



# ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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14<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your families are well and that your child is enjoying their last few days of primary school. Our staff at St Thomas More are really looking forward to welcoming the new Year 7 students in September in what we hope will be in more normal circumstances.

As you know last week the government set out the guidance for how school will operate in the autumn term. I am writing to give you a summary of this guidance, along with some specific information about the start of term in September.

## Mixing and Bubbles

The requirement to keep year groups separate will cease so this will allow us to return to a more normal way of delivering the curriculum in school. Year groups will no longer be in fixed rooms of the school which will allow for a return to full specialist facilities in Science, Music, Art and Technology. We are going to retain a couple of the positive aspects of this year's way of working by continuing to have zoned areas for year groups at breaks and lunchtime and also a staggered start to first lunchtime and the end of the school day.

## Face Coverings

We will confirm this closer to September, depending on the numbers of cases in North Tyneside at the time, but it is likely that we will continue to ask students and staff to wear face coverings in indoor communal areas only, for a period of time. With the removal of bubbles, year groups will be mixing in corridors so we feel that wearing face coverings will help to reduce the chance of someone with the virus passing it on.

We will no longer be asking students and staff to wear face coverings in classrooms but will support anyone who wishes to continue to do so.

Face coverings will no longer be recommended on school buses or legally required on public transport.

The guidance specifies that should there be an outbreak of Covid in school a decision may be made in conjunction with Public Health to reinstate face coverings temporarily in classrooms.

## Control Measures

The guidance specifies four control measures that schools should continue to implement:

1. Ensure good hand and respiratory hygiene for everyone
2. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes
3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated
4. Follow Public Health advice on testing, self isolating and managing confirmed cases of Covid 19.

## Tracing, Close Contacts and Isolation

From 19<sup>th</sup> July schools will no longer be expected to undertake contact tracing other than in exceptional circumstances. As with positive cases in any other setting NHS Test and Trace will work with the positive case to identify close contacts.

From 16<sup>th</sup> August children under the age of 18 years old will no longer be required to self isolate if they are identified as a close contact. Instead children will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test.



In summary from September students will not have to miss school because they are self isolating as a contact of a positive case.

### **Asymptomatic Testing**

Over the summer students are not required to continue to test regularly so schools have therefore not been issued test kits to provide for all students during the summer. However testing will still be widely available and LFD kits can be collected from local pharmacies. I know that many Year 6 students have been regularly testing as part of a family routine therefore I would encourage students and families to continue to undertake regular testing. **In particular, if possible, please can students take an LFD test the day before they are due to return to school?**

When pupils return in September schools are required to offer two onsite Lateral Flow Tests 3 – 5 days apart. The first of these tests should be on their first day of return, so in order to accommodate this schools are able to have a staggered return for students. At St Thomas More we have the testing capacity to do two main school year groups during the school day so the return of pupils will now be as follows:

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September – Year 7 as already scheduled. Year 13 to attend school from 1.30pm for testing only and then return for lessons on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> as already scheduled.

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September – Year 8 and Year 11 as already scheduled.

Friday 10<sup>th</sup> September – Year 9 and Year 10, one day later than scheduled.

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> September – Year 12 as already scheduled.

As in March, this testing is **voluntary** and no students will be prevented from returning to school if they do not take part in onsite testing. **As parents of new Year 7 students, we ask that you complete a consent form to either give, or withhold consent.** Please [click here](#) to access the online consent form. If you have any questions about the Lateral Flow Tests please contact school using [info@stmacademy.org.uk](mailto:info@stmacademy.org.uk). The Covid-19 Privacy Statement is attached to this email.

Following these onsite tests students will be encouraged to continue twice weekly testing at home and the government will review this at the end of September.

I hope that the new school year brings a return to a much more normal experience for all in our school community and, before then, I hope you all have a safe, healthy and happy summer break.

Yours sincerely



Mr D Watson  
Headteacher

