

Our Lady's Catholic College

Learn, live, love together in a caring Catholic community



2nd March 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Thank you for your patience. We have now planned and organised the safe return for all pupils from 8th March. **Please read this carefully and keep it for future reference.**

Thank you to all who have consented to their pupils being tested. Pupils will not return to lessons in school until their year group has been tested. The initial plan for the first tests and reopening of school is as follows:

| Date | Year Groups Being Tested | Back in school |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Friday 5 th March | Y11,12,13 | KWV groups only |
| Monday 8 th March | Y10, 9 | Y11, 12, 13 and KVW groups |
| Tuesday 9 th March | Y8, 7 | Y10, 9 and KVW groups |
| Wednesday 10 th March | Y11,12,13 | Y8 and 7 |

Testing

In addition to this letter there are attached documents with the information for all three tests. It includes the times when pupils should come to school based on surname. **Any pupil who is not yet had their twelfth birthday is not able to self-test and must be accompanied by a responsible adult i.e. someone 18 or over who will administer the test.**

Pupils should arrive to register in the sports hall. Unless the child is under 12, parents will not be able to come into the school with their child. Once the pupil has been tested they will go home and, if negative, return to school for lessons the following day.

Before your child comes for the test please make sure they have a mask to wear and remind them of the importance of maintaining a social distance and, though tempting, not to gather with friends before or after the test.

Wearing of masks

The World Health Organisation published a statement in August 2020 advising that, 'Children aged 12 or over should wear face covering under the same conditions as adults, in particular where they cannot guarantee at least a 1-metre distance from others'. **The government has advised that secondary age pupils should wear masks in school until 31st March when they will review the transmission rates and their advice.**

We understand that wearing masks throughout the day is not very comfortable and we were reluctant to insist on this but, as our local transmission rate is still high and significantly higher than the national rate, we think it is important that we follow this advice.

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Pupils will wear masks throughout the school day, apart from when they are eating, when they are outside or when they are in a classroom that allows at least 1-metre distance between pupils. There are pupils that are exempt from wearing masks. They have already been given a small white badge so that staff do not speak to them about it. If your child is exempt, please ensure they wear that badge on their return.

Pupils will need a number of masks as they will need a clean or new disposable mask for each day. They must wear a mask, not a bandana, snood or scarf. Any masks that we deem inappropriate will not be allowed to be worn in school and the pupil will be given a disposable mask for the rest of the day. They need to put on and remove masks safely. Please follow this link and discuss with your child.

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/proper-mask-wearing-coronavirus-prevention-infographic>

Start and end of the day

The start of every day will be slightly staggered and, in order to maintain as much distancing as possible, pupils will enter the school site as follows:

- **Year 7** arrival time 08:40 through the school's main entrance
- **Year 8** arrival time 08:40 through the field gate (at the back of the school)
- **Year 9** arrival time 08:50 through the entrance hall
- **Year 10** arrival time 08:40 through the MML gate (via small car park)
- **Year 11** arrival time 08:40 through gate close to the Behaviour Unit (via main car park)
- **Years 12/13** arrival time 08:50 through gate on Lune Street car park (behind the sports hall)

Staff will be on duty at each entry point to oversee arrivals and sanitising of hands.

In order to maintain social distancing, there will be a staggered end to the school day and they will leave through the gate they arrived through as follows:

- **Year 7 and Year 10** – 14:50
- **Year 8** – 14:55
- **Year 9** – 15:00
- **Years 11, 12 and 13** – 15:00

While school buses and public transport will continue to run, I encourage you to find alternative means of travel; walk, cycle or drive. However, I am aware that this is not always possible and I remind you that pupils using school and public transport must wear a protective face covering provided by parents / carers.



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Lessons

Our plan for a safe return is to maintain each year group in 'a bubble', as we did before Christmas. This is to follow the government advice to minimise the number of contacts that a pupil has during the school day. Each year group will be based in a specific area of the school. Their teachers will come to this area to teach them for each specific lesson on their timetable.

There will be hand washing or sanitising facilities available in and around each of these specific areas. Pupils will be given guidance as to the expectations around hand and respiratory hygiene on their return. For some lessons, pupils will leave their designated area to go to specialist teaching spaces; on these occasions they will follow a one-way system in order to minimise contact.

Pupils should bring a school bag containing their equipment for the day's lessons as they will not be able to borrow or share others' pens / pencils / calculators. Please check that your child has all the necessary equipment on a daily basis to ensure that they are ready to learn and that they minimise the risk to themselves and others. It would also be good practice if your child were to bring their own paper tissues and a small hand sanitiser with them to minimise the risk of spreading any bacteria.

