



De La Salle School

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19th November 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

Parental Update – Week 9

I spent last Friday and Saturday at the Lasallian Headteacher Conference at St Cassians, the Lasallian youth centre in Kintbury (no I don't know where that is either, just that it is a 4 hour journey via Satnav). It is certainly the first conference I have been to where I had a choice of top or bottom bunk! The meeting was a very timely and important one for the whole Lasallian community, not least because of the government drive towards all schools being academies within Multi-Academy Trusts (more of which below).

The meeting was also a powerful reminder of the global network and community that we are a part of: we are within the Great Britain, Ireland and Malta District but the Lasallian community globally now educates over 1 million young people every day, in 80 countries and 5 regions:

- Europe and Mediterranean (our District is one of 9 within this region)
- North America
- Latin America
- Africa
- Pacific Asia

Our district produces a monthly newsletter which can be accessed here:
<https://mailchi.mp/20a86dcecd8/newsletter-november-13411770?e=24c6dad887>

Sporting Success

Congratulations and well done to both the Year 9 football team and Year 7 rugby team in their first outings this year at St Helens Central Venue Competitions. Both teams did not lose a match. Mr Singh's Year 9 footballers won 4 and drew 2 of their 6 matches, whilst in the Year 7 rugby team's first ever tournament they remained undefeated with 4 wins from 4 matches.

Retreats

A big thank you to Sam our Chaplain and the Lowe House Animate Team who have led our Year 7 retreats this week. The students have been a credit to you and engaged fully in all the activities, especially the Crystal Maze, which Notre Dame Raiders won.

Academisation in Faith Schools

As I mentioned a few months ago, the government have made no secret of their intention that all schools should become academies and part of multi-academy trusts. Currently around 80% of all secondary schools are now academies, with the bulk of the remaining 20% being catholic or CofE schools.

It is generally accepted nationally across the various Diocese, Archdiocese and amongst the religious orders (like our own Lasallian order) that most of these schools will

academise in the next couple of years and that they will need to join suitable Multi-Academy Trusts. The crucial thing, I believe, in this transition, is that these faith schools retain their ethos and identity and are not swallowed up into some corporate business. This is certainly something our trustees, the Lasallian Brothers, are very aware of. The next 3 years is likely to see considerable change in this area both for secondary and primary schools.

House Updates

We have held off the netball and football as the venues have been unavailable, and sadly had to postpone the Harry Potter Quiz due to staff absence but we have our Year 8 bake off next week then our DT and Engineering challenges the week after. We are also looking at a dodgeball competition before Christmas. Current scores are:

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	House Total
Mount Carmel Crusaders	134	31	79	59	75	378
Team Champion	125	127	83	100	82	517
West Park Wonders	123	41	71	61	41	337
Notre Dame Raiders	138	121	77	100	122	558

COVID

Our rates remain relatively low and borderline of the threshold for the removal of controls. I have another meeting with Public Health later today to look at our current rates and figures. I have had it agreed that we can allow inter-school sports fixtures to resume and we will look carefully at the weekend's cases to see whether we can scale back from compulsory to recommended mask wearing in the near future.

Skirt Length

It has been brought to my attention that a minority of our female students are rolling the tops of their skirts to shorten their length. As I am sure you will appreciate, in a school with lots of open stairways, normal skirt lengths are fine but shorter ones are not appropriate and unnecessarily revealing. We have, and will continue, to remind students of this, if you could also echo that message.

Staff Absence

At the moment we, along with most schools across the country, are struggling with high levels of staff absence either directly through COVID, awaiting PCR results, having time to look after children who have COVID, or through more usual non-COVID related absences and illnesses.

Much of the cover for absence is having to come from within house, as supply agencies are struggling to get close to meeting the demand across schools. This obviously places considerable strain on staff and is not ideal for students either. I would ask that you please bear with us as we struggle through these challenges.

Vaccinations

The COVID Vaccinations will take place next week and I will write out at the start of the week to confirm the date. You should already have received a letter regarding COVID vaccinations for 12-15 year olds in school and some key information is below:

- The vaccine is being delivered by the NHS's School Age Immunisation Team, who deal with all of the paperwork, clinical controls and delivery.
- They can only deliver the vaccinations to students who are currently **12-15 years old**. The vaccine isn't licensed for use with under 12s, and over 15s are required

to attend an NHS vaccination centre to receive theirs. There are no exceptions to this.

- Students will be kept under observation for 15 minutes following vaccination.
- They will only vaccinate where permission has been given by the parent and the student is happy to be vaccinated. If a student does not have consent but wants the vaccine, then the team will not vaccinate, but will contact the family to discuss future options. The same applies if a parent provides consent but the student refuses. At no point will the Gillick Competence Test be applied, as suggested is some of the disinformation that has been circulated on social media.
- Students who have had COVID within **28 days (this has now changed to 12 weeks)** cannot be vaccinated.
- For security reasons we will be limiting access to the site on the day of vaccinations, with the school gate being closed from 8.45am until 9.30am.

If you wish your child to have the vaccine, please use the link below:

<https://forms.merseycare.nhs.uk/immunisation-consent-forms/covid-19-vaccination/>

PSHCE

Last week I shared with you the link to our curriculum road maps, and this week wanted to emphasise our work on Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE). We strongly believe this is a crucial element of any student's holistic education. Many schools squeeze this into registration or the occasional themed day – this might work for them but for us, it is allocated as a discreet lesson every week and delivered by teams of staff with specialisms in certain areas e.g. sex and Relationships education (RSE) or Finance, and supplemented with focussed drop down days.

The curriculum spirals through all 5 years and the full curriculum picture can be seen on one page on our website: <http://www.delasalle.st-helens.sch.uk/media/48632/pshce-curriculum-overview.pdf>

Dates for your diary (items in bold indicate a change to normal school day)

Friday 3rd December: INSET Day – students do not attend

Tuesday 7th December - Year 9 parents meeting with form tutors (virtual)

Wednesday 8th December - Year 8 parents meeting with form tutors (virtual)

Thursday 9th December - Year 10 parents meeting with form tutors (virtual)

Wednesday 22nd December: school closes for Christmas at 12.10pm (no buses after school)

Wednesday 5th January 2022: School re-opens (usual time)

And finally...

Our Earth week draws to a close with earth hour, when we turn off all non-essential electrical items, though Mrs Wellens is making the case that her posh coffee machine sits firmly in the essential category! The students have been very interested in all the activities and are, understandably, really passionate about the environment and the future. It has been wonderful to see.

And for those who wondered, from my first paragraph – I chose the bottom bunk, these knees would never manage the top one.

Have a good weekend when it comes.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Rannard

Headteacher