

# Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

Stakes Hill Road  
Waterlooville  
Hampshire  
PO7 7BW

☎ 023 9225 9214

☎ 023 9223 0317

🌐 [www.oaklandscatholicschool.org](http://www.oaklandscatholicschool.org)

✉ [oaklands@oaklandscatholicschool.org](mailto:oaklands@oaklandscatholicschool.org)



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

Our Ref: MQ/SM

7 May 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope this letter finds you all safe and well. Since my last letter to you we have had a busy ten days in school. Year 9 have experienced a very successful Mission Day, finishing with Mass and Year 8 have had a STEM Day. Our Years 11 and 13 continue to work hard and fully engage with all the work that is being done in school to ensure they get the best possible grades and are ready for the next stage of education, training or employment.

## COVID-19 Control Measures

As you know, the vast majority of staff and students across the country have now returned to education. I am very proud of our contribution to this national effort. Schools remaining COVID-19 safe is a key part of the government roadmap to reopening and we cannot yet return to a 'normal' model of education delivery.

Sadly, this week we had two confirmed cases from Lateral Flow Tests (LFT). This is a sobering reminder that the pandemic is not over. We continue to follow the DfE guidance, and this necessitated sending students home who were in close contact with the confirmed cases. We always try and apply a nuanced approach to this so that we don't send whole year groups home; this often involves looking at classroom seating plans so that we can limit the students impacted to a localised area of the room.

The national situation has improved dramatically, however it is easy to fall into a false sense of security, questioning the national isolation policy. It is important that parents collect students or arrange transport if, following DfE advice, we have to send students home. Failing to do this potentially increases the risk to the school community.

LFTs continues to play a crucial role, in and out of classrooms, in our fight against coronavirus. We are continuing to strongly encourage all students to take and return their LFT results using Test Register, twice a week on Wednesday and Sunday before 7.00pm. We aim to get a 100% return rate, but there has been some slippage in recent weeks. LFT testing and reporting is something that can only be policed from home when students are the responsibility of parents.

Reporting not only supports contact tracing in the event of a positive case, but assists our understanding of community rates of infection. To help in communicating the importance of testing and reporting, the DfE have produced a [blog](#) on why reporting your test result is as important as taking a test, featuring further guidance and common questions. This also includes details on financial support available to parents whose children are asked to self-isolate after contact with a positive case.

I would therefore ask you to work with us during this time, and would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the important role you also play in keeping our schools open and in making sure that the measures put in place by schools are as effective as possible.

### **Isolated Students and Teacher Assessment Grades**

For students in Year 11 and Year 13, a period of isolation is an unwelcome distraction as they complete assessments. ***For the avoidance of any doubt, no student taking assessments at the moment will be disadvantaged as a result of having to isolate in the final weeks of this half term.*** Any Year 11 assessments planned for the week commencing 10 May will now be postponed until the week commencing 17 May and will be spread across the week.

### **Year 11 and Year 13 End of Year Celebrations**

For both Year 11 and Year 13, finding an appropriate way to end the year is almost a rite of passage and we continue to work closely with the venues hosting our celebration events. The success of the National Roadmap out of lockdown and the venues' responses to this will determine how these events are organised. This is finely balanced, I will keep you informed.

### **Year 10 Exams in June**

Mr Bamford posted the June exam timetable on the Year 10 Team and the letter was emailed to Year 10 parents on Friday. Please read this carefully and contact him if you have any questions. Further guidance will be published next week in terms of how students can prepare.

### **Language Matters**

If you are of a certain age you will remember the 9.00pm watershed - before this time certain language would not be used on television. With the advent of social media, and other content platforms, the exposure of youngsters to inappropriate language is more prevalent than ever. At the start of term during my assemblies, I focused on educating our young people as to why it is so important to avoid using inappropriate language. We have reiterated why we will not tolerate offensive or inappropriate language towards others, be it face to face, behind people's backs, or via social media. We will be sharing strategies which our young people can use to avoid using unacceptable language and we have made it very clear that any victim of unacceptable language must speak out and seek support.

### **Staffing News**

In all schools this is the time of year when some staff begin to consider their future, be that looking for promotion, retirement, going part time, or stepping down from their current positions.

Julie Oldroyd, one of my Deputy Heads put me on notice at this point two years ago that this year would be her last at Oaklands, after 32 years of outstanding service. At the time her future direction was uncertain, however, I knew she would not leave the Catholic educational family; she has so much more to give. So, I was delighted when she informed me that she had been appointed to the post of Deputy Director of Education in the Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. Julie has made an outstanding contribution to Oaklands in many areas, enriching the lives of a significant number of students through her work in the classroom and leading our pastoral teams, she goes with our love and prayerful support.

The Governing Body have appointed Mrs Amy Bonnington to the position of Pastoral Deputy Head, she steps up from her Assistant Head role. I will inform you of other staff movements in future letters.

Finally, please can I remind you all that there will be a Staff Inset Day on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June so students will return to school after half term on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mr M Quinn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr M Quinn  
**Headteacher**