



St Mary's Catholic School

Benton Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne. NE7 7PE

where everyone can succeed



Tel: 0191 2153260 Fax: 0191 2153279

admin@st-marys.newcastle.sch.uk

www.stmarysnewcastle.co.uk

2nd September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you and your families are having a lovely summer.

Following Miss Patterson's letter, I wanted to get in touch regarding our updated school routines and expectations for September, in line with current government guidance. Over the past few weeks, we have been working through the detailed government guidance outlining the relaxing of many restrictions related to COVID-19 in schools. We have therefore been able to finalise our plans in school with regard to student routines, whilst ensuring that the health and safety of all members of the school community remains a priority.

You will find details regarding all student routines below, please read through the information below and share this with your child prior to their return to school next week so that they are fully prepared for their return to school. Heads of Year and Form Tutors will also be spending time on the first day going through these expectations with students. We are really looking forward to welcoming back our students to the school next week, including welcoming our new Year 7 students.

Testing

As you will be aware from my previous letter, as per government guidance, students must be offered two lateral flow tests on their return to school. Students will be coming into school for their first test on the day before their first full day in school. They will only attend school for their test and this will allow us to carry out the tests in a timely and safe manner. This will also mean that we can welcome and settle the students back into school on their first day without any disruption at all. You should have now received the allocated time for your child's first test. The second test will be carried out during the school day during the first two weeks back in school. If your child receives a positive lateral flow result, they will need to be taken for a PCR test. They will need to isolate until the result is received. If the result is positive then they will need to isolate in line with NHS guidelines. If the result is negative, they may return to school.

Students will also be given a pack of home testing kits in order to carry out two tests weekly until the end of September following their in school tests. The government are due to update this guidance and therefore we will be in touch regarding plans after September.

Entering and Exiting School

- There will no longer be two student entrances and all students should now enter and exit school via the gates beside the dining hall on the left hand side of the school.
- Students should then make their way to their year group yard. They may also go to toilets, water fountains or lockers. At 8:40am, students will then line up in twos to enter school and go to their form class. All students must be in school before the first bell at 8:40am.

Attendance

- We aim for all students to have excellent attendance at school. There is a clear link between attendance and academic progress and achievement. We would like all students to aim for an attendance between 95-100% in order to achieve their full potential in school.
- Should your child be ill and unable to attend school, we ask that you call the main school office or email before 8:40am on each day of their absence.
- Please avoid making any medical appointments during the school day.

Movement around school

- Current government guidance includes an end to all social distancing and an end to year group bubbles and zones and therefore we will be returning to our usual routines regarding movement around school. All students will therefore move freely around the school from lesson to lesson, they will no longer be confined to a zone and will have access to all of our fantastic specialist classrooms such as Science labs, Art rooms, DT rooms, Music rooms etc. Teachers will be based in their own teaching areas and departments again. This is something we know that students and staff will be really looking forward to.

- Students should move around school sensibly and quietly on the left hand side. In order to ensure the orderly movement of students around school, students will be given further information regarding the specific direction of student movement around school on their first day,

Breaks and Lunchtimes

- There will no longer be staggered breaktimes and all students will have their morning break at 11am.
- Food will now be available at break time in the dining hall.
- Food will be available for students at lunchtime from the dining hall. There will be a range of hot and cold choices.
- If students are purchasing food from the school canteen, the quickest and easiest way to top up their account is for parents to use the online ipayimpact payment system. Students can also top up using cash in school.
- Students can still choose to bring a packed lunch if they wish.
- Students will continue to have a timeslot for their lunch with Year 7 having a slightly earlier lunchtime of 11:45am for at least the first term. This is in order to allow them to familiarise themselves with lunchtime routines.
- Each year group will continue to have their own yard for social times. Year 7 will use the Tennis Courts. Year 8 will use the yard between English and RE corridors. Year 9 will use the yard between RE and DT corridors. Year 10 will use the yard beside the dining hall. Year 11 will use the yard between PE and English corridors.

Uniform

- We pride ourselves on our high standards of uniform and how smart our students look. All Year 7 to 11 students must return to school in full school uniform.
- Shoes must be plain black polishable school shoes. Trainers or trainer style shoes are not allowed.
- All Year 12 and Year 13 students must return to school in full Sixth Form dress code.
- All expectations re jewellery, hair style etc also remain the same.
- Please see previously distributed guidance or school website regarding our uniform/dress code expectations.

Equipment

- Students should bring their own equipment to school, as always, such as a pen, pencil, ruler etc.
- Some equipment and resources will be shared by the class teacher.
- Students should also have a school bag.
- Student lockers in the main school will now be available and will be distributed in the first few weeks back to school. There is a £5 deposit for lockers which is refunded when the locker key is returned. Students usually keep the same locker for the duration of their time at St Mary's.
- Mobile phones must be turned off and remain out of sight for the duration of the school day. If students are found to be using mobile phones, they will be confiscated and handed to the Head of Year until the end of the school day.

