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Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust
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Our Ref: MQ/SM

14 January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Over the coming half term, we will watch with anticipation as the mornings and nights begin to get lighter and the days get longer. This is a crucial period for our children, in any year group, to ensure that their learning is effective, productive and that progress is enhanced. We have several events coming up over this spring term including a number of Parents' Evening. Year 9 Options Evening has been moved to Tuesday 1st March, just after half term. Then towards the end of March, the Year 13 mocks commence.

Last weekend, we celebrated the Baptism of Jesus, which also marks the beginning of His public ministry. The Baptism of the Lord was a significant milestone in Jesus' journey with his followers. Our baptism confirms that we too have God's life and spirit within us. Pope Francis tells us: 'Because of their baptism, all members of the People of God have become missionary disciples.' In other words, we are called to put our faith into action.

COVID-19 Update

No doubt you will have picked up in the news yesterday that the period of isolation for COVID-19 will be reduced to 5 days from Monday 17th January. This is good news for both students and staff and should result in a decrease in the disruption to education. However, returning to school is still based on a clear lateral flow test.

To reduce the isolation period after 5 full days an individual will have to test negative with a lateral flow device (LFD) test on both day 5 and day 6 and they do not have a temperature.

For example, if they test negative on the morning of day 5 and the morning of day 6, they can return to school immediately on day 6.

The first test must be taken no earlier than day 5 of the self-isolation period, and the second must be taken the following day. All test results should be reported to NHS Test and Trace.

If the result of either of their tests is positive, they should continue to self-isolate until they get negative results from two LFD tests on consecutive days or until they have completed 10 full days of self-isolation, whichever is earliest.

Further information on self-isolation for those with COVID-19 is available via this link: [Self-isolation for those with COVID-19 can end after 5 full days following 2 negative LFD tests - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/self-isolation-for-those-with-covid-19-can-end-after-5-full-days-following-2-negative-lfd-tests)

Public Examinations

Although the DfE have asked schools to have in place a contingency plan, should it be necessary to switch to teacher-based assessment, the trajectory is moving further in the direction of public examinations occurring this summer. The mindset amongst students should now focus on summer terminal exams. By 7th February the exam boards will confirm any specification mitigations to compensate for lost learning.

Vaccinations for 12-15 Year Olds

The JCVI and Government have agreed that children aged 12-15 years old can now receive a second dose of COVID-19 vaccination through the school age immunisation service. The NHS immunisation team would like to pass on their thanks to the support parents gave for the first dose of the vaccine. The immunisation team will deliver the second dose in school on Monday 28th February and Tuesday 1st March.

This time the Immunisation Team are planning to use e-consent, as they do for the other vaccinations in the school age immunisation programme. Details of this can be found [here](#) on the website.

Parents only need to submit 1 form per child. If an error is made when completing a form please contact the Immunisation Team to correct the error, rather than submit another form. Should parents not know their child's NHS number they can use this link to find it: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/online-services/find-nhs-number/>

The completion date for all consent forms is 10.00am on Thursday 17th February.

Face Coverings

Thank you to students, staff and parents for following the new national guidance so carefully with regard to face coverings. This will remain in place until the next Government review. We will continue to remind and promote the use of face coverings throughout the school community, in addition to ensuring that students are clear when exemptions are in place, for example in PE.

Extra-Curricular Activities – Spring Term

Our enrichment programme is updated each term and a wide range of activities is on offer. There is a dedicated section of our website ([Extra Curricular - Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College](#)) listing the clubs and activities that are running – the Spring timetable will be available here next week. Please encourage your child to participate.

Homework Timetables

Homework timetables for all year groups can be found by following this [link](#) and this includes the updated revision for Year 7 who will now be set homework in all subjects.

Finally, a number of parents have asked me when will COVID-19 stop having an impact on school routines. I sense a weariness amongst parents and students. The reduction to a five- day isolation period is a step in the right direction. We are trying to resume some form of mask-clad normality and given how many formative experiences young children have missed out on, this is critical. Two years on from the start of the pandemic, if you end up self-isolating, education remains a stop-start affair.

Most scientists and epidemiologists now agree that hopes of eliminating COVID-19 through vaccine-generated herd immunity are now dashed. I have written before that in the whole of the history of medicine there have only been two diseases that have ever been eradicated. Experts say that COVID-19 will likely lose its pandemic status due largely to rising global vaccination rates and developments of anti-viral COVID drugs.

Instead, the virus will likely become endemic, eventually fading in potency, and folding into the backdrop of regular, everyday life. Various strains of influenza have followed a similar pattern over the past century or more including the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918. Whether closer to the common cold, the flu, COVID-19 will become a familiar individual and societal risk but no longer be a disruptor of family, community, and school life. I suspect this will be an uneven and bumpy ride, similar to other diseases that occasionally flare up, at some point it may be added to the notifiable list that we use in school.

Forecasting where COVID-19 will be long or short term in 2022 is a fraught endeavour. It will probably remain threatening once the pandemic ends, much like the flu. Once at this point it won't dictate our daily decision making in school. Bill Gates described this in his end of year blog *'It won't be primary when deciding whether to work from the office or let your kids go to their soccer game or watch a movie in a theatre.'* Like all of us, I hope he is right.

Thank you for your prayers and continual support.

Yours sincerely

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

Mr M Quinn
Headteacher