

# Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

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

Our Ref: MQ/SM

2 July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

The Government faces one of the most critical decisions of the pandemic: when to end lockdown restrictions. Commentators have labelled this as 'freedom day'. We sometimes imagine it as a balancing act between the need to prevent the spread of a virus and the damage inflicted on society, be that schools or the wider economy. The potential relaxation of restrictions towards the end of the month does not mean the virus has been 'turned off', a point I think we all recognise and respect.

No doubt, like me, you will have picked up on the soundbites appearing from many news outlets related to the number of students who are out of school for COVID related reasons. Last week this figure stood at 375,000 students. At Oaklands we have been fortunate so far, given the low numbers of staff and students affected by isolation this term, long may this continue. However, I am aware of schools in the South East that have had to shut and others who have sent swathes of youngsters home.

Like all schools, our attention has now turned to planning the Autumn Term. On Monday 28<sup>th</sup> June we received guidance from the DfE relating to the possible reintroduction of Asymptomatic Test (AST) sites in schools at the beginning of September. The details related to this have not been thoroughly explained, neither is the apparent plan to replace self-isolation of close contacts of positive cases.

I had hoped for a 'clean' start to the Autumn term returning to the pre-COVID routines that have served us well over time, this may not be possible.

Schools have been asked to prepare for all scenarios, including testing on return after the summer holidays. The direction of travel is beginning to emerge as we have already been told to expect delivery of the AST kits and the necessary PPE before the end of term to allow for the re-establishment of on-site testing centres. The decision to resource this testing must have been made weeks ago. There are approximately 5 million 11-18 year olds in this country. Procuring the kit to undertake the testing of this number is not something that happens overnight.

The DfE have informed schools that we may opt to start testing students and pupils no earlier than three days before the start of term, or stagger the return of pupils during the first week of term; this decision is at the discretion of the school.

All Headteachers want their schools to be as safe as possible so there is a logic in testing students before the return to school in September; youngsters will have circulated widely over the Summer break, and some will have been on holiday at home and abroad. Once youngsters are away from school, the level of control and reporting diminishes significantly, particularly so for our next cohort of Year 12 who will have been away from school for over 12 weeks.

The announcement this week provides tacit confirmation that the virus still presents a risk to an age group who largely have not been vaccinated and for those that come into close contact with them. Notwithstanding this, if AST reduces the risk when large groups of youngsters mix and contributes towards a strategy that results in COVID close contacts not being sent home, then this is to be welcomed. This is currently being looked into by the DfE.

We understand that an announcement for schools is going to be aligned with national announcements in relation to Step 4 of the lockdown restrictions. This gives little time for schools to react. Like you, I hope that the DfE provide us with coherent and robust guidance and that this is communicated clearly ahead of the end of this term, which is approaching rapidly.

However, I would be derelict in my duty if we did not start to scenario plan now and provide parents with significant notice of 'Plan B' for the start of the Autumn term should it necessary.

Any decisions will be communicated to parents as soon after the Government announcement on July 19<sup>th</sup> as is practicable in order to give parents due notice as to the start of term arrangements.

	<b>Original Plan (Plan A)</b>	<b>Contingency Plan (Plan B)</b>
<b>Monday 30<sup>th</sup> August</b>	Bank Holiday	Bank Holiday
<b>Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> August</b>	Staff INSET	Staff INSET + establishing AST centre and training staff.
<b>Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September</b>	Year 7 Welcome and Induction	AST Testing: year groups to be advised. <b>Students return home after tests.</b>
<b>Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September</b>	Year 7 and Sixth Form Induction	AST Testing: year groups to be advised. <b>Students return home after tests.</b>
<b>Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September</b>	All students in school	AST Testing: year groups to be advised. <b>Students return home after tests.</b> <b>Year 7 / Sixth Form only in school for induction.</b>
<b>Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September</b>	All students in school	All students in school

### **Staffing changes**

I would like to make you aware of the staffing changes we are making next year as part of our COVID recovery plan, to create additional pastoral capacity.

Mrs Cope takes on the position of joint Head of Year 11 from September, working alongside Mrs Hardaker.

