



St Mary's Catholic School

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where everyone can succeed



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Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you and your families are well.

As you will have seen from the recent government announcement, further COVID-19 health and safety measures have been introduced nationally following the emergence of the Omicron variant globally and in the UK. At St Mary's, the health and safety of our students and staff team is our number one priority and we continue to monitor the current context very closely, making adjustments where necessary to keep everyone safe. Following updated guidance from the DfE to schools, we wanted to share with you some health and safety updates and reminders.

Facemasks

The DfE are strongly advising that face masks be worn by all students (Year 7 and above) and staff in communal areas in schools from today. Therefore, from today all students are expected to wear facemasks in all communal areas of school including corridors and when lining up to come into school. Despite the short notice from the DfE, we would like to thank you for your quick response to our message yesterday and for ensuring that your children had facemasks for school today. We would like to ask for your continued support in ensuring that your child brings a facemask to school each day. The DfE are not yet recommending that face masks are worn in classrooms, given the detrimental impact this may cause to teaching and learning. Students will also be reminded in school that it is compulsory to wear facemasks on public transport during their journey to and from school. If your child is medically exempt from wearing a facemask, then please contact your child's Head of Year.

Health and Safety

As detailed in my previous letter, government guidance recommends that rooms are ventilated, as far as possible. This is considered one of the most effective ways to limit transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Therefore, we aim to ensure windows and classroom doors are open as much as possible. In order to maintain a comfortable temperature during winter months, we are allowing students to wear their coats and gloves in classrooms if they feel they need to. Students will not be allowed to wear coats when walking around inside of the school building. If students would like to wear a jumper under their blazer, this must be a school jumper and not a hoodie. Hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene continue to be paramount with students and staff directed to wash their hands very regularly, when entering/leaving the school, entering/leaving different areas of school and entering/leaving the dining hall. Hand sanitiser is available in all rooms and common areas for students and staff to continue handwashing procedures. Tissues are also provided in all classrooms and there is an increased number of bins across the school to ensure the NHS message of 'catch it, bin it, kill it' is embedded.

Close contacts and isolation

The guidance from Public Health England regarding close contacts remains the same. The only exception is if your child is a close contact to anyone who tests positive for the newly identified Omicron variant of COVID-19. If they are a close contact of someone who tests positive for the Omicron variant of COVID-19, as with adults, they will be notified by NHS Track and Trace and must isolate for 10 days. If they develop symptoms during this time, they will need to get a PCR test. Furthermore, the updated government guidance states that, as with adults, if your child travels abroad, they must isolate and get a PCR test on their return to the UK. They should continue to isolate and only return to school, once a negative PCR result has been received.

Testing

A reminder that all students should continue to carry out lateral flow tests at home twice weekly. They should also continue to do this throughout the Christmas holidays. Test kits will continue to be distributed to students in school. The recent government guidance states that students will be tested on their return to school in January in order to ensure a safe return to school for everyone. Further guidance will follow regarding in-school testing in January.

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 Lague

Director of Student Support