



St Michael with St Thomas CE Primary School

Wednesday 1st September 2021

Dear Parents/ Carers

BACK TO SCHOOL

I hope that you and your family are enjoying the summer holiday and everyone has had a chance for some rest and relaxation. As we approach the beginning of a new school year (Thursday 2 September 2021), I thought it would be helpful to send out a reminder of our 'back to school' plans as they stand today. The government updated its guidance for schools on 17 August 2021, so we have tweaked a couple of arrangements. Please read through carefully, especially regarding start and end of day arrangements.

Mixing & Bubbles

The government no longer recommends keeping children in consistent groups (bubbles). This means classes will be able to work and play together once again, staggered starts and finishes will cease and we will resume activities such as collective worship, using the hall for lunch, clubs and inviting parents to some events. However, if there is a local, school or class outbreak, following advice, it may be necessary to re-introduce 'bubbles' for a temporary period, as well as some or all of the control measures we have had in place during the past year. These decisions will not be taken lightly.

Close Contacts & Isolation

Close contacts will now be identified via NHS Test & Trace and school will no longer be expected to undertake contact tracing. NHS Test & Trace will work with the parents/ carers of the positive case to identify close contacts. This is likely to be a small number of individuals who would be most at risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of close contact.

Individuals are no longer required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and any of the following apply:

- they are fully vaccinated
- they are below the age of 18 years and 6 months
- they have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

Instead, they will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a [PCR test](#). **We would strongly encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so.**

Staff who do not need to isolate, and children and young people aged under 18 years 6 months who usually attend school, and have been identified as a close contact, should continue to attend school as normal, even while waiting for the results of a PCR test (*as long as they are not showing any symptoms and have not tested positive on a LFD test*). They do not need to wear a face covering within school, but it is expected and recommended that these are worn when travelling on public transport.

When an individual develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test

Pupils, staff and other adults should follow public health advice on [when to self-isolate and what to do](#). They should not come into school if they have symptoms, have had a positive test result or other reasons requiring them to stay at home due to the risk of them passing on COVID-19 (for example, they are required to quarantine).



If anyone in school develops [COVID-19 symptoms](#), however mild, we will send them home and they should follow public health advice. For everyone with symptoms, they should avoid using public transport and, wherever possible, be collected by a member of their family or household. If a pupil is awaiting collection, they will wait in the isolation room, supervised by staff wearing PPE. The household (including any siblings) should follow the PHE [stay at home guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

Asymptomatic testing

Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within schools. This week the Director of Public Health for Halton has written to all school stating that COVID-19 rates have remained high across Halton during the last month. There is great concern that there will be further spread of the virus once schools and colleges re-open, and that this will impact on the children's education once again. With this in mind, we would like to encourage all families to continue with the twice weekly asymptomatic testing that was being done in the summer term. Test kits can be collected from many local stores and pharmacies – if you require more information on this, please speak to the office. Staff will also continue to test twice a week.

Confirmatory PCR tests

Staff and pupils with a positive LFD test result should self-isolate in line with the [stay at home guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#). They will also need to [get a free PCR test to check if they have COVID-19](#). Whilst awaiting the PCR result, the individual should continue to self-isolate. If the PCR test is taken within 2 days of the positive lateral flow test, and is negative, it overrides the self-test LFD test and the pupil can return to school, as long as the individual doesn't have COVID-19 symptoms.

When extra action may be taken

If the number of positive cases substantially increases, this could indicate that transmission is happening in school. The following thresholds will be used to determine if this is likely:

- 5 children or staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period; or
- 10% of children or staff who are likely to have mixed closely test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period

At the point of reaching a threshold, school will seek further public health advice. A director of public health or the local health protection team may give school advice reflecting the local situation. If rates are high in the area, this may include advice that local circumstances mean that the thresholds for action can be higher than those set out above. Protective measures in place will be reviewed and additional control measures may be taken temporarily. These decisions will not be taken lightly.