Mrs Cunningham has been appointed Head of Year 7 with Mr Neil as Assistant Head of Year.

Mr Jones will continue in his Alternative Provision role and this will be extended to include oversight for Attendance.

Mrs Standen has been promoted to Safeguarding and Welfare Manager and replaces Mrs Whittingham, who left Oaklands at the end of the May half term.

Mr Miller has been appointed as Pastoral Support Officer and will take up his position in September.

We will continue to look at how we can further augment capacity in the area of pastoral and wellbeing support.

At the end of term, we say goodbye to two long serving members of staff who are retiring this year; Mr Shaw from MFL and former Head of Department and Ms Flood, Head of Music.

Mrs Hopkins will step down as Head of English, moving to a part time position. She is being replaced by Mr Osbourne, currently Second in Department.

I will write more extensively about these and other colleagues and their contribution to the Oaklands community and post a full list of staff changes in the final edition of The Oaklands News.

### **Introduction of ClassCharts in September 2021**

In September we will be introducing a new piece of software to parents called *ClassCharts*. This software and its interface will bring together in one place many of the other systems we have in school to help staff, parents and students. Parents and carers will have access to an App that will provide visibility of their child's timetable and homework as well as be able to monitor positive and negative behaviour points. This system will help improve home-school communication and enable us to put in place swifter and more effective interventions. Our main aim is to use this system to further embed the positive learning environment at Oaklands. We want to have a clearer focus on rewards and acknowledging the positives. You also need to know when your child is 'pushing the boundaries'

More details released about *ClassCharts* in September, including a 'how to' guide.

### **Fundraising Friday**

Thank you for your support for Fundraising Friday. As you are aware, we are raising money this year to support a charity called DEBRA. This charity supports those who have Epidermolysis Bullosa which is a group of genetic skin conditions that cause the skin to blister and tear at the slightest touch. This condition can have a devastating effect on any part of the body, causing lifelong disability and pain, and in some cases can tragically be fatal. Sadly, Freddie Fincham, a Year 9 student who lived with this condition, passed away earlier in the year. If you still wish to donate here is the link to our JustGiving page.

[Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College is fundraising for DEBRA \(justgiving.com\)](https://www.justgiving.com/Oaklands-Catholic-School-and-Sixth-Form-College/raising-for-debra)

The OFPA are also helping with this fundraising effort and tickets are still on sale for their raffle via your child's Scopay account. In addition, we have also raffled three fantastic Lego sets donated by Freddie's family.

### **Oaklands Friends and Parents' Association – Uniform Shop**

As mentioned in my previous letter, the OFPA are holding two uniform days this year.

#### For July Orders

Orders to be placed by Thursday 22 July – ready for collection on Friday 30 July

#### For August Orders

Orders to be placed by Thursday 19 August – ready for collection Friday 27 August

Parents should email their requirements to [opa@oaklandscatholicschool.org](mailto:opa@oaklandscatholicschool.org) and the OFPA will email the collection times when responding to the order.

If you have any uniform items that you can donate (particularly PE kit), in good condition and laundered, please bring these into our Reception at the White House or send in via your child to Student Services.

## Parent Information

On July 13<sup>th</sup> Lee Haywood is running a parent workshop on Lootboxing, Microtransactions and how to prevent large unwanted bills.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/lootboxing-microtransactions-how-to-prevent-large-unwanted-bills-tickets-161778452707>

Lee has also updated his ESafety fact sheets which can be located on the website

[E-Safety Fact Sheets - Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College](#)

Some of you will have seen in the news that the Internet Watch Foundation teamed up with Childline to create a new reporting tool for under 18s. They can now report and legally request a nude image to be removed from the public domain. A link to the tool is here:

[Remove a nude image shared online | Childline](#)

## Peri Music Concert

Sadly, another casualty of the COVID restrictions is our live Peripatetic Music Concert. However, the students have recorded their contributions, supported by the Music Department and our thanks go to all the Peripatetic Music teachers who prepared the students for these performances. Please click on the link below to watch some of our talented musicians:

<https://www.oaklandscatholicschool.org/peripatetic-music-concert-june-2021/>

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Mr M Quinn  
**Headteacher**