



De La Salle School

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11th September, 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Parental Update

Firstly, can I apologise for not writing sooner, but I hope you will understand that this week has been somewhat busier than a normal start to term.

Secondly, can I welcome our new Year 7 students, parents and carers to the De La Salle family, we are delighted to have you with us. I have spent most breaks and lunchtimes with our Year 7 students and they have been an absolute credit to you. I also welcome back our existing students, parents and carers, who we have missed greatly: it is wonderful to see the children returning, smiling and for the school to come alive again after six months of lockdown. I would also like to thank everyone for their support and unity in trying to do the best for our students at this most trying of times.

There is much to update you on and so I have broken the rest of this letter into headings for your ease of reference.

Current Plans

The considerable time, effort and consultation that went into creating our plans has paid off and our main approach to managing the students in bubbles is working well. Staff have been extra-vigilant throughout the week to identify any issues or pinch points with the plans and solutions have been put in place to rectify them.

The novelty of these new arrangements will soon wear off and our efforts are now focused upon embedding these new ways of operating into staff and student routines, so that they become second nature.

Symptoms

If we have a student who displays one or more of the symptoms, we will isolate that child in school and ask parents to arrange for them to be collected. We have had some parents tell us "it isn't COVID" or "it is just a cough" etc.

Though I realise this is very inconvenient for some parents we don't do it lightly, please respect our decision. The attached COVID Advice to Parents explains what each family should then do.

Symptoms include at least one of:

- a high temperature;
- a new continuous cough;
- a loss of or change to your sense of smell or taste.

Current Situation

I am keen to be open and transparent with parents and so I share the information below in the hope you find it useful:

- So far we have had one of the school community test positive for COVID19, but they had not started their term or been into the building.
- We have approximately 25 students and staff in self-isolation, these are for a variety of reasons: advice from test and trace, family members with symptoms etc.
- Our current attendance is 96% across the whole school which is good (we would normally be at about 98% at this time of year).

It is inevitable that we will see more cases within our community of staff, students and families across the next 6 months, which is why it is important to follow the controls and guidance that we have in place (see below)

You can perform miracles by touching the hearts of those entrusted to your care.

Guidance on what to do in different scenarios/self-isolation

I realise that guidance and advice is not always clear from the government on these issues, so I have attached a simple guide called COVID Advice to Parents that should make clear what you should do in various situations.

Buses

As I have mentioned before, we do not commission the school buses, they are classed as a public bus route operated by Merseytravel and sub-contracted out to various travel companies.

- We have shared our plans and systems regarding boarding buses at the end of the day with Merseytravel.
- This system at the end of the day is generally working well and we ensure all students board wearing masks. Sadly we have no control over whether they remain on for the journey.
- There have been a couple of issues initially as a result of new drivers, but we have now spoken to all of the drivers directly.
- As a school we can do nothing about capacity and availability of buses, this is something that would need to be addressed with Merseytravel.

Entrances/Exits

At the moment we are using the Alder Hey Road for all students arriving to school and, at the end of the day, Year 7 leave via Mill Brow and the rest of the school via Alder Hey Road. This ensures students can depart without passing through other year zones.

Though we have a 6 minute stagger at the end of the day, it cannot be any greater than this, as so many students use the buses. Though this means relatively large numbers exiting along the same path, they are all walking in the same direction, and naturally spaced as they walk along. We have also removed the considerable number of students who get the buses, as they now line up on the tennis courts. The pinch points, however, are the students waiting to cross, which we try to do as quickly as possible, and students or parents waiting by the gate, again this is discouraged. We do not send other year groups out of the Mill Brow entrance as this is a far more dangerous exit due to how narrow it is, two blind bends and no traffic calming measures. It would also involve students passing through other year group zones.

Parking

A big thank you to the many parents who have responded responsibly to our pleas for considerate parking, away from the school. To help any parents who are unfamiliar with the local area, I have included a map of the surrounding areas and colour coded (using my extremely limited photoshop skills) areas:

- **Red**: please avoid parking in these areas
- **Amber**: use if you have younger or less mature children who may struggle crossing roads
- **Green**: much quieter or wider areas (though always check any local parking restrictions).

Wherever you park please be considerate of local residents and other road users.

Catch-Up

As well as the safety of staff and students, our second priority is ensuring that we address any gaps in learning that have come about because of lockdown. We know that every student's experience will have been different: ranging from those who have done absolutely nothing to those who have done everything set for them. The reality being that most students are somewhere in the middle. We will be using every bit of the additional funding we are due to receive, and more, to ensure effective catch up.

Obviously Year 11 are our priority, as they have the least amount of time left in school, ahead of their exams, however we are addressing these issues across all year groups. Many people view catch-up support as being extra lessons or 1:1 tuition, and though these have a part to play where appropriate, there needs to be much more than this so I hope the following gives a picture of how we are looking to address these gaps:

- Our efforts started back in March
 - o Departments restructuring the curriculum to move key topics to later in the year and replace with revision of previous topics and easier, more accessible content.
 - o Providing regular and relevant work to all year groups and then moving to online lessons / tutorials for the current Year 11
 - o Providing clarity of what students should have learnt during this period to allow catch up over the summer.

- Baseline assessments: these are taking place across this week and next in every subject and year group (year 7 will also be doing Cognitive Ability Tests to help establish any issues). These will help staff to identify gaps in learning and triage the level of support needed for individuals. Some students will require only limited support, whilst others will need intensive work.
- Departments are using existing online resources eg PiXL, SENECA, MathsWatch, Educake, GCSE Pod to provide students with access to additional support for students where gaps are identified. This is a very effective way of addressing these gaps.
- Subject specialist Teaching Assistants are being re-deployed based upon need.
- Year 11 will have a bespoke intervention plan for each of their subjects (these will be shared with parents and students).
- We are signed up to the National Tutoring Programme, we are awaiting further clarification on the support they can provide.
- We are working with Teach First to provide specialist subject mentors to work with identified individuals, right through to their GCSEs.
- In Year 7 identified students will receive additional literacy and numeracy sessions to prepare them for the secondary curriculum.

Our Year 11 students are also in the more fortunate position that they were following a 3 year GCSE course, unlike most students nationally who were covering a 2 year course. The impact of losing any time is not good but losing 6 months out of 36 months compared to 6 months out of 24 months leaves our students in a stronger position before any of the work above starts.

Lunches

The lunch systems are working well but could I remind all parents, especially our new Year 7 parents, to monitor their child's spending and ensure that they have sufficient funds in their account. We have had a couple of students who are living a luxurious lifestyle, which is possibly beyond their budget!

Safeguarding Message

The safeguarding team at the local authority have brought to our attention that there is a graphic video circulating on social media. Please can you make sure that you are monitoring your child's online activity to ensure they are not exposed to any upsetting, harmful or inappropriate content.

If your child has seen the video, or any upsetting content, or you yourself have any concerns, please feel free to speak to staff in school who are happy to help.

Uniform

The students have looked exceptionally smart in their uniforms this week and I am grateful to you, as parents, for ensuring that this is the case. Can I remind you that, if wearing PE kits, students can wear black or navy sports leggings, not tracksuit bottoms.

Finally

If you have had the stamina to keep reading this far, a big thank you to you all for your understanding, questions, support and comments. None of this is ideal, none of it is what we really want for the students but, by working together, we can make the most of it and ensure our children are happy, educated and feel valued.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Rannard (Headteacher)