

School Re-Opening FAQs

1. Why is the school not doing student testing the week before and allowing all students to return on the 8th March?

The government have allowed schools to test at an earlier date than the 8th March, and I am aware that some schools are doing this and even doing two of the 3 tests for students in that week. The factors influencing our decision are below:

- The purpose of the testing is to help control the infection but also to give parents and staff a sense of confidence that, at the point of returning to school, each student is COVID free.
- There is a danger the testing becomes a box-ticking exercise rather than a genuine measure to control infection and provide reassurance.
- Unfortunately we know that many students do not always follow the lockdown guidance outside of school, especially with the weather improving and over weekends.
- By testing students several days, including a weekend, before returning could make that testing pointless.
- By testing within 24hrs of return, this provides greater confidence that individuals remain COVID free (though of course there is no 100% guarantee)

2. Why don't students stay in school after having their tests?

Again there are a number of reasons for this:

- In the first set of testing, we expect to have a number of students who are asymptomatic but test positive.
- The scale of testing would mean large numbers waiting around for test results with increased risk of cross-infection, as keeping large numbers of students socially distanced over a period of time would be problematic and we want to avoid children who are negative having to self-isolate before even returning, just because they have been near to a positive case.
- The scale of testing required would mean that students would be arriving throughout the day, making teaching very difficult as some students would be in school from 9am whilst others might not be tested until the afternoon.

3. Why have you decided not to make face coverings compulsory in classrooms?

We are acting in line with the guidance provided to schools by the Department for Education. This guidance states:

*"We now also **recommend** in those schools, that face coverings **should** be worn in classrooms or during activities unless social distancing can be maintained. We [The government] are taking this additional precautionary measure for a limited time during this period of high coronavirus (COVID-19) prevalence in the community. These measures will be in place until Easter. As with all measures, we will keep it under review and update guidance at that point."*

The guidance does not make face coverings compulsory and also makes clear that "No pupil should be denied education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering." We have taken the strongest and fairest line on this by strongly recommending that they are worn.

4. How do I know if my child is exempt from wearing face coverings?

Details of exemptions can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

5. Are face coverings recommended in physical subjects eg PE?

No the guidance makes clear: *"This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons."*

6. Will teachers be required to wear masks when teaching? My child needs to lip read when in class.

In all of our classrooms, teaching staff desks are socially distanced from the students. Therefore the recommendation does not apply if they maintain this social distancing. If they then move closer or between groups of students, it is recommended that they wear a face covering. Please let us know if your child needs to lip read. In these cases we can provide staff with clear face coverings.

7. Why did you choose that order for Year groups to return?

Government guidance advises schools to start with older students if planning a phased return. They are also the students who have less time for us to provide catch-up for missed education.

8. Why are you having a reduced day on the first day all students are back in school?

Yes this is far from ideal. The reason for the reduced day is to facilitate the Year 11 Parents' Evening which has been in the calendar since the start of the year (because of the number of staff involved, we need to close school to run parent evenings).

With all such events, a lot of thought goes into the timing of it, linked to other assessments, whole school reports etc. This is particularly important this year for our Year 11 students and families amidst the disruption and uncertainty they are going through at the moment. Had it been another year group, we could have considered moving it, but at this time, it is very important for the Year 11 students.

9. Why is there no provision for children of key workers and vulnerable children from 8th March?

We would have liked to continue this provision but in order to scale up our testing requires considerable staffing and we have had to redistribute many of our staff to enable the testing to take pace. This means I could not safely provide the supervision required for the 70+ students whilst also keeping them in their separate bubbles.

10. Who do I speak to if I am concerned about my child returning to school?

In the first instance you should speak to your child's Head of Year or Pastoral Support Manager. After that you could liaise with Mr Hale (Yrs 9, 10 and 11) or Mrs Wellens (Yrs 7 and 8) or Mrs De'Ath for any safeguarding issues.

11. What so I do if my child starts showing symptoms?

If your child develops a new and continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), you:

- must keep them home (or if in school we will send them home) to begin isolation - the isolation period includes the day the symptoms started and the next 10 full days
- should follow the guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>)
- arrange to have a test as soon as possible to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19)

Other members of their household (including any siblings and members of their support or childcare bubble if they have one) should self-isolate. Their isolation period includes the day symptoms started for the first person in their household, or the day their test was taken if they

did not have symptoms, whether this was a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) or Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test), and the next 10 full days. If a member of the household starts to display symptoms while self-isolating they will need to restart the 10 day isolation period and book a test.

If anyone tests positive whilst not experiencing symptoms but develop symptoms during the isolation period, they must restart the 10 day isolation period from the day they developed symptoms

Where can I find further information?

Our school website has a section dedicated to all aspects of schooling during the Coronavirus. This can be accessed here: <http://www.delasalle.st-helens.sch.uk/>

In addition below are links to some of the key government guidance and advice.

- 1. Full reopening guidance:**
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964351/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf
- 2. The government's evidence summary related to reopening schools:**
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963639/DfE_Evidence_summary_COVID-19_-_children_young_people_and_education_settings.pdf
- 3. Updated Government guidance on Keeping Children Safe in education**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-from-abuse-and-harm/advice-to-parents-and-carers-on-keeping-children-safe-from-abuse-and-harm>