



From the Headmaster

Whilst I am not in the habit of writing to parents early in the week, indeed before the pandemic I wrote only once a month, I thought it was important that I update you on a number of issues, especially given the news that all children aged 12 to 15 in England will be offered one dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech jab. Whilst I understand that these vaccinations will be offered in school, we have no further details. I would emphasise that both parental and pupil consent will be sought *and will be needed* for any pupil at Sir Thomas Rich's to be vaccinated. Of course, we will update you when we have more information. As I have said before, these are not 'normal times' and whilst it is hugely satisfying to see many of the activities associated with the 'old normal' return, we would be foolish to think that the situation regarding COVID-19 and the advice from government will not continue to change, sometimes several times a day. We will, of course, endeavour to provide timely and effective communication. In the meantime, thank you again to you all for your understanding and support.

Cases of COVID-19 in the school community

As the term progresses, it is clear that we are likely to have a number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the school community. As you are aware, following the change in statutory guidance on 19 July 2021, the school will continue to ensure that confirmed cases of COVID-19 do not attend until the end of their self-isolation period, but contact tracing is now undertaken by NHS Test and Trace.

NHS Test and Trace may contact you and advise your child to get a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test if your child has been identified as a close contact. You can book a PCR test [here](#). We will do our best to assist in the process of contract tracing.

Home testing and contact tracing

In order to prevent avoidable spread in school, we encourage all pupils and staff to continue with the twice weekly LFD testing, to report all positive test results to us and to follow-up the positive result with a confirmatory PCR test. You may be aware that a small number of Lateral Flow tests (LFTs) taken in school returned 'false positive' results. If the PCR is also positive, the isolation period for 10 days starts at the point that the LFT was taken.

I know that the switch to NHS Test and Trace from school-based contact tracing and that close contacts of a confirmed positive case awaiting a PCR test result do not need to self-isolate until they have a positive result themselves is causing some parents considerable concern. However, we must follow the guidance as it stands.

If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19

I would, however, emphasise that if your child develops symptoms of COVID-19 at any time, however mild, please do not send them into school and book a PCR Test. Symptoms of COVID-19 are still being described as:

Nevertheless, we are aware that children with other symptoms have tested positive. If the PCR test is negative, your child can return to school once they are well. Further information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

If you are concerned about your child's symptoms, or they are worsening you can seek advice from NHS 111 at <https://111.nhs.uk/> or by phoning 111.

Remote education for students self-isolating

Where children are at home self-isolating, classwork and homework will be posted regularly on Satchel One for each lesson on the timetable and where possible teachers will 'live stream' lessons.

In order to try to stop the spread of COVID-19:

We will be encouraging students to wash their hands with soap and water often for at least 20 seconds, use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available, wash their hands as soon as they get home, after using the lavatory and at break times. We will also be reminding students to cover their mouths and noses with a tissue (not their hands) when they cough or sneeze and put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash their hands afterwards. We will continue to do our very best to maintain an appropriate enhanced cleaning schedule. This includes deep cleaning at the end of the day and a further cleaning of classrooms and corridors at least once during the school day as well as regular cleaning of touch points throughout the day following the guidance for the cleaning of non-health care settings. We continue to endeavour to ensure the school remains well-ventilated and that a comfortable learning environment is maintained.

Finally

One parent recently remarked to me that the best thing about my emails was the quote at the end; the rest was rather boring. They asked why I had stopped; had I run out? My reply was brief. I was worried that perhaps the

quotes I could think of were rather pessimistic, but as George Bernard Shaw put it: "Both optimists and pessimists contribute to society. The optimist invents the aeroplane, the pessimist the parachute."

M. S. Morgan.

Matthew Morgan
HEADMASTER

SIR THOMAS RICH'S

Oakleaze Gloucester GL2 0LF

01452 338400

info@strs.org.uk

www.strschool.co.uk

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