

3rd September, 2021



Dear Parent/Carer

Parental update 69

Happy New Year! A warm welcome to the first newsletter of the new academic year, and an especially warm welcome to the parents of new Year 7 and Year 12 students (and a small number of new parents in other year-groups too).

Since the start of the pandemic, this newsletter for parents has been our main way of communicating with you; given the rapid changes that there have been to school procedures *etc* it's been important to keep in touch on a weekly basis. (I should add that writing it has become an enjoyable feature of my week too!). We're going to keep the newsletter as a weekly publication for at least September; it may be that we only need to communicate fortnightly if, nationally, the parameters under which we must work become more stable.

Welcome

Over the last couple of days we've been welcoming our new students into St Margaret's, easing them into their new-found membership of the St Margaret's family. The new Year 7s have made a great start; we've been very impressed by their attentiveness and the speed at which they're settling in. Our new Year 12s are enjoying an Induction Day at Hope University as I type, and I'm sure they're making an excellent start too!

We're also welcoming three new members of staff.

- Mr Disley is joining the Art Department on a part-time basis, having had an excellent Teacher Training placement here last year.
- Miss Geddes is joining the Maths Department; she too had a very successful placement here a few years ago, and we're delighted to welcome her back.
- Miss Houston has also joined the Maths Department following Mrs Hargreaves' and Mr Stewart's departures last year.

On the subject of staff comings and goings, we're currently advertising for a Principal's Personal Assistant; full details are on our website. Please pass the news on if you know anyone who might be interested!

News from the Summer break

GCSE, 'A'-level and BTEC results

I'm delighted to report that once again, very many of our students achieved extremely well when the external exam results were published last month. The vast majority achieved the results they needed to progress to the next stage of their education, and over the next few weeks a number of last year's Year 13 students will be off to start prestigious University courses thanks to the grades they achieved. Congratulations to them, and big thanks to all the parents and staff who have supported them through their journeys here.

Summer School

One of our vice Principals, Mrs Penketh, organised two highly successful Summer School weeks for our new Year 7 students. Given we were unable to have any onsite Year 6 Transition work last term, I'm delighted so many of our new students were able to come along and enjoy a very varied week here. Thank you to Mrs Penketh and to all her team for two great weeks.

Building Work

Thanks too to Mr D'Arcy, Mrs Smallshaw, Mr Cain and the site team for their various roles in overseeing a £3¼m building project that took place over the summer. The work was to improve our heating and associated pipework – the old pipework dated from when our present school was first built in the early 1960s, and renewal was long overdue! The work has spilled over slightly into the start of term but the only impact on students' learning has been a small number of room changes.

Covid Testing

Thanks to many students who came into school to be Covid-tested at the very end of the summer holidays, as part of the Government's provision for all secondary school students to be tested twice at the start of term. Day 2 of testing is tomorrow (Saturday 4th September), and it's not too late to sign up if you'd like to take part – you can book and appointment [here](#). If you have any difficulty logging in, please just turn up on the day – the team are onsite from 8:40am to 3:50pm.

Covid matters

Whether or not you're taking part in Covid-testing onsite, **please continue to test your son or daughter regularly** using kits that can be freely collected from pharmacists. As we all know, a number of people who get the virus do so without any symptoms at all; if such people come into school, they could unknowingly spread the virus to other students, their families, and staff. Regular testing significantly reduces that risk.

I've also encouraged all our pre-16 students to **continue to wear face coverings around school** if they are able to do so (and the same message will be given to post-16 students too). At this stage, it isn't mandatory to wear a face-mask, but again doing so helps reduce the risk of spreading the virus. **Frequent hand-washing** is also strongly encouraged. As ever, please reinforce these messages at home!

Nationally, the system of sending students home if they have been in contact with someone who is infected has changed. This term, contacts of positive cases will not have to self-isolate; they will simply be instructed to take a PCR test – and the burden of identifying such contacts will fall to NHS Test and Trace, not to schools. There are more details about the changes on the BBC website [here](#).

This year's timetable

In order to keep students and staff safe, we've gone a bit further than the national 'minimum requirements' by still giving year-groups different breaks, lunches, and start/finish times. We've managed to do this without the very long lessons that were a (not particularly well-received) feature of last year's timetable.

In *Parental Update 67*, we stated that Year 8 students will finish school at 2:30pm on Fridays; in fact, Year 8 have a break from 2:15pm to 2:30pm every day, so their lessons actually finish (and they will be dismissed from school) at 2:15pm on Fridays. Apologies for any inconvenience that miscommunication may have caused. If anyone needs us to supervise their Year 8 student from 2:15pm to 2:30pm for a few weeks, please let us know.

Indeed, with the shorter ‘stagger’ in starting and finishing times, we *may* be able to offer, in the short-term, some childcare to (for example) Year 7 students so they can wait for older siblings who may be accompanying them home. Some students in older years who struggle with independent travel (eg some students with Special Educational Needs) may also find this helpful. If you’re interested in exploring this issue further, please drop me a line [here](#).

Uniform

Please can I remind all parents that:

- blazers are now compulsory,
- shoes must comply with our [guidelines on acceptable footwear](#), and that
- shirts should have sufficiently large collars to allow top buttons to be fastened without discomfort.

As ever, thank you for your co-operation!

