



ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you and your families are well.

As we come to the end of another unprecedented school term I would just like to thank you all for your continued support during these times. I would also like to pay tribute to the dedication and skills of all our staff in school who have once again risen to the many and varied challenges we have faced since January.

I am pleased to report that since full reopening there has only been one positive Covid case, which was initially identified by a home LFD test and then confirmed by a PCR test.

Home testing

Every student who took part in the testing in school, recently received 6 test kits to allow them to test at home, twice a week, until the end of term. The proposed schedule we sent suggested using one of the remaining tests on the Sunday evening before all students return on Monday April 19th.

Since then the government have said that they would like twice weekly testing to continue throughout the Easter holiday and this week we have received a delivery of more kits to allow students to continue this testing at home. These kits will be distributed to students during registration on Thursday morning. They will again be instructed to place the kits straight in to their school bags (so please ensure they bring one with them that day) and not remove them until they arrive home.

We would like to suggest a slight change to the schedule we initially proposed and now ask that students complete tests on a Tuesday and Saturday. Testing on Saturday, rather than Sunday, allows more time for the result of a PCR test to come through (to confirm a positive lateral flow test), giving staff in school the opportunity to inform any students of the need to isolate before leaving for school on the Monday morning.

A reminder that the guidance does state that parents/carers should report all results to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is completed, either online or by telephone, as set out in the home test kit instructions. Please continue to notify us of any positive test results via the usual email address:

reportcoronavirus@stmacademy.org.uk

Financial support if you have to take time off work to care for your child while they are self-isolating

We were informed recently that some families may be eligible for financial support if their child has to self isolate. The information states:

If you are on a low income and you need to take time off work to care for your child while they are self-isolating, you may be eligible for financial support from your local authority through the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is open to people who live in England and who meet the following criteria:



- They are the parent or guardian of a child or young person in the same household and need to take time off work to care for them while they self-isolate; this is limited to one parent or guardian per household for the child or young person's self-isolation period
- Are employed or self-employed
- Are unable to work from home while undertaking caring responsibilities and will lose income as a result
- They are currently receiving or are the partner of someone in the same household who is receiving at least one of the following benefits:
 - Universal Credit
 - Working Tax Credit
 - income-based Employment and Support Allowance
 - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
 - Income Support
 - Housing Benefit
 - Pension Credit
- Their child or young person:
 - is aged 15 or under (or 25 or under with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC) and normally attends an education or childcare setting
 - has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or by their education or childcare setting because they have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19

Discretionary payments are also available for people on low incomes who are not on means-tested benefits but who may still face hardship as a result of the requirement to self-isolate. Your local authority may have additional eligibility criteria in place for discretionary payments.

If you are eligible, you will receive a £500 payment from your local authority in addition to any benefits and Statutory Sick Pay you receive currently. If you are unsure which local authority you should claim from, you can check on Find your Local Council on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

Your local authority will contact your child's school to verify the information you provide about your child as part of the process of confirming whether you are eligible for a payment.

You can see the full eligibility criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and find out how to apply at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme>.

If you think you meet the eligibility criteria listed above and would like to apply to your local authority for a payment from the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme, you should provide this letter to your local authority to support your application. **You will not be able to make an application for a payment from the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme without this letter.**

Further information is available at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Face coverings after Easter

I understand that a government decision will be made during the Easter holidays about face coverings in schools after Easter. At the moment please assume that we will continue with the same approach as we have since returning to school but if this changes we will let students know on their return.



Finally I would like to thank our students who overall have coped incredibly well with the challenges of remote learning and have again returned to school in a very positive way.

I wish you and your family a very happy Easter.

Yours sincerely,



Mr D Watson
Headteacher

