



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Learning and loving on our journey with Jesus

Dear parents, carers and guardians,

I hope you have all enjoyed your family time together this summer holiday and have kept safe and well.

We are looking forward to the return of all your children to St Mary's on **Friday 3rd September 2021** for the start of their new school year.

You we all now aware that we are now having to live with the Coronavirus and must still maintain some semblance of caution before we go straight back to complete normality. With this in mind as well as recent government guidance we have made decisions purely based on the safety and wellbeing of all.

When the children return next week we are keeping to the system of drop off and pick as we had last term. Everybody knows this system and in order to maintain some distance and safety measures it seems prudent to continue until deemed safe to return to normal.

Drop off and pick up times at the wooden school gate in the car park:

EYFS team will be conducting home visits at the start of term.

EYFS children will be in school on 8th, 9th and 10th September. On these dates they will arrive at 9.00am and be picked up at 12.30pm. From 13th September they will come in 9.00am and be picked up at 3.00pm.

Year groups 1 & 2 to drop off at 8.40am and pick up at 3.10pm.

Year groups 3 & 4 to drop off at 8.45am and pick up at 3.20pm.

Year groups 5 & 6 to drop off at 8.50pm and pick up at 3.30pm.

At drop off siblings can go in at the same time as the earliest child to avoid parents coming back round. Unfortunately at pick up parents will have to wait until their children in different phases are ready at the pick-up times above.

Children in years 5 & 6 no longer need to line up in the car park. They can go straight into class and begin their morning tasks. The front office will no longer collect mobile phones so pupils will need to hand their phones to their class teachers who will lock them away until the end of the day.

We will maintain the one way system as it was fluid and avoided any unnecessary gathering on site which could result in a spread of the virus if anyone unknowingly has COVID.

We are very much aware that life at St Mary's and all schools nationally has been less than ideal these last 18 months and we are thankful to have such an understanding and caring community who have supported the school and each other during this time. I appreciate we

are not clear of this virus and its various mutations and so I ask that you bear with us as we continue to navigate through it.

We are hopeful that this academic year will not challenge us all like before, however, as you will be aware, COVID variants remain and outbreaks have occurred around the country including in this county. At the end of last term we had a dominoes effect of one group being isolated, one after the other causing disruption to so many. In case of an outbreak attached is our **COVID outbreak management plan**.

Please see below the Department of Education (DfE) aims, recently received from the local authority. This has been helpful in making decisions for the start of this term:

DfE Aims:

- We want to ensure that all children and students can experience as much normality and stability in their education and care settings as possible.
- Maximising face to face attendance in education settings will counter the detrimental impact of the last 18 months
- **Under 18's will no longer be required to isolate if they come into close contact with a positive case.** High numbers of absences in the last school year were due to close contact with a confirmed case, but most pupils who isolated did not have Covid
- **The risks of severe illness from COVID-19 are extremely low in children and young people.**
- Clinically vulnerable children and those children with clinically vulnerable adults in their households will begin to receive vaccinations.

Point 1 - To avoid the possibility of further outbreaks we will still remain cautious with some of our operational decisions to minimise risk. However we will continue to take steps to get back to normality as soon as possible continually communicating with you via parent mail.

Point 2 - We are aware that there will be educational gaps in children's learning given the turbulence experienced recently and our key aim is to highlight those gaps quickly and respond in order to plug any educational gaps. Our school mission of *'learning and loving on our journey with Jesus'* underpins the ethos at St Mary's. A key part of this ethos is to focus on the social and emotional well-being of all our children as this is a vital prerequisite to successful learning.

Point 3/4 - We are pleased that we no longer have to ask bubbles to self-isolate and so we can change some of our operations in school from day 1. For example, we will be able to mingle more at playtime and resume worships and assemblies in the school hall in year group phases, eventually moving to whole school worship once the children have got used to it. With regard to children's wellbeing we will start back with our previous routines and revert back to normal practice gradually over time. We will aim to achieve this during term 1 so that after half term we can return back to the normal school day. In the meantime we will be

paying close attention to government guidance and any local news regarding the virus as at any point this may override any return to normal.

