



22nd February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Effective communication with our parents and stakeholders continues to be very important to us. We are writing, therefore, to all the parents of pupils at Hagley Catholic High School to update you on an incident which recently occurred at Hagley, to keep you as fully informed as possible now that we have more information to share with you following our investigations.

You may be aware that, during December 2020, the school was unfortunately the victim of a sophisticated cyber-attack involving ransomware. Ransomware is a form of malware that is used by hackers to prevent users from accessing files, and in some cases, extract and hold data hostage until a ransom is paid.

After discovering the attack, we promptly took steps to secure our systems and began investigating the nature and scope of the incident, engaging with and taking advice from Cyber Security Experts, West Mercia Police and the Information Commissioner's Office.

We are reassured that, with the exception of music coursework, the initial investigation has not evidenced any loss of personal data and the police advised that we were extremely fortunate to have back-ups to re-instate the majority of the education data. Unfortunately, as a result of the attack, one of our back up servers was damaged beyond repair, which resulted in a loss of some music coursework. We are liaising with the relevant exam boards about this and pupils and parents affected by this have been contacted separately and are aware that they can get in touch with school staff for further information and support, if required.

We are implementing a series of cyber security enhancements and replacing the damaged server. We are doing everything possible to mitigate against the risk and to future-proof our systems, however, unfortunately, given the sophistication of the computer hacking environment, no organisation can ever guarantee that a similar situation would never happen again.

Some of the measures we have taken and are taking include working with West Mercia Police Cyber Security and the National Crime Security Centre. To protect our IT infrastructure these measures will be kept strictly confidential. Over the last few days, we have been informed that two of our schools have been selected to participate in a government cyber risk pilot. This will support the MAC in achieving 'Cyber Essential' accreditation.

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Our journey with Christ





Our Management Information System, which is our main pupil database, and Safeguarding system are all held on separate platforms by third parties as detailed in our Privacy Notice and, reassuringly, there is no evidence to suggest that these systems were compromised during the attack.

Our Pupil, Parent and Staff data is held in accordance with our Privacy Notices and as a data controller we take the security of this data extremely seriously and will continue to embed and add additional security measures throughout all of our schools. We will also continue to keep our data protection policies under review and ensure that staff continue to receive data protection training.

If you have any specific questions about this ransomware attack then please contact Ms A Hodder, Chief Finance and Operations Officer for Emmaus Catholic MAC, on the following email address: ahodder@emmausmac.com

Once again, we thank you for your continued commitment and support during these extraordinary times. We know that the pandemic and remote learning have placed stress on our whole school community and we are committed to supporting all of you. We look forward to seeing all of our pupils back in school in the very near future.

Yours sincerely

S Horan

Suzanne Horan
Catholic Senior Executive Leader

A Hodder

Amanda Hodder
Chief Finance and Operations Officer

