



10 December 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

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School gates

School gates have been installed to improve the security and safeguarding measures within the school. The pedestrian gates will be open during the morning and after school but will remain closed at other times.

When visiting the school during the day, please use the intercom on the far right handside of the gates which will connect you to our reception. Reminder:

- All visitors are required to report to reception
- Please ensure all contact with your child is via reception throughout the school day. We are a mobile phone free school
- Any item being dropped off should be via reception

Parent/Carer communication with staff

The effective relationship between school staff and families is fundamental to help all our young people thrive and to provide support and guidance when needed. We often refer to this relationship as the 'golden triangle - parents/carers, child, school'.

We really value the support from parents/carers and welcome contact regarding your child/ren and this often helps the school run smoothly. The vast majority of this communication is both helpful and constructive.

Fortunately it is rare at St Katherine's, but there are odd occasions when genuine concern spills over into communications that are unreasonable in tone. We understand there are times when you are worried about your child or a particular situation and we are always here to listen and help. However, I have a duty of care to my staff and will act to protect them from any communication that is inappropriate and could cause deep upset to individuals who dedicate themselves tirelessly to serve our young people. Where this is the case, staff have been asked to pass this communication to a member of the senior team who will communicate with parents/carers.

We have updated our [communication guidelines](#). Please note that email is not an urgent form of communication and staff will endeavour to respond within two working days. Where the communication is of a more urgent nature, please contact the school by telephone.

Time is a very precious commodity for us all and your support in ensuring your communication is necessary and goes to the relevant member of staff is much appreciated. Please avoid including multiple staff email addresses in your message. This helps us focus our time on the content and delivery of our curriculum across the school. Please see the table in the Weekly Communication to parents/carers for the range of contacts.

Uniform

Thank you to parents/carers in Year 7-9 who have supported us through the transition to our new uniform for September. Your patience and understanding of the circumstances has been very much appreciated and we look forward to the new uniform standard working through to Year 11 by September 2023. Monkhouse will continue to supply our uniform for September 2022 after which we will review suppliers, taking into account value for money, quality of all items of uniform, parent/carer and student feedback, and the suppliers' ability to fulfil their contractual obligations.

New uniform guidance was issued by the Department for Education on 19 November 2021 and all schools have been asked to review their current uniform policies. If any adjustments are necessary, schools are asked to amend their policies in time for September 2022 or 2023 where contractual obligations exist. Schools are specifically asked to avoid using branding on items such as PE trainers, coats, socks and bags. Parents/carers should not have to consider the cost of uniform when making a decision about which school to send their child to.

Our recent change to Monkhouse allowed us to:

- maintain costs in line with the previous supplier for existing uniform items.
- offer a significant price reduction to all families in receipt of the pupil premium.
- offer a local uniform shop (we acknowledge the limited impact of this during COVID-19 restrictions along with the appalling customer experience for families which has been addressed).
- agree there would be no annual RPI increase in the first two years, offering further savings to our families.

Following our consultation with parents/carers and students, we introduced a new standard skirt and trouser. Although many parents/carers have welcomed the clarification in our policy, we recognise the potential additional costs. These have been mitigated through financial support from school and through our second-hand uniform shop (requested by families), which will offer a 'buy back' for outgrown uniform at 50% of the cost price (items must have no stains or tears and to be in a resaleable condition). Parents/carers are able to purchase uniform through the second-hand uniform shop at 50% of the cost price, subject to availability.

Our uniform cost is below the national average when compared to the most recent Department for Education figures. These show that the average cost of boys' school uniform (excluding PE kit) was £231 and girls' £240. Our current cost for a blazer, two pairs of trousers/skirts, shirts and shoes average less than half this price.

The cost of uniform should never become a barrier to school attendance and we ask that any family that does face financial hardship, whether over uniform, transport, equipment or any other school-related cost, contact their Head of House to discuss how we can support them.

January return to school

Students return to school on Wednesday 5 January. **We are keen to minimise any disruption to our curriculum and would ask all families to carry out a Lateral Flow test at home on Tuesday 4 January. Should the test be positive, please do not send your child to school and book a PCR test.** We will be carrying out one lateral flow test for each individual onsite, supervised by a trained adult. This will involve students coming out of a lesson at some point during the first three days of term. Students will complete their lateral flow tests as follows:

Day	Year groups
Wednesday	10, 11 & 13
Thursday	8 & 9
Friday	7 & 12

- We will assume the latest consent we hold on record for your child remains the same unless parents contact the school to inform otherwise.
- If your child has tested positive for Covid-19 since Wednesday 7 October, they will not be expected to complete the lateral flow test when they return to school. To ensure students are not asked to complete their lateral flow test. Please inform us via [this form](#) if your child has tested positive for Covid-19 since Wednesday 7 October.
- If your child tests positive between now and our return, please inform the school via email - school@skdrive.org.

A huge thank you to those parents/carers who have volunteered to support the return to school testing in January.

Wishing all our families a wonderful festive break.

Yours sincerely





Justin Humphreys
Headteacher

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