

St Matthew's Academy  
Jacks Road  
SALTCOATS  
KA21 5NT  
Head Teacher - Mr S Colligan  
Tel: 01294 606680



Our Ref:

Date: 17/02/21

Dear Parent/Carer,

Following the announcement from the First Minister I am writing to make you aware of our plans to allow pupils following practical subjects to return to the school. I am also writing to let you know about the new "Schools/ELC Asymptomatic Testing Programme", which is being put in place as part of the package of COVID-19 risk reduction mitigations in schools across Scotland, and to give you more information about how the programme will operate in our school.

### **Senior Phase Pupils (S4-S6) phased return to school**

The Scottish Government has confirmed that between 5-8% of the school roll can return from 22<sup>nd</sup> February to participate in practical learning tasks which are not easily completed due to remote learning. This means that Saint Matthew's Academy will be allowed to accommodate approximately 100 pupils each day. Parents should not anticipate their child being present every day from week beginning 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

S4 pupils will attend week beginning 22<sup>nd</sup> February and S5/6 will attend week beginning 1<sup>st</sup> March. The schedule of subjects can be found on the school website and a link has been sent to you along with this letter. Not all subjects will require pupils to attend. If your child is required to attend any of the classes you will be contacted by text when they are due to be present.

Some key points to be aware of are:

- Hand sanitiser must be used upon entry and exit from the school building and upon entry and exit from the classroom.
- Unless exemptions apply, masks must be worn at all times.
- Transport will be provided at the usual times to those pupils who are entitled to it. 2m social distancing will be required on the school bus.
- Pupils should enter via the Technical door near the entrance to the school grounds and exit via the main doors into the playground.
- As pupils will be required to follow 2m social distancing at all times, class numbers will be approximately half of normal size.
- Pupils will work on one subject per day. This is to reduce movement around the building and to limit potential contacts.
- The full day will count as that week's learning in that particular subject and no online work will be issued.
- Only the pupils involved in that day's subjects should attend.
- All pupils will follow the late interval and late lunch schedule as introduced early this session.
- Pupils will not be taking part in formal assessments – classes will consist of learning and practical tasks designed to support future assessment.
- In the interests of safety and security, pupils should attend in full uniform.

The priority for Senior Phase learners at this time should be learning and teaching, to ensure that they have a secure foundation and course coverage prior to formal assessment taking place in the later stages of the 2020/21 academic session. Remote learning continues to be the primary delivery model and the above approach of in-school learning prioritises the subject areas requiring in-school facilities.

Staff are looking forward to working face to face with our young people but it is essential that we maintain all necessary safety requirements. Please contact the school office if you require further information.

## **COVID-19 asymptomatic testing programme for school/ELC staff and senior phase pupils**

As part of this phased return a programme of Covid-19 asymptomatic testing is being introduced from next week. I would request that, as a parent/guardian of a senior phase (S4-S6) pupil in our school who is eligible for testing, you discuss the contents of this letter. The consent form and privacy notice will be sent to all pupils who are under 16 for parental signature. These documents can also be viewed on the school website.

If you and your child are content, please ensure that the consent form is completed and returned when your child is next in the school building. This will ensure that your child can participate in testing if he/she wishes to do so. Pupils who are 16 or over are able to provide consent when collecting their testing kit.

### **Why is our school/setting participating in the programme?**

Along with the other protective measures we are implementing to keep our school community safe, regular testing of staff and senior phase pupils will help to further reduce risks for staff and children and young people in our school.

It will do so by helping to identify asymptomatic individuals in school environments at the earliest possible opportunity, and asking them and their close contacts to self-isolate, thus minimising the likelihood of them passing on the virus.

### **Who can take part?**

The regular testing is open to all school staff and senior phase pupils who are regularly attending the school premises. The testing programme also includes school-aged childcare staff and early learning and childcare staff in settings that are attached to schools. References to 'school staff' within this letter include this wider group of childcare staff.

### **Does everyone have to take part?**

Testing is voluntary. No-one who is otherwise permitted to come to school will be prevented from doing so just because they do not wish to participate. However, we are strongly encouraging all school staff and senior phase pupils who are attending school to participate wherever possible, in order to contribute to the wellbeing of our school community.

However, if staff or pupils are working or learning from home, they should not participate. This is because the programme is intended specifically to reduce risks in the school environment.

### **What will the testing involve?**

Our school is being provided with a supply of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits by the Scottish Government and the UK Department of Health and Social Care for use at home. We will give each participating staff member and senior phase pupil a supply of these test kits to take home, together with the 'Instructions for Use'. Each staff member and senior phase pupil will be asked to sign for these in a log at the point of handover. Completion of this test kit log is a regulatory requirement.

We will then ask individuals to test regularly at home, twice a week - every three to four days, ideally in the morning before school.

The tests supplied do not require laboratory processing and can provide a quick result in around 30 minutes. Comprehensive guidance on conducting self-testing is contained in the 'Instructions for Use' leaflet, which will be provided with the test kit. There is a useful video showing participants how to administer the test here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvaBZskxS7tzQYIVg7lwH5uxAD9UrSzGJ>.

Once the test has been conducted individuals must log the test result – whether positive, negative or void – online at [www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result](http://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result). Tests are free of charge and will be provided by the school.

**NB:** It is important to note that this regular testing is only for individuals without symptoms. Those with symptoms must continue to follow the usual guidance. They must self-isolate and book a PCR test at a test centre or via a home test kit at the earliest opportunity. People with symptoms must not rely on a negative LFD result to continue to attend school.

