



5 November 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: COVID-19 Reporting Procedure

I am sure you are aware that the number of cases of COVID-19 has increased rapidly in Essex over the last few weeks. We had an excellent start to the year but unfortunately, we did have some positive cases at the end of the half term.

Can I remind you if your child tests positive for COVID-19 **please phone or email enquiries@st-martins.essex.sch.uk and the relevant Head of Year and Year Administrator**. A positive test result means you must complete a 10-day isolation period from when your symptoms started. If you do not have symptoms but have tested positive for COVID-19, stay at home and self-isolate for 10 days from the day the test was taken. If you develop symptoms after your test, restart your 10-day isolation period from the day the symptoms start.

Once we are told of a positive case we spend a huge amount of time gathering and collating information from all students and staff involved and discussing the situation with Public Health England (PHE) and Essex County Council.

While this process takes place, which can take several hours please can you use discretion and not post on social media and inform other people as this can create uncertainty, confusion and anxiety amongst other parents and staff.

Once the investigation is complete and we have taken guidance from PHE we will then contact the relevant students and staff that need to self-isolate. If your child falls into this category, we will text you and email you a letter which will have all the details you need including when to return to school and guidance from the government regarding testing and isolation. If we can, we will try to telephone you as well but this is not always possible due to trying to get the information out to everyone as quickly as possible. We can obviously not give out the name of the person who has tested positive. However, it may be that your child is of the opinion that they have not been in close contact with any students who have tested positive but after conducting the tracing procedure and taking into account that they share the same bubble, it is likely that they have and therefore every precaution must be taken and they will have to self-isolate.

After the tracing procedure has taken place, if your child is not linked to the student or staff member who tested positive you will still be contacted by email so you are aware of the situation and to avoid any possible confusion.

It is important to remember that while each positive case is treated and investigated in exactly the same thorough way with PHE, the outcome may well be different depending on the nature of the contact and interactions the student was involved in. This means the

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number of staff or students told to self-isolate after each incident in different year groups may be very different. We obviously do not want anyone self-isolating at home when they should be in school so all decisions in discussion with PHE are taken extremely seriously. Any self-isolation is obviously very unfortunate but will be unavoidable and absolutely necessary if the advice and guidance dictates it.

It is a challenging time for us all in trying to navigate our way through COVID-19, which is constantly changing on a daily basis. We continually review our plans in light of new events and guidance. The very nature of COVID-19 and the possibility of positive cases makes every day a potential new challenge and I thank you for your continued support of the school dealing with this issue.

We will of course continue to keep parents and carers fully informed of any new developments and announcements by the government which affect our plans going forward.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Smyrk', written over a faint dotted grid background.

Ian Smyrk
Headteacher