

ST. ILLTYD'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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8th March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

As you are no doubt aware the Welsh Government has announced that secondary schools can reopen in Wales from March 15th 2021. For us it means that Year 11 only can return on that date.

This is great news and marks the start of reopening for all year groups and a return to face to face teaching. The last months have not been easy for any of us and again I cannot stress enough how well our young people have coped and kept going. I also cannot thank you enough for your support and help with their online learning and also your support of the staff and school as a whole. It is never taken for granted.

Despite this positive news we must also be realistic and, although schools have reopened, the virus has not gone away. We all know that.

Last term when a positive case or cases occurred in a year group we were told and left with no choice but to send the whole year group home to isolate, placing an enormous strain on pupils, families and staff.

The school provides a full and balanced curriculum and we have tried to keep the school day as close to normal as possible. All protocols have been followed. Classrooms and public areas are cleaned regularly throughout the day. There is a one-way system in place and pupils have been great in wearing face masks and maintaining social distancing.

Again, thank you for your support in encouraging our young people to follow these guidelines.

We have invested in further cameras to track pupils and looked again at how we can reduce the impact of a positive case on a year group. We will continue to investigate every case and where possible try to avoid whole year groups isolating. When we are notified of a positive case:-

- We have to track that pupils' movements in school for the previous 48 hours.
- This includes who they were sitting by within 2 metres of in their lessons and who they have been socialising with at break and lunchtimes.
- We then send this information to communicable diseases.
- Communicable diseases then discuss with us the case and possible contacts of the positive case. They also do this with the positive case themselves.
- Communicable diseases then tell us who needs to isolate.
- If there is any doubt when the movements of the positive case cannot be accounted for in school, then we are told to isolate the entire year group.

Although the school and you will be doing everything possible to avoid it, I am afraid that we are going to have positive cases in the next days, weeks and months. We will continue to do everything we can to keep as many pupils in school as possible but I must inform you that I cannot rule out the school being told by communicable diseases that a whole year group or groups will have to isolate in the future. If and when this occurs, upsetting and annoying as it is, I would like to thank you in advance for your understanding of the situation and for your concern for the pupil and family who have tested positive and are dealing with the effects of the virus.

Lateral Flow testing is being introduced for year 10 and year 11 in the coming weeks as well which could be a further aid and when this happens you will be informed of the process involved. In the meantime may I remind you of the existing arrangements and protocols.

The school Day

Pupils are to attend in full uniform. No sweatshirts, hoodies etc.

Pupils will follow their normal timetable.

Pupils are to stay in “contact” groups within their own year group during lessons and break times.

There is a one-way system in operation inside the school building. Pupils must follow it.

Pupils must social distance whenever possible, especially at break and lunchtimes.

The canteen will be open at both of these breaks.

Face coverings are to be worn in all public areas of the school and where possible in classrooms as well.

Pupils must use the hand sanitiser provided on entering the building and leaving and entering classrooms.

There will continue to be regular cleaning of classrooms and the site including cleaning of door handles, desks etc.

Pupils will be expected to bring their own equipment as “sharing” is no longer an option under current conditions.

If any pupil is unwell in school, they will be isolated and their home will be contacted immediately to collect them.

Covid 19 Guidelines

To reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading, there are things that everyone in your family can do to help. These include:

- washing hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- using hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- washing hands as soon as they get home
- covering their mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not their hands) when they cough or sneeze
- putting used tissues in the bin immediately and washing hands afterwards

Please be **alert for symptoms of COVID-19 in your child**, which are:

- A new or continuous cough
- A high temperature
- A loss of or change to sense of smell or taste

If your child develops any of these symptoms, even if they are mild:

- Inform the Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) team who will be in daily contact with you
- If advised by TTP book a test for them by phoning 119 or through the online portal: <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test>
- Inform **St Illtyd’s Catholic High School** that they are unwell with COVID-19 symptoms and that you have requested a test
- Your child should remain in self-isolation
- All other household members should isolate for 14 days from when your child developed symptoms
- Do not visit a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital but if you require medical advice please contact NHS 111 or telephone your GP; if there is a medical emergency phone 999
- If you require medical advice for COVID-19 symptoms or another reason, please inform the healthcare worker that your child is a contact of a case of COVID-19 and in self-isolation
- Please follow the advice provided when your child receives their test result

Further formation on Test, Trace, Protect can be found here <https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-coronavirus>

Further information on symptoms and self-isolation can be found here <https://gov.wales/symptoms-and-self-isolation-contact-tracing>

For general information on COVID-19 <https://gov.wales/protect-yourself-others-coronavirus>

The COVID-19 online symptom checker can tell you if you need medical help and advise you what to do
<https://gov.wales/check-if-you-need-coronavirus-medical-help>

To conclude, it is great news that we are reopening and are moving to a stage where all year groups will return. We must remember though that we are not in the clear yet and the rest of the school year will see more examples of positive cases. Please be assured that when this happens we will do all that we can to minimise the disruption that it will cause but we must be prepared that individuals and potentially whole year groups will be told to isolate by communicable diseases in the future.

In the meantime we look forward to welcoming Year 11 back next week. The latest guidance for examinations from qualifications Wales is on the website.

We already have evidence for each pupil in their subjects and these next few weeks will be focused on gathering more to ensure that grades are justifiable and accurate. The intention is not to overwhelm Year 11 but to bring clarity to what they need to do to ensure that they can secure the grades that they deserve.

Take care and best wishes,

David Thomas

Headteacher