



Dear Parents,

I would like to welcome you to our Year 6 information afternoon – which is a document this year, as we are not yet able to host large groups of people on our school site due to the current Covid19 pandemic.

Hopes and Expectations

The success of St Bernard's is based on the foundations of the home, the school and the parish. Our values as a Catholic community are developed in our young people by parents, who are the first teachers of their children. The commitment of parents, the academic expertise of staff, and the spiritual guidance of the Church underpin our ethos, how we treat each other, and our attitude to learning.

There are opportunities for your daughter, in the experiences of secondary education at St Bernard's. We aim to nurture a love of learning, spiritual formation, and a sense of social responsibility in the world around us.

Equally, there are threats to this wholesome development of our young people. Social media can be misused, children can be exposed to attitudes, behaviours, conversations and images that are inappropriate and indeed damaging to their growth.

Therefore we ask you to exercise your responsibility as parents in their use of mobile phones and other such devices. Do not allow them to be kept in bedrooms overnight; check what is in the memory of your daughter's phone. You have the right – and the responsibility – as her parent. You would not allow a stranger to meet with her alone and unsupervised – and yet so many adults allow this to happen in a virtual sense through social media. Although our students are well behaved, we are not immune from the misuse of mobile phones, which are the biggest cause of pastoral issues in school.

As children get older, they can try to keep parents at a distance in many ways, not just with regards to their use of mobile phones. Please keep showing an interest in homework, and looking at your daughter's school planner. You have shown this interest all through her primary school education: please do not stop now.

Please remember that we act on your behalf in school – “in loco parentis” is the phrase. One secret of good parenting is to maintain a common approach where two parents are asked the same question, or challenged in the same way by a child. We need students to hear the same message from both home and school; please work with us to ensure this consistency in how we guide our students, your children.

We look forward to working with you as your daughter progresses through the school and into the Sixth Form. In the contributions that follow, my colleagues will give you more specific information which will aim to make that progression as smooth as possible.

Mr Sharpe (Headteacher)



PASTORAL

St Bernard's is proud of the pastoral systems it has in place to support the students. Your daughter's form has been carefully put together so that the transition to secondary school can be as smooth as possible; her form tutor will be made aware of any needs she may have and will support her. If your daughter finds she is struggling to settle into school, or has difficulties with workload and organisation, we have four dedicated learning mentors who will be able to help her. The learning mentors will support her and if required give you an update on her progress. We also have a school counsellor who can support your daughter with any emotional needs, but we will require you to fill in a consent form before this can start.

Your daughter needs to be in the correct full uniform in school and this is all outlined in the pack you would have received. If you have any issues with obtaining the uniform, please contact the school and we will try to help. Our mobile phone policy has also been given to you and I would be grateful if you went through this with your daughter so that she is aware of the rules- these rules will also be re-iterated by the form tutor and her Head of Year once she starts at St Bernard's. We look forward to getting to know your daughter once she is in Year 7 and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself or Miss James.

Mrs Barnes (Assistant Headteacher)



SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Learning Support department plays a vital role in St Bernard's school life. Although we support students with additional learning needs, we are available for all children to access our services. We are based in EO1 and we are fortunate enough to have a highly experienced and dedicated department.

Our aim is to make all students independent learners no matter what their additional learning needs are. Teachers are trained how to appropriately differentiate work and through teaching strategies help all students maximize their potential. Students are monitored through curriculum and pastoral structures and in the first term we look to identify the nature of the support required for students. Learning Support Assistants do go into some classrooms and this means that they are knowledgeable with the whole school curriculum and methods used to support student's learning in school.

We have a comprehensive transition policy at St Bernard's so if your child has an additional learning need, we would have been made aware of it through correspondence with the primary school or through your own paperwork. Normally we would visit primary school but I or the Head of Year have spoken to many of the Special Needs Co-ordinators and/or class teachers to see what support is needed for each student. We will try and implement individual support for each student, so they can access their lessons in a way which is suitable to them. The role of the Head of Inclusion is to oversee the support your daughter receives, and to put in place resources to support her. I also meet with individual parents to review students' Early Health Care Plans which have been put in place by the Local Authority. Much of the work consists of sharing information with staff, making sure they are aware of your daughter's learning needs and advising them on how to support her through various teaching strategies, which often can vary from subject to subject. The transition to secondary school is a challenge, and we try to help the students acclimatise to the greater freedoms, independence and ultimately responsibilities they face when they arrive at secondary school. Helping with organisation is key initially for year 7 students; they also need help learning the routes of the school, using their planners, meeting new teachers, and following their own timetable. Some students want to be independent and we are there to support them so they can do that. We aim to help students to become self-reliant, through developing learning strategies to help them when they eventually venture into the wider world.

We provide help outside of lessons in our learning support room (EO1) and this is a place where students can be helped with their studies and completing their homework. We also encourage students with additional learning needs to make use of the resources available in EO1, and we are open before and after school as well as at lunchtime. We are starting to make use of the amazing electronic resources which are available, computer programmes such as Read Write, Gold, reading pens and iPads which can help the students become more independent. The Learning Support Team run small group interventions and help monitor reading through the Accelerated Reader programme. We also provide help during the external exams and have students assessed for Exam Access Arrangements.

