

10 December 2020

COVID-19 Testing

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope that you and your families are well, enjoying Advent celebrations and looking forward to the coming of our Lord at Christmas. I would like to provide you with an update on current provision within our schools during the pandemic and make a request for your support for our staff in schools, as we approach Christmas:

Update

- All schools opened fully in September and have worked tirelessly to keep pupils and staff safe throughout the term, including during the rising numbers of cases before half term and then during the period of lockdown in November.
- Headteachers and school staff have implemented strong safety measures across our schools which have meant relatively few bubbles closing, lower than average positive cases amongst pupils and staff, and higher attendance in our schools than local and national averages.
- Of course, there have been instances of bubbles closing and pupils and staff self-isolating. I am grateful to staff for the progress they have made in providing a blending learning programme for pupils so that online resources have been well supported by live streamed lessons whenever possible.
- We are very grateful for the high levels of support shown by families across our schools. We know that you have adjusted well to the different arrangements at the start and end of the day and for wearing face coverings, which have helped our school staff.
- Most importantly, though, during my visits to all of our schools, I have seen how young people are enjoying being back in schools with their friends and the school staff and how engaged they have been in their learning.

During the Christmas holidays, it is vital that our school staff are able to relax and enjoy time with their families (Government restrictions permitting, of course). The Government has suggested that schools could rearrange an Inset day for the last day of term, 18 December. The principal purpose of this would be to reduce the number of days into the Christmas holidays when school staff would have to be available to help identify contacts for children and staff who might test positive at the start of the holidays.

Having discussed this with Headteachers we feel that it would **not** be right to arrange an extra Inset day for next Friday at such short notice. The main reasons for this are:

- The difficulties for parents of such short notice. This would include the impact on key workers and anyone needing to take time off work as a result.
- The impact on end of year celebrations, which schools have already planned and are such an important part of the faith life of our schools.
- The fact that there has already been so much disruption to pupils' social, emotional, spiritual and academic development since March.



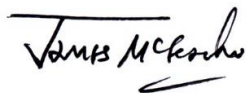
You can support our staff who really do need as much of an uninterrupted break as possible by following our guidelines to the letter:

- Do not send your child into school if they have any COVID-19 symptoms (new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of taste / smell). If you feel that any of these are present, please support school staff and other pupils by keeping your child at home. Any siblings must stay at home as well – even if they have no symptoms.
- Arrange for a test for anyone who has symptoms, **as soon as you notice the symptoms**, and let the school know the outcome. If a child tests positive and symptoms started on Sunday 20 December or earlier, you will need to contact the school on **07597 546659** so that they can start tracking close contacts. **If symptoms started after Sunday 20 December, you will NOT need to contact the school.**
- Where one member of the household has symptoms, everyone in the household must stay at home until the person with symptoms has a negative test.
- Where one member of the household tests positive, everyone in the household must isolate for 14 days.

As we approach Christmas, you can help minimise the risk to our school staff by following the guidelines very carefully and, if you are not sure, you can visit the NHS website or ring NHS 111. By following the guidance to the letter, you will be supporting staff in our schools.

I do hope that you have a very happy and holy Christmas and that 2021 brings much hope, joy and peace for you and your families.

Yours sincerely



James McGeachie
CEO, Our Lady of Lourdes CMAT



Paul Greig
Headteacher, The Becket School

