

Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

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Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

Registered in England and Wales, Company No 07721932

Headteacher: Matthew Quinn B.Ed (Hons), M.A., NPQH

Our Ref: MQ/SM

4 March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I appreciate that most of my recent communication has referenced the logistics of Lateral Flow Tests (LFT). However, I now want to return to students coming back to school, albeit it for a short period before the Easter break.

I hope you are all well and are as excited and pleased as I am to get children back into school next week. We are delighted that students will be re-joining us, by way of a reminder our phased return will be as follows.

| Year Group | Date of First Test | When Back in School |
|-------------------------|------------------------|---|
| Year 11 Year 12 & 13 | 5 th March | 8 th March |
| Year 10 | 8 th March | 8 th March phased in through the day |
| Year 9 | 10 th March | 10 th March phased in through the day |
| Year 8 | 10 th March | 10 th March phased in through the day |
| Year 7 | 8 th March | 8 th March phased in through the day |

You will have received a separate letter indicating the time your child needs to come to school on the phased day. It is important that you keep to this.

Not only does this phasing allow us to conduct the LFTs, it will allow us to settle the youngsters, after what has been a long and difficult absence from school and to explain the necessary procedures that have been put in place to help maintain both their safety and the safety of staff. This gradual reintroduction to the school will allow us to focus on making sure all students feel safe, looked after and more confident about the whole school return by the end of the week. Within the first few days back all students will have extended tutor time.

I have been encouraged by the number of parents supportive of the measures we took earlier in the year to maintain the safety of the school community. The potential damage to youngsters being out of school outweighs the risks associated with the virus.

To help you and your child, we have produced an updated 'Back to School' booklet which addresses many of the details related to what happens in school.

Please take time to read this and discuss it with your child. The information can be found by following this link:

[Student and Parent Booklet March 2021](#)

The booklet contains all the details related to returning to school and how we intend to keep your child and staff safe. Students will be aware of many of the procedures from earlier in the year but students will need time to re-familiarise themselves with all the arrangements.

As mentioned in my last letter, please ensure you have topped up your child's Scopay account before Monday 8th March. The canteen will be open from Monday for the usual break and lunchtime service. Breakfast service will resume from Tuesday morning for Years 7, 10, 11 and Sixth Form but students in Years 8 and 9 will not be able to use the breakfast service until Thursday, following their Lateral Flow Testing on Wednesday.

We have again updated the COVID-19 Addendums to a number of policies. These clarify the changes we have made to our Safeguarding, Attendance and Behaviour policies and the updates to the Home School Agreement. <https://www.oaklandscatholicschool.org/about-us/policies/>

Like many of you, I have been monitoring the advice being provided to schools by scientific advisers. However, it is clear that as a nation we have some way to go until 'normal play' resumes. We are only part way through the first phase of the Government roadmap. Many of the restrictions in place for wider society also apply to school.

On Monday 1st March, the school received further guidance from the Government on face coverings. The DfE state:

*"We recommend that in those settings where pupils and students in Year 7 and above are educated, face coverings **should be worn** in classrooms and during activities unless social distancing can be maintained. This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons."*

As an employer, the Governors have a responsibility to the staff and students to ensure risk is mitigated. One of these control measures is the use of face covering as the layout of the school estate makes it particularly difficult to maintain social distancing when staff and pupils are moving around the premises. As you are aware many of our buildings are very cramped, with small classrooms and narrow corridors. In these areas social distancing is virtually impossible to manage even with the control measures we have put in place such as one-way systems. We will continue to be sensitive to the needs of students to remove masks when outside and socially distanced. We acknowledge that wearing a mask for 5 or 6 hours without break is draining, but we will be reminding students regularly to wear face coverings when indoors and moving around the site.

Off the cuff comments from politicians about face coverings that are often in tension with published policy are not helpful at this time for parents, students or schools. That said, all of the control measures we put in place, be that washing of hands, sanitising equipment or ventilating rooms, individually only provide a marginal gain. However collectively they make a difference. If all of this helps us get back to a sense of normality sooner than later then we should embrace these measures. A national review of facemasks in school has been promised for the end of this term.

I understand fully that some parents and carers will be anxious about their child's return to school; after almost a year we are all still wrestling with the impact of the pandemic which has challenged the way we now live our lives.

The national guidance developed by the Government and supported by scientific advisers, supports a safe return to school for children, young people and staff, taking full account of progress made in suppressing COVID-19 in particular the roll out of the vaccine. However, we need to be realistic, should a student or member of staff present in school with symptoms of the virus, or report the same from home, the control measures we adopted before, including sending groups of student home will be used again.

The school will continue to follow Government and scientific advice and will keep you informed of any implications in as timely a way as we can. Recent updates are usually available via the school website and our social media channels.

Our priority is to ensure that our students and staff keep safe and well and to do all that we can to ensure we can continue to run our school day as normal, keeping things in perspective.

Again, thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Quinn', written in a cursive style.

Mr M Quinn
Headteacher