As a department we also support medical needs and, if these impact on a student's access to lessons, we try to put in place strategies to support, based on the medical guidance we are provided with. We should have been made aware of any medical conditions that your daughter may have, but if we have not, please



let the school know. If your daughter requires a Health Care Plan from a doctor or nurse, then, where appropriate, we will meet with you to discuss the recommendations. If your daughter has anaphylaxis it is important that the school is provided with auto-injectors (“epipens”) for emergencies, as well as her having her own personal pen in school.

Some students will find that the move to secondary school can be one that causes them anxiety and we do all we can to alleviate it. I think it is important to emphasise the wonderful opportunities and challenges that students have at St Bernard’s School, such as studying new subjects, and it is an opportunity for students to find new passions and interests and meet new people. I think it is so important that we encourage our students to see this change as a positive and wonderful thing. We obviously have faced challenging times with the lock down but I would argue that this should be something to be embraced: we now know what it is like not to have access to school and hopefully going forward students will see the privileges that education gives them. The staff in EO1 are really caring and we know St Bernard’s will seem like a large school for many students; we are here to assist with any problems or worries students may have, no matter how small they may appear. We look to support the whole child and want to encourage them to grow as individuals, becoming independent and resilient. It is really important to the department that those with Special Educational Needs have the same opportunities as every other student in the school, and we aim for them to be the best version of themselves by setting them aspirational targets, ensuring they have the same high-quality education as the other students, and providing the support to help them achieve their goals.

Mrs Whittle (Head of Inclusion)



TRANSPORT

St Bernard's is situated in a residential area and close to a number of junior schools, and therefore the start and end of the school day can have a significant impact on those living close by. We want to be a good neighbour and therefore we need our students and their parents to support this.

Currently students access the school via the metal gate on Milton Road, where they are greeted by members of the sixth form from 8.00. That gate will shut at 8.45 precisely. After that they will be classed as late, and need to enter the school via reception. With COVID 19 we may need to make temporary adjustments to this arrangement at the start of term but we will give clear instructions on this by 1 September.

Ideally those who can should walk to school. This has always been our preference, but it is even more relevant in these times. Students need to be aware that, when they are walking in a group, they need to be aware of other pavement users and move into a line to allow the other users to pass by. All too often our students can be so engaged in their conversations that they fail to notice a parent pushing a buggy or an older person walking along. Their awareness and courtesy has real impact. If your child is walking please ensure that, as the darker evenings and mornings start, that they are visible; potentially reflective strips on their bag or coat can be helpful.

We encourage those who can to ride their bikes into school. We have always had bike sheds where bikes can be locked appropriately but again with COVID19 this is seen as a safer way of moving around. If using a bike please ensure that it is roadworthy, and that your child uses a helmet and has the necessary lights.

We appreciate that many will need to use the bus and train because of the distance you live from St Bernard's. The school is well positioned for public transport, being walking distance from both the C2C line at Westcliff and the First Anglia line coming into Southend Victoria. There are First Direct bus stops at the junction of Milton Road and London Road (the Cricketers' Pub stop) and Stephenson Buses run specific routes that bring students across the Borough for school times. Their details are on the website. Again the girls are distinctive in their uniforms and members of the public do contact us about their behaviour, whether good or bad. Students need to be aware about how they conduct themselves, by being courteous to other users, in the way they move round and in the volume of their conversations. The same sanctions apply to students when they are travelling to school, as when they are actually in lessons on site.

Finally some will be transported by car. This is our least preferred method, as parents seem to want to drop their child as close to the entrance gate as possible, regardless of the safety implications. This blocks Milton Road, making it dangerous to the other students, other road users and any other pedestrians. It also means that, at the end of the day, cars are temporarily stopped in any space they can find, blocking the side roads and residents' driveways. Therefore if you do need to use the car please can you arrange to drop your child a little away from the school so they can walk the last few metres; similarly, when collecting them, please an arrangement to meet them some distance away from the school, so everyone can leave safely. There are car parks at the Cliffs, at the bottom of Milton Road, or in North Road - just the other side of the junction on London Road.

Mrs Krone (School Business Manager)



YEAR 7 VIRTUAL TRANSITION - MUSIC

"At St Bernard's, music is at the forefront of many things we do, within the classroom, on an individual basis and during our Whole School Masses and celebrations. Music enables students to develop their self-confidence, independence, personality and is character building, in addition to becoming part of a team. We have many music provisions at St Bernard's which I would encourage your daughter to consider when joining us in September. If you have played an instrument during Primary school and are looking to continue or you are new to music and would like to learn a new skill, there is an instrument for everyone.

We are proud to offer:

Flute, clarinet, harp, violin, guitar, bass guitar, drums, piano, keyboard, singing.

All lessons are 15 minutes per week and your daughter will be given a time and day for her lesson. The lesson will take place during the school day as we are unable to offer lessons outside school hours. Most of our students take graded examinations within their instrument to prepare them for GCSE and A Level Music and others prefer to learn for fun.

Our instrumental teaching staff are excellent, inspiring and will guide your daughter in her chosen instrument.

Letters will be sent to you for you to complete at your earliest convenience so that I can get your daughter on the waiting list for lessons as soon as they commence in the Autumn Term.

In addition to our instrumental lesson we also offer the following extra curricular activities:

Orchestra, Chamber Choir, whole school choir, woodwind group, band and we will be hoping to offer some new clubs in the new academic year.

Miss Chapman (Head of Music)