**NB:** A negative test result must not be taken as leave to relax or ignore physical distancing or other measures intended to reduce transmission – testing is an additional intervention that contributes to reducing risk.

## **What happens next?**

Please discuss the contents of this letter and the privacy notice with your child. If your child wishes to participate in testing, and you are content for them to do so, please ensure that the attached consent form is completed and returned at the earliest opportunity.

We intend to start distributing test kits to staff in week commencing 15<sup>th</sup> February. Pupil kits will be issued as Senior Phase students attend practical classes in week commencing 22<sup>nd</sup> February. In the meantime, some Frequently Asked Questions can be found in the annex to this letter.

During this time of Lent please know that you are not on your own. Of course, this is a difficult period for all members of our community. The constant comments of pupils "falling behind" in the media are unhelpful and place huge pressure on parents, pupils and staff. Life is not a race to be won or lost. "Falling behind whom?" is the question I would ask. We are all in this together and we are all experiencing the same challenges.

Yes, this is a challenging time but it is not one of despair for the future of our children – the capacity to recover from this experience is most certainly there. The one thing adults know about children is that time is absolutely on their side. Parents and staff will continue to work together to the best of our abilities to support our young people but do not be too hard on yourself if some learning days in your home are better than others. That just means you are experiencing the same challenges that I and every other parent in Scotland are going through.

Therefore, for this period of Lent I would ask that you try to be kind to yourself and not overly critical of your own parenting. I will try and do the same.

The implementation of the S4-S6 phased return and the introduction of testing should be seen as positive steps as we work to return to a more familiar form of learning and teaching. Please be assured that all staff in Saint Matthew's Academy want to get back face-to-face learning as soon as it is safe to do so. Until that point, we will continue to do our best to support and communicate with you all.

Yours faithfully,

S Colligan

Head Teacher

## **Annex – Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How will my child know how to use the tests?**

The school will provide those participating with the most up to date Instructions for Use along with their test kits. Participants will be asked to ensure they use these, and not the ones that are pre-packaged in the test kits.

The Instructions for Use set out clearly how to use the test kits, or how to support someone to do so. They also provide a number to call if there are any problems with the test kits.

### **Are the tests safe and accurate?**

LFD tests have been widely and successfully used to detect COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals. No test is perfect, but the speed and convenience of LFD tests supports detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals who would not otherwise be tested. They are clinically approved and are crucial in the fight against the virus. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has approved the use of these at-home tests for these purposes.

LFD tests are very accurate, which means that only a very small proportion of people who do not have coronavirus will receive a positive result (false positive). The tests are better at picking up true positive cases when a person has a higher viral load and is more contagious. There is a risk of returning a false negative result when viral loads are low (e.g. in the early stages of infection). This is why Public Health Scotland recommend two LFD tests 3 to 4 days apart, or regular testing, to enhance detection by picking up any cases which were not detected during the first test and to catch any new infections.

If someone tests positive using an LFD, it is likely that they are infectious at that moment, whereas people testing positive on a 'Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)' test could be in the less infectious early or late stages of disease. This means that by using the LFD, we can identify people with a high viral load who are the most likely to spread the virus further.

### **What happens if there is a problem with the tests?**

Any incidents that could potentially impact the quality or safety of testing should be reported to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

For incidents occurring in a home setting, please report any issues (for example: something damaged, or missing or difficult to use in the kit, you are unable to log a result) to **0300 303 2713**.

If there is a clinical incident which led to, or has the potential for, harm (e.g. swab breaks in the mouth, bleeding, allergic reaction on using the kit etc.) please report it on <https://coronavirussyellowcard.mhra.gov.uk>.

This is not for seeking immediate medical care. Medical care should be sought through the usual route of contacting 111 or 999.

### **What happens if my child tests positive?**

If your child receives a positive result on your Lateral Flow Device at home, they must report the result online at [www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result](http://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result), self-isolate and book a confirmatory PCR test. This can be done via <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>. We advise visiting a community or drive-through test site as this is the quickest way to get tested, or you can order a home test kit.

It is important that your child begins self-isolation immediately after they receive the positive result from the LFD test, and does not wait until the result of their PCR test.

### **What happens if my child tests negative?**

They must report the result online at [www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result](http://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result). Individuals who test negative will be able to stay in schools and resume their activities as normal.

### **What happens if the test result is “void”?**

This means the test has not run correctly. Your child must report the result online at [www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result](https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result). They will need to take another test. Use a new test kit, and do not reuse anything from the first kit.

### **What if my child has been in close contact with someone who tests positive?**

If a pupil or member of staff has tested positive, they will have to self-isolate as per government guidelines. The pupil or member of staff should also inform the school of their absence, and are strongly encouraged to report a positive case to their school to support contact tracing activities.

Both Test and Protect and, once informed, the school will get in contact with staff members and pupils who were in close contact with a positive case to inform them that they need to self-isolate.

### **What if my child develops symptoms?**

This testing programme at school is for people with no symptoms. If your child develops symptoms at any time (such as a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) they must immediately self-isolate, and book a test by calling 0800 028 2816 or visiting <https://www.nhsinform.scot/>. People with symptoms must not rely on a negative LFD result to continue to attend school.

### **Can staff/pupils' families get tested too?**

No, this asymptomatic LFD testing is aimed at staff and senior phase pupils only. The tests will be handed to staff and senior phase pupils for personal use and should not be used for anyone else. Family members of staff or senior phase pupils taking part are not eligible.

If family members experience COVID-19 symptoms, they must follow standard Government guidance, including self-isolating immediately and booking a test through the NHS Coronavirus (COVID-19) service or by calling 0300 303 2713 in Scotland.