



St Joseph's Roman Catholic High School

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Dear Parents and Carers

You are aware that we have had some challenges in staffing our Science department. Thank you for your patience and understanding. After starting in September with a full complement of staff we have faced many challenges due to debilitating illness within the department. It is proving difficult to recruit specialist trained Science teachers of good quality, especially on short term contracts to cover illness. We have advertised vacancies nationally and used all our local contacts to secure consistent teachers. This is a national problem and St Josephs is not alone in this predicament.

We have recruited an assistant head of Science, Mr Turner who will take up role in January. Mr Trist will remain with us in January to provide consistency in teaching within the department. We are indebted to Mrs Mclean who has offered her time to provide a bit of stability for our students. We realise that having a number of different teachers in Science can be unsettling for our students but where possible we have placed experienced Science staff to teach a 'lead lesson' for each group to ensure that all students have the same opportunities. We are also thankful to Mrs Morgan and Mr Sharrock for taking over the teaching of biology for some groups to provide stability during staff absence. These teachers have an expertise in this area as part of their Sports Science degree.

We believe that Y11 students should be prioritised in Science and have listened to the concerns of parents and students. To this end, we have planned three 'Science Deep Learning' days. This means that the usual timetable will be suspended and students will focus on gaps in their Science knowledge and skills. Part of the day will be led by our most experienced specialised teacher in large group teaching on each Science discipline with support from the senior team. The other half of the day will be with a Science specialist who will focus on the skills/knowledge gaps and needs of students in smaller groups. This will be an opportunity for our young people to address any of their concerns. Please encourage your child to spend time over Christmas revising and speak to Miss Miller or Mrs Horridge if they have a topic they would like more support on. The first Science deep learning day will take place on Wednesday 17th January.

Over Christmas we will be restructuring Y11 tutor groups based on individual student priorities and some more students will be given a Y11 Science form. The Science department have organised an intervention session on Thursday evenings from 3:30 to 4:30pm. This is open to all students. The department will also be coming in over February half term on Monday 19th & Tuesday 20th February. They will be working for half a day per subject plus generic scientific skills that students can then apply to any Required Practical questions. They will also be focusing on anything that shows as a weak area in the mock exams. Extra sessions during the Easter holiday which will be confirmed in the New Year. The department offer a lunchtime drop-in each day if there are any questions or specific concerns from students e.g. over a particular GCSE question they have completed.

The department have placed revision resources on Epraise and other mind map revision resources are available from Miss Miller. Epraise also features crib sheets "*and exemplar questions*" and students can use Youtube to revisit method and equipment for the forthcoming required practicals.





Decisions about whether students will be entered for higher or foundation papers will be made over Christmas and a workbook will be available from the department. (Currently available on Amazon for £9.95 for Combined and £4.95 for each of the 'Separates'). If you are struggling to fund these, please let Miss Miller know. A parent kindly donated funds to enable disadvantaged learners to access resources.

Unfortunately, Mrs Walsh our Assistant Headteacher has undergone a serious injury. We do not yet know the extent of the damage but Mrs Halliday our Assistant Head of Maths has come forward to teach this group to cover any absence. We are confident that the groups progress will continue.

Finally, I appreciate that this time may have been frustrating for the young people and caused a degree of worry for parents. Please encourage your child to remain positive and avoid the temptation to use challenges as an excuse to not make the most of the opportunities that they are given. We will continue to remember Year 11 in all our prayers and we ask that you too remember our staff, those who are unwell and those who are taking on extra responsibilities to ensure the best possible chances for each young person. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

May we wish you a happy, peaceful and Holy Christmas.

God bless!

Mr T McCabe