



ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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14th July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your families are well.

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 19th 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 16th 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 unless they are attending a summer school. Schools have therefore not been issued test kits to provide for all students during the summer. However testing will still be widely available and kits can be collected from local pharmacies so I would encourage students and families to continue to undertake regular testing. **In particular please can all students take a 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 8th September – Year 7 as already scheduled. Year 13 to attend school from 1.30pm for testing only and then return for lessons on Thursday 9th as already scheduled.

Thursday 9th September – Year 8 and Year 11 as already scheduled.

Friday 10th September – Year 9 and Year 10, one day later than scheduled.

Monday 13th 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. We will assume that parents who gave permission for March onsite testing continue to do so, but if this has changed please contact school via info@stmacademy.org.uk. Equally if you did not give permission in March but now wish to do so please contact school via info@stmacademy.org.uk.

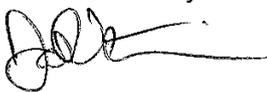
Parents of new Year 7 students will be contacted separately and asked to complete a consent form.

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.

As we come to the end of another unprecedented school year please can I firstly thank you all for the support you have given to staff in school and of course your children. As a parent I understand how challenging and frustrating this year has been for you all. I also want to thank and pay tribute to the tremendous staff at St Thomas More, their adaptability and their determination to provide the best education and support for your children as they could. Finally I want to thank our wonderful students, your children, who have faced many obstacles this year and have responded with great fortitude, resilience and positivity. As always a massive part of how well the year has gone in school is down to them.

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