Point 5 – As with children aged 16 and 17 you will receive a letter advising you if you or your child are expected to receive a vaccination. If you are unsure please contact the NHS directly and they can advise you.

Please see below the key changes for schools when they return this September:

Key Changes for Schools Return

- Schools, colleges and out-of-school settings no longer expected to keep pupils in **bubbles** or **reduce mixing in groups**.

Bubbles and social distancing



- No longer recommended in education and childcare settings.
- **Are recommended on dedicated school or college transport** in line with government expectation to wear face coverings in crowded areas when prevalence is high.
- **Singing, wind and brass instrument playing** can be undertaken.

Face coverings



- Education and childcare settings are not asked to undertake routine **contact tracing** for children and young people.
- **Contact tracing** will be limited to **close contacts** identified by NHS Test and Trace.
- Settings may be contacted in exceptional cases to help identify close contacts.

Contact tracing



- **From 16 August**, fully vaccinated adults and under 18s identified as close contacts are not required to self-isolate unless they are symptomatic.

- Close contacts will instead be advised to take a PCR test. If positive, NHS Test and Trace will inform the individual of next steps.

Self Isolation



- **For education settings that are open over the summer holidays, continue testing twice weekly at home.**
- Two on-site tests at the start of the **Autumn term**, then a transition to twice-weekly home testing.
- **Year 6 students transitioning to year 7** will be offered 2 ATS in the **autumn term** but **will not need to test over summer.**

Testing



- We **continue to encourage Covid-19 vaccine** uptake in education.
- DHSC have now accepted advice from JCVI that **routine vaccination should be offered to 12–15-year-olds** with underlying health conditions or who are household contacts of the immunosuppressed
- Also, **16 and 17 year olds will be offered the vaccine.**

Vaccines



We no longer require parents to wear face coverings on site when outside at drop off and pick up. However, we ask parents to wear face coverings if meeting with staff indoors. We will ask staff to do likewise.

Contact tracing will now be the responsibility of NHS test and trace so schools no longer need to undergo contact tracing unless directly ask to do so by NHS test and trace. Please visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/if-youre->

[told-to-self-isolate-by-nhs-test-and-trace-or-the-covid-19-app/](#) for further information if you are contacted.

We are pleased that we will no longer have to close bubbles or send anyone home if we are informed by any member of our community that someone has had a positive PCR test result. If any member of your household exhibits symptoms of COVID which are: loss of sense of taste or smell; high temperature or continuous cough then that person must remain away from school and seek a PCR test. If it comes back negative and they are no longer feeling ill they can return to school. If positive, they must self-isolate for the time advised usually 10 days from when the symptoms began.

Please inform the school at the first instance of symptoms so we can record their absence appropriately. We will advise any close contacts to seek a PCR test, however, they can remain in school unless they too start to show symptoms of COVID.

Testing is not applicable to primary schools as our pupils are not required to take LFD tests.

Vaccines have not yet been offered to primary aged children unless they are clinically vulnerable.

We ask that children continue to arrive in school on their PE day in their PE kits. This allows children to have a much longer PE session. We ask that all children practice putting their PE kits on themselves even if in the EYFS and KS1.

All children in EYFS and KS1 will be provided with their stationary needs in school. Children in KS2 are invited to bring in their own stationary this will comprise of a clear pencil case, several HB pencils, a pen if your child has been given permission previously (if in doubt a pencil will suffice), a pencil sharpener, and optional colouring pencils. If you are unable to supply these the school will make items available.

All children should return to school in full school uniform. Summer uniform is permitted up to October half term, depending on the weather. Following half term all children will be expected to wear the winter school uniform. Please see our website for details - <https://www.stmarys-maidenhead.org.uk/parent-information/>

It just leaves me to say have a great bank holiday weekend and we look forward to seeing you all on **Friday 3rd September 2021**.

God bless,

Anton Dworzak

Headteacher