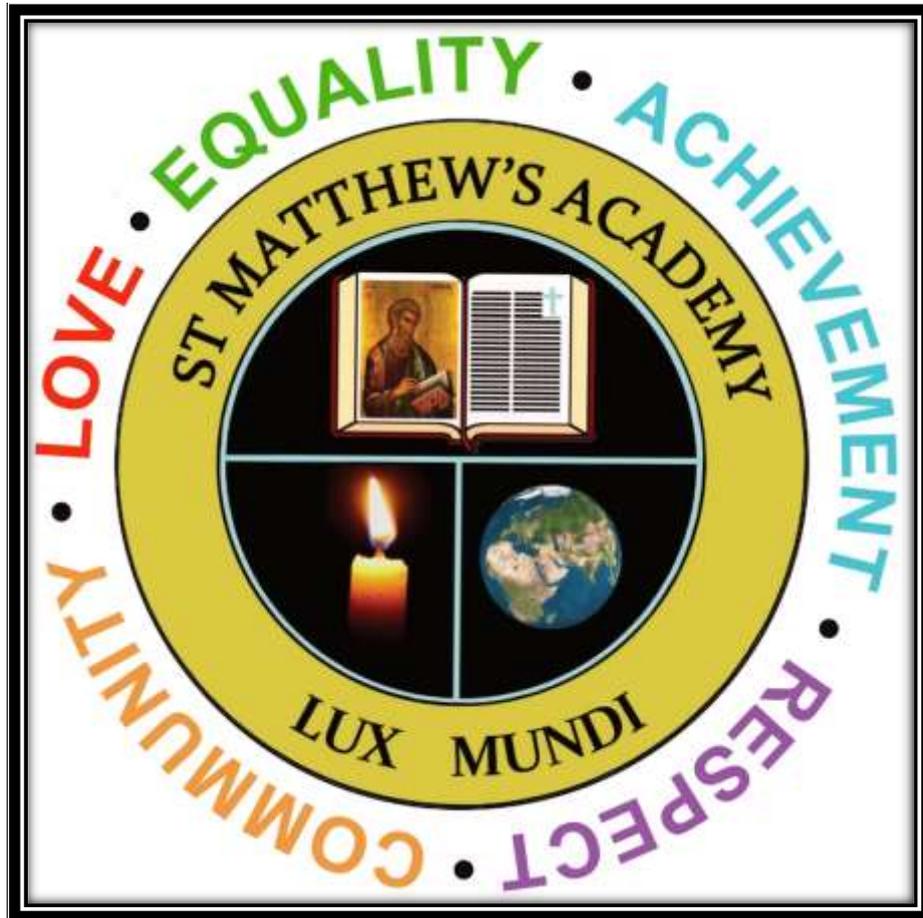


SAINT MATTHEW'S ACADEMY



COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions

August 2020 edition

Parent Information

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The current situation regarding COVID-19 has presented a significant challenge for all members of our school community. We are aware that parents have many questions. In the document below we have collated some of the most frequently asked questions we have received. The answers are correct at the time of collation (09/08/20) but may be subject to change in the days and weeks ahead. Should the document require to be updated we will do so as promptly as possible.

1) When will my child return to school?

Staff will return to school on 10th August 2020. All pupils will return over the course of this week. S1 and S5/6 will return on 12th August. S4 will return on 13th August. S2/3 will return on 14th August. This will mean all pupils will be present by the Friday of the first week of term. When pupils arrive on their first day of term they will be directed to designated classrooms where timetables and health and safety information will be shared. The school day will begin following this initial class.

2) Has the school year calendar changed due to the earlier return in August?

Yes. As the original calendar was based on a 17th August return changes have been made to the calendar. The September Inservice has been moved to the start of term. The new dates can be found on the school website - (www.saintmatthewsacademy.com)

3) How will physical distancing be implemented?

The official guidance from the Scottish Government states:

The scientific advice is that physical distancing between young people in secondary schools is not required to ensure a safe return to schools... within the context of a full return to school, and to provide additional reassurance to young people, staff and parents/carers, where there are opportunities to further minimise risk these should be encouraged. As a precautionary approach therefore secondary schools should encourage distancing where possible between young people particularly in the senior phase... Distancing should be implemented in a proportionate way. Importantly, schools should ensure that the specific approaches adopted do not introduce capacity constraints and/or prevent a return to full-time learning in school.

Saint Matthew's Academy will promote physical distancing where possible. We cannot implement physical distancing between pupils if this presents capacity constraints that negatively impact on full-time learning.

Staff will maintain 2m distancing from colleagues and pupils. Where this is not possible or where staff will be in face-to-face contact for about 15 minutes or more, face coverings should be worn.

4) How will the timetable operate?

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The normal timetable will be in operation. The school day will run as normal with usual start and end times over the course of the week.

5) Will there be lunch and breaks?

