

Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

Stakes Hill Road
Waterlooville
Hampshire
PO7 7BW

☎ 023 9225 9214

☎ 023 9223 0317

🌐 www.oaklandscatholicsschool.org

✉ oaklands@oaklandscatholicsschool.org



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

3 January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope that you had a relaxing and enjoyable break. I am very much looking forward to welcoming students back to school later this week. I would not normally write to you all until the end of the first week, however events over the holiday necessitate a letter before the term commences.

On Sunday 2nd January the Government issued further guidance to school, again this leaves schools, parents and students little time to make the necessary adjustments.

COVID-19 Tests

This week students are expected to come to school for a 'COVID test'. All the information pertaining to this was published before the end of term and can be found [here](#) on our school website. High participation levels will help reduce the incidence of COVID spreading. As you are aware, the new COVID variant is significantly more infectious and thus I must ask that over the next few weeks you continue to test at home as a part of your family routine. This is a simple way in which we keep one another safe. **Guidance from the Government, issued over the weekend, confirms that all students should take an LFD test in school, irrespective of whether they have recently had COVID or not.**

Face Masks

One way in which we can keep one another safe is by wearing face masks. The new guidance has confirmed the reintroduction of face masks in school. From Tuesday 4th January, the wearing of facemasks will be extended to lessons and all internal areas of school. Students will be required to wear a face mask at all times when they are inside the building unless they are exempt or eating/drinking. This is a reasonable measure to keep everyone as safe as possible. Could you please ensure that your child has a face mask before leaving home for school and explain to them the importance of this simple and effective measure which we must all abide by in order that the spread of COVID is reduced. Students using public transport or a school bus service will be expected to wear a facemask on these services. The Government have confirmed a review of this measure on 26th January.

Isolation Periods

Before Christmas the Government changed the rules related to the self-isolation period for individuals who have tested positive for COVID. In short Individuals may now take Lateral Flow Tests on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period. Those who receive two negative test results are no longer required to complete 10 full days of self-isolation. Full details related to self isolation can be found [following this link](#).

The section above is self-explanatory. I must reiterate that if your child shows any COVID-19 symptoms, they should not be sent into school. Equally, if staff believe that a child is showing COVID-19 symptoms in school, parents or carers will be called to take their child home and advised to book a PCR test.

Staffing Levels

Keeping schools open is in the best interest of students and families. However, we have to be realistic in terms of what we can achieve. There were points last term, as a result of staff absence much of which was related to COVID-19, where it became very difficult to cover classes. I am sure you are aware of the media reports lamenting the supply of external cover teachers. The Government has already warned that workplace absence could reach 25%. If a point arises where the school does not have sufficient staff for each class then it will be necessary to send students home switching to online learning. This will very much be a last resort, if this action is necessary then our priority will be to maintain classes for Year 11 and Year 13.

Student Absence

If your child shows any COVID-19 symptoms or they have a positive LFT test, they should not be sent to school. You should take your [child for a PCR test](#). If your child appears unwell at school, we have staff who can make an assessment and if necessary, we will contact you.

If your child is absent from school **because they are still isolating** or for any other reason, then it is important that you leave a message on the absence line 023 9224 8053. The line is open 24/7 so please leave a message as soon as you know your child will be absent from school. Or you can email attendance@oaklandscatholicschool.org at any time. If you need to speak to a member of the Attendance team, please indicate this in your message and they will call you back as soon as possible. Please be familiar with our school processes for reporting absence, which can be found on the school website.

Ventilation

Ventilation is a key control measure to help prevent of the virus. We will continue to keep windows in classrooms open. Whilst we will continue to heat the school, a balance has to be struck. Students are expected to continue to wear school uniform. A t-shirt under a blouse or shirt may be advisable, in addition to school jumpers and blazers. Hoodies or similar garments are not acceptable.

This is not the start to the new term that we would all have hoped for. Keeping students and staff safe is in everyone's interest.

At the end of last term we made a decision to cancel our annual Presentation of Certificates Evening, gathering large numbers of people together in the school hall was considered inappropriate in the current climate, a decision that now appears to have been prudent considering infection levels. Next week, we will write to students in the 2021 A Level and GCSE cohort detailing how we will distribute certificates. We intend to look closely at the feasibility of all other 'public' events due this term, their continuation will depend on the advice and guidance we receive.

Once again thank you for your support, and I will write again at the end of the week.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Quinn', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Mr Matthew Quinn
Headteacher