



# St Mary's Catholic School

Benton Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne. NE7 7PE

*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 government's plan B Covid response. 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. However, since my previous letter on 29<sup>th</sup> November outlining the updated guidance for schools, there have been little changes made.

## 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, all students are expected to wear facemasks in all communal areas of school including corridors and when lining up to come into school. We would like to ask for your continued support in ensuring that your child brings a facemask to school each day.

## Attendance

School attendance remains mandatory and all the usual rules continue to apply. Enabling children and young people to attend their education setting regularly continues to be a national priority.

## January Exams

There are some exams for vocational and technical qualifications timetabled for January. Students who are due to sit these exams will be prepared and it is right that they should be given every opportunity to demonstrate what they have learnt. The government have stated in their guidance that exams scheduled for January will go ahead. Consequently, it is essential that students continue to prepare for these assessments.

## Ventilation

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.

## 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.

## Testing

You will have now received information about testing in January and our staggered return to school to allow us to do this effectively. Please complete the electronic consent form as soon as possible for your child to be tested on their return to school. If you do not give consent for testing, then there is no need to complete the form. 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.

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