



3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021

Dear Parent / Carer,

I hope that your family have enjoyed the summer break and that you were able to experience some of the nicer weather with your family. If you did have the opportunity to get away, I trust you had a restful time whilst enjoying a change of scene. I also hope that your son/daughter is excited and looking forward to starting Year 12 at St Mary's College. If they are a little nervous, this is completely normal, and we will do our absolute best to look after them.

There is no doubt that the last school year was extremely challenging at times for families, students and staff. None of us could have accurately predicted the disruption to learning or the impact on people's lives that the Covid pandemic caused. Indeed, we are not out of the woods yet, as cases continue to be high-especially in our local area.

Therefore, I have made the very difficult decision to keep a number of restrictions in place when your son/daughter starts with us at St Mary's College next week. I fully recognise that this is not the start that any of us would have wished for, but I have to take into account the most recent local data alongside the ongoing anxieties of families, students and staff. By beginning the school year in a cautious and controlled manner, it allows us to lift restrictions as soon as possible, as opposed to reintroducing them a few weeks into the term (which would be a real possibility when taking into account current statistics) which I feel would cause unnecessary disruption and further worry.

We will review the mitigations we will have in place on a weekly basis, thus allowing us to constantly re-evaluate and make clear decisions which we will communicate to all families. Hopefully the points below will help to clarify my decision and next steps. If you do have any questions, please contact the SM6 Team in the first instance.

**When we return next week, we will:**

- Remain in year group bubbles across the school
- Request that students wear masks – especially in internal spaces where social distancing cannot be achieved - this will also be the same for all staff. A blue medical mask or any inoffensive mask will suffice.
- Expect all visitors to the site to wear a mask inside buildings
- Be in bubbles on the school buses – please ensure your child has a mask to wear on the bus next week (if it is not of the type stipulated above, do not worry, as we will sort this when they arrive). We would ask that all Year 12s using the school bus sit upstairs, we will explain where they will sit once they start with us

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Mrs M Stead



- Continue to ensure that windows in classrooms are open to enable ventilation and to maximise ventilation in other indoor spaces etc

#### Why are we doing this?

- Covid rates in Hull remain stubbornly high
- We are double the national average for new infections
- The situation in Scotland is a good marker of how we can expect cases to spike upon students' return to college
- I want to ensure that we are being pragmatic and taking a cautious view
- Due to the numbers at St Mary's College (one of the biggest secondary schools in the country) this would be the sensible approach.

#### Regarding Testing and close contact tracing:

- Lateral Flow Testing for students will start, as planned, when your son/daughter starts school next week provided they have given permission for an LFT (over 16s can give their own consent)
- Once the initial 2 tests have been taken by students in school, we ask that 2 tests per week are undertaken at home by students. We would ask that students log these results with the school (details will follow). This is really important as it is the cornerstone of the National Strategy
- Staff at St Mary's College will resume their testing regime next week too
- If a student tests positive for Covid they will have to self-isolate for 10 days. As previously, they will be able to access their lessons online if feeling well enough
- Students and staff will still be identified as "close contacts" of any student or staff member who tests positive as we did previously. However, double vaccinated adults and children aged under 18 do NOT have to self-isolate now. Instead, we will request that they take a PCR and notify us of the result. So long as they have no symptoms, both students and staff should continue to attend and work at school. Whilst waiting for the PCR result staff and students should continue to be at school.

Furthermore, we want all of our students to be able to take part in trips, events and as much extra-curricular as possible this year. This is especially important for our new Year 12s, taking part in clubs and extra-curricular activities makes them quickly feel part of the college and meet new friends. All of these activities will be fully risk assessed on an individual basis and we will work hard to ensure that as many go ahead as possible- assuming it is safe.

I thank you in advance for your support and understanding during what continues to be a challenging and unprecedented time. As always, everyone's safety and well-being is paramount and by working together we can hopefully look forward to a more "normal" future as the school year progresses.

I am very much looking forward to meeting your son/daughter next week when they start at our college.

God Bless,



Mrs M Stead, Head of School.