Toilets/Water Fountains

- All year groups will continue to have a specific toilet block and water fountain assigned to them for use during social times and before/after school.
- If students need to access toilet areas during lesson time, they will be able to use the toilet block closest to their classroom.

Travel to school and parent/carer access to school car park

- We will continue to allow access to our school car park for parents/carers on a morning.
- However, we will continue to close the car park between 2:45pm and 3:30pm each day and limit parental/carer access to the car park in order to ensure health and safety of students, staff and parents. Access will only be permitted in extreme exceptional circumstances. We imagine this will be a very small number of students. Previous permissions have now expired at the end of the last academic year. If you require access to the car park due to extreme exceptional circumstances then you may complete a request which will be considered by the school. Any access granted will be reviewed on a half termly basis.
- As always, student behaviour must be exemplary on the journey to school. Our excellent reputation in the local community is something that we are incredibly proud of and students should travel to school in a calm and orderly manner showing respect at all times to members of the public and representing St Mary's school in the most positive light. Students who fail to behave appropriately on their journey to school will be sanctioned.

End of School day

- The school day will end at 3pm for students in Years 7 and 8.
- The school day will continue to end at 3.10pm for students in Years 9, 10 and 11, as normal.
- Year 12/13 students should remain in school for the duration of the school day. If students have a study period, they may use the sixth form study areas to complete work. We will review this after the first half term and students who are showing excellent work ethic may then be granted permission to study from home during their study periods.

Face masks, cleaning and hand hygiene

- As per the updated government guidance, facemasks are no longer compulsory in schools. Therefore, neither students nor staff will be required to wear facemasks in classrooms or in communal areas whilst in school.
- As with all policies, we will review this regularly and, if the government or public health guidance changes and/or the national or local situation changes, we will adapt accordingly.
- Enhanced cleaning routines will continue throughout the school. Fogging will also continue to be used to sanitise rooms.
- Additional cleaning of all surfaces, touch points etc will continue daily and cover every room/area of the school.
- Hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene will continue to be paramount with students and staff directed to wash hands very regularly, when entering/leaving the school, entering/leaving zone areas and entering/leaving the dining hall.
- Hand sanitiser will be available in all rooms and common areas for students and staff to continue handwashing procedures.
- There will also be tissues provided in all classrooms and an increased number of bins across the school to ensure the NHS message of 'catch it, bin it, kill it' is embedded.
- Government guidelines recommend rooms to be well ventilated as far as possible, whilst maintaining a comfortable room temperature. Therefore, we will aim to ensure windows and classroom doors are open as much as possible.

Any students with COVID symptoms and/or returning from a country with quarantine restrictions

- Students with any COVID symptoms (i.e. a high temperature, a new continuous cough, a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste etc) should not come into school.
- Please inform your child's Head of Year immediately if he/she has COVID symptoms.
- We would then ask you, as the parent/carer, to book your child a COVID test as soon as possible. The results are usually received in less than 48 hours, often in 24 hours. If the test for your child is negative, you should let the Head of Year know and your child will then be able to return to school.
- Should the test be positive, of course your child should remain at home and follow national public health guidance for self-isolation, when to seek medical support etc.
- If a student develops any of the symptoms whilst in school, they should notify a member of staff immediately. The student will be supported and remain separate from the other members of the school community until a parent/carer can collect them from school. We would appreciate if he/she could be collected as soon as possible.
- We will work with local health authorities in responding to any confirmed cases in the school community.
- In line with recent government guidance, all children aged under 18 years do not have to isolate unless they have symptoms. This means there should be much less student and staff isolation and disruption to learning this school year.
- Furthermore, if any student has returned recently from a country where quarantine restrictions are in place, they should, of course, not come into school until the period of quarantine is complete.

Please be assured that the health and safety of our students and staff will remain the highest priority for us. Whilst we are really looking forward to what we hope will be a much more normal school year, the above routines are all subject to change in line with our contingency plans should Public Health England and/or the government recommend reinstating any restrictions or control measures at any time due to the changing national or local context. However, we hope very much this will not be necessary and we hope for a much more settled and normal academic year with our students enjoying their learning in school.

We were really impressed with our students mature attitude towards the changes in school last year and we are confident that they will impress us again by adapting to the more normal school routines outlined above. Thank you so much for your continued support. If you have any queries regarding any of this information, please do get in touch with your child's Head of Year in school.

Yours faithfully,



Miss Largue
Director of Student Support