



6 November 2020

Dear Parent / Carer,

Weekly Parental Update

It is good to be back in school after what I hope was a restful half term for you and your family. Much has changed since I last wrote and I am sure there will be many questions and concerns that you may have regarding the impact of the national lockdown.

Please also take note of the information on early finishes and INSET days across the rest of the term and the attached key dates.

New Information

Current Situation

To update you on our current situation:

- Since the last update we have had 3 students test positive – one in Year 9 and two in Year 11.
- As a result, 57 students across various year groups were required to self-isolate.
- So far since 1st September, we have had 27 of the school community test positive for COVID19.
- We currently have 40 students still in self-isolation and 10 staff absent from school, these are for a variety of reasons: advice from test and trace, family members with symptoms etc.
- Our current attendance remains steady at 93% across the whole school and 84% once students self-isolating are included (under government regulations, students in self-isolation are coded X and do not count as absences).

National Lockdown

From the information we have received so far from the Department for Education, the new restrictions do not require many changes to our existing risk assessments and plans, as the region was already in Tier 3. However, for your information, below are the main provisions relating to schools:

- **Face coverings** are mandatory in communal areas of secondary schools and colleges. They will still not be recommended in classrooms. (This is already our position in school). Please ensure your child brings a face covering to school.
- **Clinically Extremely Vulnerable** staff and students
 - Children – where a doctor has confirmed they are still clinically extremely vulnerable, they should not attend school. Schools will need to make appropriate arrangements to enable them to continue their education from home.

- Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable - should still attend school.
- **Clinically Vulnerable** staff and children
 - Staff and children who are clinically vulnerable or have underlying health conditions but are not clinically extremely vulnerable, may continue to attend school in line with current guidance.
- **Extra-curricular activities** should only take place where it is reasonably necessary to support parents to work, search for work or undertake training and education, or where the provision is being used for respite care. Sadly none of our extra-curricular activities fall into this category.

Further information can be found in the links later in this update.

Early Finishes and INSET days

Each year we have 5 INSET days, which we use for staff training, students do not attend on these days.

We also have some reduced days – these are days where we compress the day (combining lunch and break) allowing students to still have their 5 lessons. They are in place mostly for parents' evenings and also to provide time for staff planning, training and meeting.

These will continue this year but we will also be using the reduced days to allow the cleaners full access to the site to ensure an additional comprehensive clean can take place. Key dates to be aware of this term are:

- **Monday 16th November:** students will finish between 1:00pm and 1.30pm on a staggered release as no buses will be available that afternoon. Sadly we cannot accommodate students waiting until 3:00pm on this occasion as the main site will be empty to allow the cleaners full unrestricted access.
 - 1.00pm Year 7 (via Mill Brow) and Year 8 (Alder Hey Rd)
 - 1.10pm Year 10 (Alder Hey Rd)
 - 1.20pm Year 9 (Alder Hey Rd)
 - 1.30pm Year 11 (Alder Hey Rd)
- **Friday 4th December:** INSET day – students do not attend
- **Friday 18th December** (end of term): school will finish at 12.30pm (though this may need to be staggered)

Parental Evenings

Following on from the item above, we obviously cannot hold traditional parental evenings but we are still keen to ensure you have a chance to speak with your child's teachers. To help achieve this, we have invested in an app that allows face to face video parental meetings. (I know, not another app, but this is a very simple one). We are looking to trial it with the Year 10 pastoral Form Teacher meetings which is scheduled for Thursday 19th November. We hope then to be able to run all the parental evenings and form tutor meetings through this system until regulations allow face to face meetings to resume. I have attached the key dates for these meetings, along with this update.

Year 11 Mocks/Reward

Our Year 11 students have been working very hard for their mocks this week and next. Their attitude and approach to the exams has been excellent. In response to a request from the students, as a reward, they will have some down time lesson 5 next Friday. This will be different for each class but may involve treats/snacks and the opportunity to watch a suitable programme or film.

Uniform/Nails

We have seen a small but growing number of students wearing acrylic coloured nails for school. These are more problematic for us to deal with, as they don't remove as easily as nail varnish. Can you please help by ensuring your child does not have

acrylic nails attached? (I realise this paragraph is clearly written by a man with two teenage boys and no real understanding of how acrylic nails work).

Face Coverings

The vast majority of students bring in a face covering every day. For the few who don't, we are happy to provide one. Payment for these (£1) is via ParentMail, however, there are a rising number of cases where this is not being paid. **Please can check if you have an outstanding payment for a face mask provided to your child.**

Regular Reminders

Reporting positive COVID tests

We have now created an email address for parents to report COVID test results to us. These are auto forwarded to myself and Mrs Peet and will allow us to act promptly, particularly if the results are received of an evening or over the weekend. Rather uncreatively the email is: covid@delasalleschool.org.uk if reporting a positive test please include:

- Name of child
- DOB
- Contact number
- Date symptoms started
- Date of test
- Date of results

Of course during the school day you can also contact the school directly by phone.

Symptoms

I have attached the useful 2 page reminder of what you need to do in cases of COVID, and can I remind all parents and students to be vigilant for symptoms which include at least one of:

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

Please do not send students in to school if they are awaiting a test or have symptoms.

Around this time of year, it is common for people to start to get coughs and colds. The following link to the BBC website provides a useful explanation of the differences between cold symptoms and COVID symptoms. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-54145299>

Further Information

The guidance for schools: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020?utm_source=5%20November%202020%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19

There is also a **guide for parents** (though at the time of writing this was still waiting to be updated): https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_source=30%20October%202020%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19

Mental Health and Wellbeing

There is no doubt these are testing times for everyone and we would encourage anyone who has concerns about themselves or another person to seek help. This

could be through school and the pastoral staff that we have. Alternatively, visit the special section of our website which covers:

- Direct links to lots of different types of support
- Advice and guidance
- Activities to help you or others
- Information on Anxiety, Mental Health, Wellbeing and Mindfulness.

The link is: <http://www.delasalle.st-helens.sch.uk/parents/coronavirus/mental-health-and-wellbeing/>

Finally

Entering another period of lockdown combined with longer nights can seem dispiriting and overwhelming for all of us. However, Charlie Mackesy's wonderful book: *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse* is a great antidote for children and adults. In particular the following:

"Those are dark clouds." Said the Boy

"Yes, but they will move on," said the Horse "the blue sky above never leaves."

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Rannard
Headteacher