Lunch and break times will take place. Pupils will be encouraged to go outdoors. Where this is not possible some year groups will be allocated separate areas within the school to support physical distancing between pupils.

6) Will the canteen be open?

The canteen will be open at interval and lunch. However, pupils are encouraged to bring a packed lunch if at all possible as physical distance queuing will slow down the lunch process. It is not anticipated that the canteen will be open in the morning before the start of the school day.

The canteen will operate a cashless system. Parents will be asked to make use of the Parentpay system. Please email parentpayqueries@north-ayrshire.gov.uk if you require sign up information.

Free school meals will continue to be provided. Parents are reminded that if their child is entitled to a free meal they should apply at the following link -

<https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/grants-and-allowances/footwear-clothing-and-free-school-meals.aspx>

Pupils are encouraged to bring their own drinking water.

7) Will all subjects be available?

The vast majority of subjects will be offered as usual however advice continues to be released from Education Scotland which may require further adaptations to the curriculum. Practical classes may require some amendment to usual delivery with an increase in demonstrations rather than participation with equipment.

8) What is blended learning?

Blended learning is the contingency model of learning should a change to the normal operation of the school be required. It is a combination of at home and in school education. If required, it will be different from the previous lockdown model because pupils will have weekly face to face contact with their usual teachers in their usual classrooms. Home learning content could be delivered through digital means in some cases but not all. Many parents have informed us that access to digital devices has been a potential barrier to learning. This is a common theme at local and national level. North Ayrshire Council has ordered a number of digital devices to support those pupils in most need. Digital devices will soon be issued to support those pupils without digital access. Should blended learning be required parents should anticipate that a combination of digital and traditional materials will be provided in most subject areas.

If required, Teachers will be teaching classes throughout the week and tasks will be set for completion during the days when pupils are working from home. When the

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pupils return to the class teachers will review and further develop the learning face to face. Feedback will be provided at this point. This should ease some of the pressures on parents which the lockdown model has presented.

Parents should be reassured that blended learning is the contingency model. It is not the default – full time education is the default.

9) My child has applied for a college course as part of their options. Will this run?

Senior Management in Saint Matthew's Academy and representatives from North Ayrshire Council have met with colleagues from Ayrshire College and a blended learning model is being developed for students which will allow them to continue to access college courses.

10) Will additional spaces be required for learning in August?

With all pupils returning to school under normal timetable arrangements it not anticipated that any additional spaces will be required.

11) Will uniform be required in August?

Yes, full uniform will be required for August. Uniform will help to support a sense of normal practice which will support wellbeing.

12) How will physical distancing operate around the building and in the playground?

The Scottish Government Guidance states that corridors and stairs are considered to be low risk areas because of the brief nature of the contact – pupils passing each other for less than 15 minutes. When pupils are required to travel round the building they will be encouraged to keep their hands by their sides to minimise coming into contact with touchpoints such as handrails. Doors will be open to reduce need to touch door handles. A one way system will be in operation to minimise face to face contact and to reduce “pinch points” across the school.

During interval and lunch pupils will be encouraged to maintain physical distancing. Parents are asked to reinforce this message.

13) What hygiene measures will be in place?

A programme of enhanced cleaning arrangements will be provided through Facilities Management (Mitie). Enhanced hand washing will be required and additional soap has been ordered for pupil toilets. We have requested each classroom will have hand sanitiser and anti-virus wipes. Pupils will be expected to use hand sanitiser as they enter each classroom. They will be required to wipe down any table or work space they are allocated both before they take their place and again as they leave. Hand sanitiser will be available at the entrances and pupils will be instructed to apply this as they enter the building. Pupils and staff will be reminded of the importance of keeping hands clean and not touching their face.

14) Will staff be wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

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The Scottish Government Guidelines states that PPE will not be required for teaching staff in normal circumstances provided effective measures are in place such as physical distancing, capacity management and hygiene measures as stated above. However, it also states – *“Anyone (whether child, young person or adult) wishing to wear a face covering in school should be enabled to do so.”*

15) How will pupils access toilets?

During class contact time pupils will access toilets on an individual basis. They should use hand sanitiser when leaving the class and take anti-viral wipe from the classroom to wipe the door lock on entry, the flush handle and again door lock on exit. The wipe will then be placed in the bin and hands washed before return to class. They should then use hand sanitiser when returning to class.

16) How will teachers manage the infection risk in their classrooms?

Teachers have been encouraged to maintain clear surfaces to allow for effective cleaning of classrooms. They will remind pupils of the expectations regarding hand sanitiser and physical distancing as pupils enter their room. Classroom windows and doors will be kept open. Movement round the classroom will be kept to a minimum to ensure physical distancing. Delivery of learning will be adapted to ensure all members of the class remain safe and aware of current requirements. Desks will be arranged in rows to prevent pupils sitting face to face. Pupils should not put school bags on desks.

17) What will happen on the first day of term?

