

Dear Parents/Carers,

24 February 2022

I hope and pray that you and your families are well. Following the announcement yesterday by the Prime Minister on the significant scaling back of COVID restrictions. This letter outlines the changes in a simplified way for you as families.

The key points are:

- **LFT testing** –the government have announced that staff and students in most education and childcare settings no longer need to test twice a week. We would encourage families to continue to test fortnightly to keep our community safe. If you wish to obtain tests between now and 1<sup>st</sup> April, these can now be ordered from [this website](#). Lateral flow tests (LFTs) won't be available for free after 1 April, except for the over-75s and over-12s with weakened immune systems.
- **Self-isolation of close contacts** – self isolation of individuals who have been in close contact with someone that has tested positive is no longer required, even if they are not vaccinated. Close contacts also do not need to test daily for 7 days. Contact tracing by the NHS will also stop. Please remember that we expect all students who have been a close contact to attend the Academy every day, unless they are unwell with Covid symptoms.
- **Positive cases** – although legally those that test positive will no longer be required to self-isolate, the guidance is they should stay home and avoid contact with other people for community safety. If an individual has 2 negative test results after day 5, they can return to school. We would strongly encourage you to keep your child off school if they test positive, however we understand that with limited access to test kits, it will be more challenging for you as parents to be certain of positive cases. Please work with the school here by keeping our Attendance Officer well informed.
- **Symptoms** – anyone displaying one of the 3 main symptoms of COVID should stay home and immediately book a PCR test. Tests can be booked via [this link](#). The 3 main symptoms are:
  1. A new, persistent cough
  2. A high temperature
  3. A sudden change or loss of taste and / or smell
- **Educational visits** – all trips can take place as long as a robust risk assessment is in place. I am thrilled to see plans coming together for every child to take part in a fully funded enrichment experience for Science Week and encourage you all to promote this.

Principal Hannah Fahey

- **Masks**- masks are no longer recommended in classrooms or communal areas at school. We encourage personal choice here and will not sanction any student who wishes to wear a mask.
- **Vaccination**- the Government and World Health Organisation continue to urge all families to take up the vaccination offer for young people at secondary school. Should you wish to take this scientific advice, please see the Merton website for information regarding vaccination centres.

It is obvious that the virus is still around and has the ability to cause significant illness. We will ensure that the Academy maintains heightened vigilance on the main mitigations of ventilation, cleaning and hygiene for some time. Alongside this, I would encourage parents to continue to ask their child to hand sanitise regularly and remind them that they are welcome to wear a mask within and outside of lessons at St Mark's.

I am so proud of the way the Academy has adapted to the pandemic and want to thank you as parents for playing a leading role in the continued success of St Mark's journey of transformation. Together, we will ensure that the Academy remains a hub of safety where every young person is transformed to thrive.

Yours faithfully,

Hannah Fahey  
**Principal**