Pupils will need to attend / come in PE kit on the days they are advised they have a practical lesson.

Lunch times

Lunch times will be staggered in order to reduce the number of pupils having lunch at any one time and to allow for the eating spaces to be cleaned between sittings. **Please order lunches using the cashless system; pupils will be expected to order their lunch in advance using the following link.** <https://ourladyspreorder.swift-order.co.uk/>

Other arrangements

May I also point out that if parents wish to come onto the premises then they will have to make an appointment with the relevant member of staff, unless it is an emergency. I am sure you will appreciate that these protocols are all part of our risk assessment. **I would appreciate it if you discussed this plan with your child / children this week to prepare them for the return to school. I would also request that you impress on them the increased responsibility of each pupil to behave safely and sensibly throughout this period as the safety of the whole school community cannot be compromised.**

We understand that holiday plans have been disrupted during the pandemic. Please make sure any holidays booked or rearranged due to the lockdown are NOT during term time. We intend to do everything possible to catch up on the learning missed during lock down, to do this we need pupils to be in school. Parents can request (from their child's PSO) a holiday request form. This must be completed and handed in to the Headteacher, at least six weeks before the start of the holiday. **No holidays will be authorized unless evidenced exceptional circumstances are present e.g. If a parent is in the armed forces and can only take leave at certain times.**

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Parents Evenings

Year 11 Parents' Evening is scheduled for Thursday 11th March. This will be a virtual meeting with all your child's teachers. Please make sure you have booked appointments.

Year 9 Options evening will be on Thursday 11th March followed by Parents Evening on Thursday 18th March. Both events are virtual.

Year 11 and Year 13 information

As you will have read in the news, OfQUAL and the DfE have released their outcomes of the consultations into the awarding of examination grades this summer.

A brief summary of the news headlines is given below:

For Vocational and technical qualifications

- Grades will be assessed by teachers or tutors for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQ) and T Levels which are similar to GCSEs and A levels, and used for university or college places, as well as other general qualifications like the International Baccalaureate
- Exams and assessments for occupational courses, which lead directly to employment, will take place in line with public health measures
- Exams and assessments for smaller VTQs, such as Functional Skills qualifications, will continue in line with public health measures or remotely
- Alternative arrangements will be available for those who cannot access the assessments
- Students will only be assessed on what they were taught
- There will be checks from schools, colleges and awarding organisations to ensure fairness for pupils. Results days for VTQs used to enter college or university will take place in the week commencing 9th August in line with A levels and GCSEs
- Every student will have the right to appeal their teacher-assessed grade

For GCSE, AS and A levels

- Students will receive grades determined by teachers
- Teachers will be given clear guidance on using a range of evidence to assess pupils including coursework and optional questions from exam boards that teachers can use
- Students will only be assessed on what they were taught
- There will be multiple checks from schools, colleges and exam boards to ensure fairness for pupils
- Every student will have the right to appeal their grade
- GCSE and A level results days will take place in the week commencing 9th August



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We are considering these documents and are receiving advice from other sources, such as examination boards and professional associations. We shall be reflecting upon all of this guidance when formulating our approach to Teacher Assessed Grades. Whilst we develop our approach we will not be able to answer individual questions and queries about summer examination grades but shall keep you informed of developments later this term and into the summer term.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your continued support. This has been an incredibly difficult time for schools and their families. Thank you for all your encouragement of home learning during the most recent lockdown. I am sure the return to routines will be beneficial for our pupils and that they will be delighted to be able to spend time with their peers. You will have heard much about pupils being 'behind' and needing to 'catch up'. We must remember that all pupils across the UK have not been in school for the same period. We will work with you to do all we can to ensure the pupils have the best curriculum to move forward and achieve their best.

We can only speculate what the impact of the pandemic will be on young people. During this time at home with families, learning in new ways and coping with a lack of face-to-face social interaction they will have built their character in ways we didn't know possible. They have built resilience, creativity, self-sufficiency and many other skills which will help them in their future. We are here to support our pupils and their families.

As Pope Francis has said in his recent book 'Let Us Dream', *"The basic rule of a crisis is that you don't come out of it the same. If you get through it, you come out better or worse, but never the same"*.

On Monday we take the next step to coming out of the crisis. We are getting through it and I want to reassure you that all our staff intend Our Lady's to come out better than we were before. We very much look forward to welcoming our pupils back to school. If you have any concerns please feel free to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

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