As in previous years, pupils will be directed to designated classrooms to complete timetables at the start of the day when they return. Signs will be visible around the school and will be shared on the school twitter account on the 11th, 12th and 13th August. Health and Safety instructions will be shared with all pupils during this time. As in previous years, a separate letter has been sent to all new S1 pupils regarding whole school matters. S6 students will support S1 in the opening weeks of term.

18) Mental health and emotional wellbeing will be an issue for my child upon return. How will the school address this?

Over the past few years significant work to support mental health and wellbeing as taken place in Saint Matthew’s Academy. This will continue. Pupil Equity Funds have been earmarked for the creation of a Recovery and Resilience post. This post will support Pastoral staff to care for the mental health of our young people. Pastoral staff have reviewed the existing PSE programme to ensure it meets the needs of our young people. The school counsellor will continue to be available. As in previous years, mental health training will be provided to senior students to allow them to support younger pupils. All staff receive child protection training every year to ensure wellbeing of our young people is a core priority. This will continue to be the key focus of our work here at the school.

19) My child has additional support needs. How will they be supported?

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Our Pupil Support department is recognised by parents as an extremely important and successful part of our school. We work in partnership with parent and external agencies to ensure young people are supported and have effective plans in place to meet their needs. Senior Management and Pastoral staff have completed a programme of enhanced transition meetings for targeted P7 pupils and we are now looking forward to welcoming all pupils into S1. Enhanced classroom resource has been allocated to the Pupil Support department for the session ahead to allow for delivery of additional programmes designed to support recovery and resilience.

20) What happens if someone becomes ill with Covid-19 symptoms when in school?

If a pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 the class teacher will alert Senior Management who will then arrange for the pupil to be escorted to the First Aid room. They will be placed in a separate and ventilated room until a parent or emergency contact can collect them. It is therefore essential that all contact details are current and include an emergency contact should this be required.

The school will follow the procedures outlined in the Scottish Government documentation entitled "Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020".

21) Can parents visit the school as normal?

Parents should not enter the building unless a prior arrangement has been made regarding a staff meeting. Telephone appointments will minimise contact between adults and reduce the risk of infection.

Dental appointments and the like should be scheduled at a time when the child is not in school whenever possible. If this is not possible parents will be asked to wait outside the main door under the covered entrance and the child will be sent out to them once they have signed out.

Parents should ensure they use the parking on Jack's Road and/or the parent drop off point beyond the bus bays. However, parents must stay in their cars. Parents should not use the staff car park. Parents are reminded that only pupils from a single household should be transported to and from school in a single private vehicle.

22) Will emergency evacuations be affected?

Should there be a requirement for an emergency evacuation the priority will be, as always, to ensure all can leave the building as safely as possible as quickly as possible.

23) My child travels by bus to school. Will this still occur?

Transport will run as normal.

24) What happens if someone is shielding or in a vulnerable group?

The Scottish Government guidelines state that the trajectory of the virus has been such that shielding has been paused from 1 August. It is expected that children,

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young people and staff who have been shielding will be able to return to school in August, unless given advice from a GP or healthcare provider not to, and can follow the same guidance as the rest of Scotland.

25) What if I don't want to send my child to school in August?

We are committed to ensuring Saint Matthew's Academy is as safe as we can possibly make it for your child to return to school. As you can see from the information above, we have thought carefully about how best to ensure wellbeing and health. We would strongly urge you to allow your child to return to school, to be with their friends and to continue to benefit from the very good learning and teaching which is a hallmark of our school. We understand that this is an anxious time for all parents but, if all members of the school community follow the national guidance, we believe we can offer a safe and welcoming learning environment.

26) Will there be SQA exams in 2021?

At this point we are awaiting details regarding the exam diet for 2021. This is a very fast changing situation and the priority at this point is the safety and wellbeing of all in the school. As of today, we are proceeding on the basis that exams will take place and are planning for an exam diet in May 2021. As always, pupils in Senior School should be ensuring that every piece of work they submit is of the highest quality possible and that they begin preparing for SQA qualifications from the first day they return to the building.

All schools in Scotland are awaiting clarity and we anticipate national advice in the near future. Once we have this information be assured that all staff members will deliver a curriculum that ensures students have the best opportunity to achieve.

27) If things change will the school get in touch?

All relevant information will be shared with parents as soon as we can. Parents are asked to continue to monitor the school twitter account and ensure we have an up to date mobile number and, where possible, email address. It is likely that any letters will be placed on the school website and links will be sent by text. Any concerns regarding Covid-19 should be directed to the Head Teacher. We will work to ensure that we can respond quickly and provide the most up to date information when we have it. Parents are asked to be aware that we cannot provide updates without access to full information. This may mean that there is a delay between announcements at national level and subsequent communication from the school. Please be assured that we will share all information with parents as soon as it is practical to do so.

Stephen Colligan

Head Teacher

09/08/20

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