Control Measures

At school we will continue to:

1. Ensure good hygiene for everyone including hand washing and respiratory hygiene
2. Maintain our cleaning regimes
3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated
4. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of Covid-19

Attendance

School attendance is mandatory for all pupils. Holidays during term time will continue to be unauthorised and parents should bear in mind the impact on their child's education which may result from any requirement to quarantine and isolate upon return, in addition to the holiday itself.



Remote Education

School will continue to deliver remote education for pupils who are well but need to self-isolate because they have tested positive.

Educational Visits & Residential

As risk assessments allow, visits and residential will resume. However, in the event of changes nationally or locally, it may be necessary to change the original arrangements, postpone the visit or even cancel altogether. Isolating children will not be able to participate.

School Uniform Expectations & PE Kits

Children should return to school wearing correct school uniform, black shoes (not trainers) no jewellery, minimal hair accessories in school colours (very small bows/clips only) and no nail varnish.

Snack

Toast for break time can be paid for on Arbor for all pupils or they can bring either toast, fruit or veg from home to have instead. No other food items are permitted.

Drop Off & Collection Arrangement

Staggered starts and finishes will cease.

Drop Off/Collection

- School will start for all pupils at **8.50am** (there was a typing error in the letter sent out in July which stated 8.45am start)
- School gates will open at **8.40am** and be locked at 8.50am prompt.
- Anyone arriving after 8.50am will need to be signed in by an adult at the school the office – please do not send your child in on their own if they are late.
- Parents/ carers can leave messages for class teachers with the staff on the gates, or can arrange a meeting with the teacher via the school office.
- Remember that the equipment outside reception has been set up by the staff for morning lessons – this is not for children to play with and we ask that parents ensure children stand sensibly with them and do not touch any learning equipment whilst waiting
- School will finish for all classes at **3.15pm**
- It would help to stop a bottle neck in the morning if parents allowed KS2 pupils to walk onto site themselves, rather than walking them to the gate. Alternatively, if KS2 pupils wish to use the main entrance, they are welcome to do so as we know lots of children did last year.
- **We ask that all adults think carefully about how they are driving and parking as we move back to a shared start/finish time. More cars on the road means there is more of a need for tolerance and respect, as well as consideration of safety for all. We suggest the best way parents can support this is parking further away from the school and walking down the avenue.**
- **Please remember, it has been a long time since we have had the whole school coming in and out at the same time and it may feel a bit hectic at first compared to the last 12 months. Before Covid restrictions, we had a good routine that worked well, so try and remember that as we move back to normal!**

See table below for a reminder of drop off and collection points for each class.



	Start of Day	End of Day	Drop Off	Collection Point
Breakfast/ASC	From 8.00am	Up to 5.45pm	Main entrance through the school office – please use the doorbell.	
Rec – Y2	8.50am	3.15pm	Enter through the main entrance where they will be met each morning by staff.	Children will be released through the classroom doors.
Year 3	8.50am	3.15pm	Enter through the main entrance where they will be met each morning by staff.	Children will be released through the main entrance.
Year 4	8.50am	3.15pm	Via the gate on the car park – enter site through the main car park gate.	Children will be released through the classroom door on the playground. Parents please enter site through the gate on the car park.
Year 5	8.50am	3.15pm	Via the gate on the car park – enter site through the main car park gate.	Children will come out of the double doors from the KS2 courtyard (next to Y4). Parents please enter site through the gate on the car park.
Year 6	8.50am	3.15pm	Via the gate on the car park – enter site through the main car park gate.	Children will be released from the meeting room door onto the playground. Parents please enter site through the gate on the car park.

I know that after the last 18 months, a move back to previous routines can seem daunting and cause some concern, but I hope after reading this letter you feel updated about the current position for schools in relation to COVID-19, and that you have the information you require prior to your child returning to school on Thursday 2 September. Don't forget, our COVID-19 Risk Assessment is available on our school website. Should you have any questions or worries, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

It is worth bearing in mind that the operational guidance the DfE has set out for primary schools, is subject to change. As always, we will endeavour to keep you fully informed and update you at the earliest opportunity.

We look forward to seeing you all back at school again tomorrow!

Miss Slingsby

Headteacher