



15 July 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

As we reach the end of the academic year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the support, encouragement and trust you have shown our school community throughout the year. As this has been my first year as Headteacher, it has been a genuine privilege to lead our wonderful school. I have been incredibly proud to witness the kindness, resilience and determination of our students each day, and I have been inspired by the dedication of our staff and the strong partnership we share with our families. Together, we have celebrated many successes, and I am excited about all that lies ahead as we continue to build on these achievements.

We now turn our thoughts to the new academic year ahead. We are excited to welcome our students back in September and continue our shared mission of nurturing them academically, spiritually and personally in the light of Christ.

Start of Term Arrangements – September 2026

Please note the following start dates and arrival times:

Thursday 3rd September

- **Year 7:** Arrival between 8.00am – 8.40am.
- **Year 12:** Arrival between 10.00am – 10.20am.

Friday 4th September

- All remaining year groups return. Years 7–13 should arrive between 8.00am – 8.40am.
- All students should line up in their form groups on the playground upon arrival.

Thank you in advance for your support in ensuring a calm and positive start to the new academic year.

Uniform Expectations

On the first day back, all students are expected to return in full school uniform. A letter has been sent by the Pastoral Team outlining our expectations regarding school uniform, PE kit, jewellery, hairstyles and other appearance requirements. Further information about uniform can also be found in our Uniform Policy on the school website.

If your daughter has any items of school uniform that she has outgrown, we would be very grateful if these could be donated to the school to support other families. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Lockers

Thank you to all parents and carers who have already made the one-off contribution towards the provision of lockers. We appreciate that this represents an additional expense, and we are grateful for your support. As this is a one-off contribution, your daughter will have the use of her locker for the remainder of her time at school.

The locker will provide a secure place for your daughter to store her belongings during the school day. She will be expected to leave her coat in her locker and may also store books, equipment and other personal belongings there. This will help to keep classrooms and our narrow corridors as clear as possible, making it easier and safer for everyone to move around the school. Your daughter will, of course, be able to access her locker at lunchtime and wear her coat during colder weather should she choose to do so.

Your daughter will be allocated her own locker when she returns in September. In line with our Mobile Phone Policy, she will be expected to store her mobile phone in her locker during the school day. The Mobile Phone Policy will be available on the school website, and a copy will also be emailed home.

As I have previously shared, we want to place trust in our students and do not wish to introduce the complete mobile phone bans adopted by some schools. We understand how important it is for parents and carers to be able to communicate with their daughter on the journey to and from school, and we believe this approach strikes the right balance between maintaining a positive learning environment and recognising the needs of families. Arrangements regarding the use of lockers, together with our expectations of all students will be explained to your daughter by her Head of Year on her first day back in September.

Times of the day

After careful consideration of student voice, we are making some adjustments to the school day from September.

Lessons will be 90 minutes rather than 100 minutes, and we will continue to operate a three-lesson day alongside a staggered end to the school day to support a calm and orderly departure.

- Years 7, 8 and 10 will finish at 3.20pm.
- Years 9 and 11 will finish at 3.25pm.

Students in Years 9 and 11 who travel on the Stephenson bus will be permitted to leave at 3.20pm to ensure they can access their transport home safely and on time.

Break time will increase from 15 minutes to 20 minutes, and lunchtime will be extended from 45 minutes to one hour. This additional time will allow students to eat, socialise and engage more fully in the wide range of extracurricular opportunities available across the school.

These changes also support the smooth running of the school day. As our corridors are very narrow, students will have five minutes to move between lessons, helping to reduce congestion and ensure movement around the building remains calm, safe and orderly. This will help ensure that all students arrive at lessons on time and are not disadvantaged by congestion.

Duke of Edinburgh

We are delighted to announce that the Duke of Edinburgh's Award will be returning to St Bernard's from September. This is an exciting opportunity for our students, and we are very pleased to be able to offer this prestigious programme once again.

The award will be led by Miss Webb and Miss Mead, who will oversee the Bronze Award. In September, the programme will be open to students in Years 9 and 10, ensuring that both year groups have the opportunity to participate during its first year of reintroduction. Going forward, students will be able to enrol when they reach Year 9, making the Duke of Edinburgh's Award a regular part of the opportunities available at St Bernard's.

We very much look forward to seeing our students embrace the challenge, develop new skills, serve their community and enjoy the many experiences that the Duke of Edinburgh's Award provides.

Finally, as we look forward to the year ahead, I am excited about the opportunities that await our students and our school community. We remain committed to providing an environment where every member of our community is encouraged to flourish academically, spiritually and personally, supported by our shared Catholic values.

Thank you once again for your continued partnership and for the invaluable role you play in your daughter's education. I wish you and your family a safe, restful and enjoyable summer. May this be a time of peace, joy and renewal, and I look forward to welcoming your daughter back in September as we begin another exciting chapter together, continuing to grow in faith, learning and service.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'H Barnes', written in a cursive style.

Mrs H Barnes
Headteacher