



De La Salle School

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11th December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Weekly Parental Update

As we look ahead to our final week of school, there is a definite Christmas feel to school life. Today is Christmas jumper day and I write this update in my very warm office with the heaviest Christmas jumper you could imagine.

Elsewhere in school: the younger students have been eager to decorate their form rooms, as part of a competition organised by our 1719 Society, there have been plenty of rehearsals and filming for our end of year Advent Liturgy (this will be shared with parents next Thursday and details of how parents can access this will be sent out next week). We have also had groups of students practising their singing and dancing for a pre-recorded X Factor on the last day, staff Secret Santa is in place (with apologies to my recipient) and this afternoon after school, staff will gather, socially distanced, to sing carols together.

As always, my update is in two parts: new information and regular reminders.

Part 1 - New Information

Current Situation

To update you on our current situation:

- Since the last update we have had no students test positive.
- As a result no students have had to self-isolate.
- So far since 1st September, we have had 36 of the school community test positive for COVID19.
- We currently have 39 students in self-isolation and 14 staff absent from school, these are for a variety of reasons: advice from test and trace, family members with symptoms etc.
- Our current attendance (for the year) remains stable at 94% across the whole school and 88% once students self-isolating are included (under government regulations, students in self-isolation are coded X and do not count as absences).

Reporting of Positive Cases

Schools have been asked to continue to carry out contact tracing for positive cases for 6 days after finishing. Therefore if your child does test positive please continue to inform us (details of how to do this are in part 2 below). Mrs Peet and I will be monitoring the COVID email during the first week of the holidays up until 1pm on Christmas Eve. Please feel free to submit any positive tests after that, but they may not be picked up until the New Year.

Will the school close a week early?

Several parents have asked if we were considering closing a week early for Christmas. Though I understand the reasons why many would like to see this, unfortunately the government have been very clear in their latest guidance that *"nurseries, schools and colleges should not change their Christmas holidays or close early this term"*. FE Colleges operate under slightly different rules.

In addition, the legal advice given to schools by ASCL is *"In light of the government policy to keep schools open, the DfE may intervene and could, ultimately, issue a direction under Schedule 17 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 to require a school or college to stay open. This direction could be backed up by an injunction through the courts."* So unfortunately that is a no.

Christmas Dinner

The whole school Christmas Dinner will be served on **Wednesday 16th December**. Though obviously not compulsory, the menu on that day in both dining rooms will be much more limited in order to be able to provide students with the annual Christmas Dinner. Students who previously have packed lunch are welcome to have Christmas Dinner that day.

End of Term Arrangements

At the end of term, I can confirm that the students will finish, as planned, with a staggered finish on Friday 18th December between 12.10 and 12.30pm.

12.10pm – Year 7 (Mill Brow Exit) and Year 11 (Alder Hey Road)

12.20pm – Year 10 (Alder Hey Road)

12.25pm – Year 9 (Alder Hey Road)

12.30pm – Year 8 (Alder Hey Road)

The usual arrangements apply, that students are free to wait for siblings in Iona House Base and there will be **no buses available at these times** and we will look to clear the school building of staff and students by 1:00pm to allow the cleaners full access.

Year 11 Update and GCSE arrangements

The Year 11 reports are in the final stages of completion and then will be checked in the first week back after Christmas before being sent out to Parents.

You may also have seen information regarding changes to this year's GCSEs. I have summarised the information below:

Building on the 3 week delay to exams to free up extra teaching time announced in October, the new measures include:

- more generous grading than usual, in line with national outcomes from 2020, so students this year are not disadvantaged
- students receiving advance notice of some topic areas covered in GCSE, AS and A levels to focus revision
- exam aids, for example formula sheets, provided in some exams giving students more confidence and reducing the amount of information they need to memorise
- additional exams to give students a second chance to sit a paper if the main exams or assessments are missed due to illness or self-isolation

- a new expert group to look at differential learning and monitor the variation in the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on students across the country

Nut Free School

Can I remind parents that, owing to a number of students having severe allergies, that we are a nut free school? Please ensure that any food you send in with your child is nut free.

Items Purchased via ParentMail

If you have purchased an item from the ParentMail shop, such as a revision guide or school tie, please ask your child to collect it from reception. We have a number of items still awaiting collection, some of which were purchased last academic year. Items in the ParentMail shop are always in stock, so they can be collected from reception as soon as you have paid for them.

Part 2 - 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

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 you or 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

Full updated details of the requirements for schools can be found here: <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/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn->

[term?utm_source=1%20December%202020%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19](http://www.delasalle-st-helens.sch.uk/parents/coronavirus/mental-health-and-wellbeing/?utm_source=1%20December%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/>

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Rannard
Headteacher