Dr Silverstone writes...

Please may I extend my own welcome to the new school year.

This year, we will continue to use these newsletters to highlight some safeguarding issues and pass on links to resources and support services that you may wish to make use of.

This week, I’d like to remind all St Margaret’s families that we have a dedicated safeguarding e-mail account that you can use if you wish to ask any questions related to safeguarding or pupil welfare: safeguarding@stmargaretsacademy.com. This e-mail address isn’t to be used for any emergencies, but if you have questions that you’d like to ask or concerns you wish us to address, please do get in touch.

Letter

A start-of-term letter from colleagues at Liverpool City Council is attached.

Finally...

For the first time this week, we’ve held face-to-face Assemblies – one year-group at a time – in an appropriately-ventilated Drama Hall. It’s been great to begin rebuilding that sense of community that has been eroded at times over the last 18 months! Indeed, one of the five strands of our current Academy Improvement Plan focuses on the rebuilding of community – it’s a theme I am likely to return in later *Updates*.

For now, though, please accept my best wishes for a pleasant and restful early-autumn weekend.

Yours faithfully



Stephen Brierley
Principal.



Dear Parent / Carer,

We are writing in light of changes made to national policies on self-isolation and to provide information on how COVID-19 will be managed in the school this term.

Changes to the national self-isolation guidance

From 16 August, the Government has said that people aged under 18 years and 6 months or who are fully vaccinated will no longer be legally required to isolate if they are a close contact of someone with COVID-19. Instead, such people will be advised (but not legally required) to get a PCR test unless they have had a positive PCR test in the previous 90 days.

Regardless of age or vaccination status, anyone who develops any of the three main COVID-19 symptoms (see below) must get a PCR test as soon as possible and isolate until the result is available. People who get a positive PCR test must continue to isolate as usual.

Covid Vaccination is currently available to people aged 16 and above, and in certain other circumstances, based on JCVI guidance. This may change, and if so we will be back in touch. Vaccine uptake in Liverpool is significantly lower than the national average. To date 88% of eligible UK residents have received their first vaccine, whilst in Liverpool this figure is only 69%. Nationally 77% have received their second dose compared to 57% in Liverpool. We strongly encourage all eligible Liverpool residents to come forward for their first and second doses of the vaccine to prevent new restrictions being imposed on the city. To book your vaccine please use [this link](#).

Further details on the covid-19 vaccines can be found [here](#):

What should I do if my child develops COVID-19 symptoms?

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- new continuous cough and/or
- fever (temperature of 37.8°C or higher)
- loss of or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

If your child develops any of these symptoms, you must arrange for them to have a PCR test as soon as possible. A PCR test can be arranged via the NHS UK (www.nhs.uk) website or by contacting NHS 119 *via* telephone if you do not have internet access.

Your child should self-isolate immediately and they should not attend school.

Please contact the school by phone to inform us your child has COVID-19 symptoms and you are awaiting a COVID-19 test.

What should I do if my child has COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test?

Anyone with COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test should self-isolate until the later of:

- 10 days after the onset of their symptoms, or
- 10 days after their test day if they are asymptomatic

Self-isolation means your child should not go to school, attend any out of school activities or visit a friend's house. They should not visit any public places, use public transport or go out to exercise. You should not have visitors into the home except for those providing essential care.

Please contact the school by phone and inform them your child has COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test. It is really important you let us know if your child has confirmed COVID-19 so we can monitor the number of children with COVID-19 across the school.

What should I do if my child is a contact of someone with COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test?

If your child is aged under 18 years and 6 months and does not have any symptoms of COVID-19 (high temperature, new continuous cough, loss of or change in, normal sense of taste or smell) they do not have to self-isolate as a contact of COVID-19. They are advised to have a PCR test unless they have had a positive PCR test in the last 90 days. Children aged 5 and under are not advised to take a PCR test unless the confirmed case is someone in their own household.

What should I do if my child has a positive result on a lateral flow device test?

If your child has a positive result on a lateral flow device test, they should self-isolate immediately and you should arrange a PCR test as soon as possible. Other members of the household do not need to self-isolate whilst you await the PCR test result if they do not have symptoms and are aged under 18 years and 6 months or are fully vaccinated.

Plans for COVID-19 testing in Secondary Schools

All secondary school pupils (year 7 and above) should receive 2 on-site lateral flow device tests, 3 to 5 days apart, on their return in the autumn term. We are also advising that students take a lateral flow test before returning to school for onsite testing.

Secondary school pupils should then continue to test twice weekly at home until the end of September, when this will be reviewed. By ensuring your child correctly carries out the lateral flow tests, it will be easier to spot asymptomatic spread amongst pupils. A positive Lateral Flow Test should always be followed up with a PCR test and the person testing should isolate until the results are back.

Nursery and primary school pupils are not asked to test at this time.

Finally, we are asking residents, businesses, organisations and key stakeholders in the city to tell us what they think of Liverpool and how it could be improved. In particular we are seeking views on how we can make Liverpool fairer for all. If you would like to help shape Liverpool's future we would love to hear from you. Please take part in our short survey via this link: www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ourcityyourfutureyoursay/.

Matt Ashton
Director of Public Health, Liverpool

Steve Reddy
Director of Children's Services, Liverpool