are 'inclusive' and 'transformative' - and in order for our society to be the former, we all need to engage with the latter. St. Saviour's is no exception. In a Heads of Department meeting that took place earlier this week, the curriculum was discussed as just one of many areas deserving of review to identify how it can better equip our students with the skills and knowledge they need to dismantle racism. It is also heartening to see the activism on a local level that is geared towards empowering





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our young people. The Southwark Young Advisors held a Black Lives Matter Youth Voice Event on Zoom this week for young people aged 14-21 and will undoubtedly be holding more events like it; a link to their website is at the bottom of this newsletter. We will do all we can to engage with organisations like this to give our young people the platform they need to have their voices heard.

We recently asked students to complete a survey to gather their views on remote learning. We had a very high response rate and the results helped us to identify what is working well and what requires more focus to ensure all learners are engaging in quality learning. The majority of students in each year think the challenge level of work has been 'about right'. This is a great achievement on the part of our teaching staff who have had to adapt to a whole new style of teaching and now must judge the difficulty of work they set without the instant feedback they would usually receive in the classroom. Very few students said they were finding work 'too easy', indicating that teacher expectations have remained just as high during the lockdown. It is clear however that some students are finding independent learning a challenge. This is to be expected when so many students rely on the support of peers and the presence of a teacher in the room. Nor can we underestimate the impact that mental health has had on our students' ability to learn. The survey also told us useful information about how students are using ICT; some report that they are spending more than five hours a day looking at the computer screen. As much as learning remains a high priority, teachers also know that students need to organise their time and monitor their own wellbeing. Please be reassured that we are here to help if your daughter feels overwhelmed or has fallen behind in her work.

I am pleased to be able to share opportunities for the summer holiday and will share more as we hear of them. First is the Lambeth and Southwark's 'Summer of Food and Fun' programme, in collaboration with The Mayor's Fund and the link is at the end of this newsletter. In addition, I know our partners through The Elephant Group have offered our sixth form students university summer schools, and supporters in Livery companies have offered work experience. I am confident our students will make the most of these opportunities.

I have really enjoyed seeing our students' work, as well as hearing from them and this week I asked our Head Girl, Dominique Vincent to share her experiences as a student in lockdown:

"When they announced that the GCSE and A-Level exams were to be cancelled, the first emotion that crossed my mind was joy. What student wouldn't want that? It was something that we had joked about constantly over the last few months. Yet when the gravity of the situation dawned, the fear and confusion settled in. What would this mean in terms of our grades and admission to University? What would I do for the next few months? Despite knowing that this choice was made for our well-being and safety during the height of the COVID-19 outbreak, I couldn't help but focus on what that would mean for the futures of those in Year 11 and Year 13. So much work, time and dedication seemed to have all been for nothing.





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The first few weeks of the quarantine were filled with me trying to find out as much information as possible about what would happen. I tried to keep myself as busy as I could. It was almost as if my mind still felt the strain and pressure of exams. It was about keeping myself distracted so that I wouldn't think about the uncertainty that surrounded everything. But gradually, I was able to find other healthier ways to channel this energy. Learning became something that was for more than just exams again. I had the space and time to rediscover my passion for my subjects without the stress of knowing that I had to remember it all for exams. It gave me a greater appreciation as well. In a way, I am thankful for this time. Despite the grave circumstances surrounding it, the time to look after myself and reconnect with what made me love learning was something that I needed."

Wouldn't it be an amazing outcome if, like Dominique, we could all emerge from this lockdown having been reminded of what we love about learning and teaching?

As we look with hope to the future, stay safe and stay well.

With very best wishes,

Catherine May
Headteacher



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Prayers / Thoughts for the Day

'You are the light of the world like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.' Matthew 5:14

'Justice grows out of recognition of ourselves in each other that my liberty depends on you being free, too.' President Barack Obama

'Even though I walk through the shadow of the valley of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me: your rod and your staff, they comfort me.' Psalm 23:4

Poem written by Kathleen O'Mara in 1869: History repeats itself.

Sharing this poem written in 1869, reprinted during 1919 Spanish Flu Pandemic:

And people stayed at home
And read books
And listened
And they rested
And did exercises
And made art and played
And learned new ways of being
And stopped and listened
More deeply
Someone meditated, someone prayed
Someone met their shadow
And people began to think differently
And people healed.
And in the absence of people who
Lived in ignorant ways
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless,
The earth also began to heal
And when the danger ended and
People found themselves
They grieved for the dead
And made new choices
And dreamed of new visions
And created new ways of living
And completely healed the earth
Just as they were healed.





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Link to Southwark Young Advisors:

<https://youngadvisors.org.uk/southwark/>

Holiday food and activity programme:

This week Southwark announced a new partnership with Lambeth and the Mayor's Fund to provide an extended programme of holiday food and activity this summer. Beginning July 22nd, the 'Lambeth and Southwark's Summer of Food and Fun' programme will ensure that children and young people (aged 4-19 years), their families and/or carers are able to access a regular source of free nutritious meals over the summer, whether at a local club or at home, and join an array of community activities including sports, theatre, arts and crafts and cooking. For more information please see the link below:

<https://www.mayorsfundforlondon.org.uk/lambeth-southwark-summer-food-fun/>

Latest Guidance from DfE on the re-opening of schools can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

NSPCC support and guidance on talking to children about Coronavirus link:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/coronavirus-advice-support-children-families-parents/>

