



Dear Parents and Carers,

We would like to wish you a Happy New Year and hope that you all had some relaxation time with your families over Christmas. We are very much looking forward to welcoming your children back to school tomorrow.

We are writing to update you on the latest guidance provided by the government to assist the start of term.

Isolation Period

The isolation period for those who have tested positive for Covid 19 has been reduced to 7 days. Lateral Flow Tests must be carried out on day 6 and day 7 and, if negative, the person may leave isolation on day 8.

Close Contacts

Close contacts of a person who has tested positive do not have to isolate and may continue to attend school, but they must test daily for 7 days. Children under the age of 5 who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive may still attend school and do not need to test daily, but should have a PCR.

Staffing

We are starting the term already suffering staff shortages due to Covid-19. The government recognises staff absence may interrupt learning and its guidance suggests in some cases, classes can be merged or where significant challenges are faced, teaching reverse to remote learning. We will do everything we can to avoid this, but it is important we make you aware of the possibilities. At present, we aim to continue to operate as normal, including providing clubs from next week. However, should we need to cancel plans, we ask for your understanding as we adapt accordingly.

Staff will continue to test twice weekly. If a member of staff has tested positive, they may return to work on day 8 (as long as they have 2 negative LFTs) but must continue to take LFTs until day 10. Staff are currently wearing face coverings in public spaces and, where possible working within their year group/phase only.

Covid-19 Notification

Close contacts in schools are now identified by NHS Test and Trace and education settings will no longer be expected to undertake contact tracing. As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with the positive case and/or their parent to identify close contacts. Contacts from a school setting will only be traced by NHS Test and Trace where the positive case or their parent specifically identifies the individual as being a close contact. This is likely to be a small number of individuals who

would be most at risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of the close contact. You may be contacted in exceptional cases to help with identifying close contacts, as currently happens in managing other infectious diseases.

In order to keep our community safe, we will try our best to inform you of any positive cases within your child's class, where possible.

Reporting Absence

Due to high levels of absence across both staff and pupils, following up on children's whereabouts is taking longer than usual - especially when parents forget to phone or email school to inform us. Please ensure that you report your child's absence before 8.50am via telephone or email info@st-stephens.richmond.sch.uk

Scooters and Bikes

Children are now allowed to ride a scooter or bike to school and leave it on the premises. Please note that this is at your own risk, as we cannot take responsibility for these items. Please note, children are not permitted to ride or scoot on the playground at any time.

What we ask you to do:

- Please continue to test twice weekly. Please ensure that your child completes an LFT tomorrow morning, before returning to school.
- Keep your child at home if they exhibit any of the Covid symptoms and book a PCR. Symptoms are; fatigue, scratchy throat, running nose, nausea, headache and sneezing.
- Alert school (via telephone or email) being clear about the reason your child is away. Please inform us of the PCR result immediately.
- Please wear face coverings at the gate and on the school playground.
- Do not enter the school office. Please email info@st-stephens.richmond.sch.uk to keep in touch with school.
- Send your child to school with a small bottle of hand sanitizer.
- Make sure your child comes to school with a coat as classrooms are cooler than usual. Children may also wear a base layer under their uniform - as classroom windows must be kept open.

Thank you for your continued support and for helping to keep our community as safe as possible.

Best Wishes,

St Stephen's Team