



Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: COVID-19 Update and Timetable changes

As you will be aware from recent correspondence we have seen an increase of positive COVID-19 tests school, albeit very slight, since the beginning of Term 2 and this appears to follow the national trend.

Please be reassured that we continue to work very closely with Public Health England (PHE) who form an integral part of any decision-making process that takes place to determine which students should self-isolate in every case we have seen in school.

In addition to the guidance we receive on every case, on Friday 13 November we asked PHE for an independent review to ensure that we are doing everything possible to keep our students and staff safe. You will be pleased to hear that PHE confirmed that they were extremely satisfied with all of our procedures in school, both our preventative measures and the actions taken when a positive case has occurred. In particular, the following points were noted:

- All cases across the Trust have been classed as 'community transmission' and unrelated to the school environment, except one. In this case it was not possible to find a link between the 'positive individual' and contacts outside of school. This case has been closed off by Public Health England, the individual has fully recovered and there are no other cases within that Year Group Bubble.
- As yet no positive test results for cases within the SLATrust have been linked to 'in school transmission'.
- The advice regarding sending an entire 'Bubble' home to self-isolate, which for our schools is a whole year group, remains the same and we need to re-emphasise to parents / carers that **to send a whole 'Bubble' home should always be a last resort**, i.e. where it is not possible to identify close contacts. In all of the SLATrust schools we have been able to identify close contacts using a system of robust seating plans, CCTV, transport authorities, pastoral information, identifying friendship groups and through discussion with parents. It is pleasing that we have not had to ask an entire year group 'bubble' to isolate yet, but we will not hesitate to do so if it is in the interest of student, staff and parent safety.

One thing we would like to share with parents / carers is how we intend to offer further support to all learners in each of our schools. A measure taken at the start of the academic year was the creation of the Year Group Bubble 'Zones', used to prevent different 'bubbles' mixing in corridors and sharing rooms. This has been successful in terms of student safety, but it has meant that students are often not learning in a subject specialist room, which creates some significant difficulties for practical subjects such as Art, Drama and Music, particularly for KS4 learners, and for those subjects that require IT facilities.

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We have therefore worked to find solutions to ensure that students in Years 10 and above will move to be in specialist rooms for all practical and IT subjects where required. The new measures include:

- Re-allocating some rooms to different zones. These will either be rooms which are adjacent to their zone, or which can be reached via an external door without the need to share corridor space.
- We have purchased a number of 'Fogging' machines. These are used to thoroughly clean an entire room, making it COVID-safe within a short space of time. This allows us to safely use a room for two different year groups during the same day, such as the changing rooms for PE, the Art rooms, etc. Where students are accessing rooms in another zone they will be registered in their own zone and then walked to their specialist rooms only after all the corridors are clear.
- The school has invested in additional day cleaners and this team will be cleaning in the key areas any time where students are entering a specialist area.

Unfortunately, it will still not be possible to timetable all Science lessons in a Science Lab, and under the current restrictions it would not be possible to allow students to conduct their own practical experiments. However, Science teachers will be demonstrating experiments in their current allocated teaching rooms and this will continue.

Please be reassured that these changes have been fully discussed with PHE and approved.

The rooming timetable changes will therefore come into effect this term, prior to the Christmas break and any student this has impact on will be issued with a new timetable.

Finally, can we take this opportunity to remind all parents / carers that all students need to continue bringing a mask to school and that they must be worn in all communal areas except classrooms, unless medically exempt or when eating. We have seen an increase at the start of this week in the number of students forgetting masks and although we have been able to give masks to these students this cannot continue indefinitely.

Also, a reminder that students should not be sent to school if they are feeling unwell and are displaying any symptoms of COVID-19. The most common symptoms are; a new continuous cough, a high temperature and a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell. Students should also not be sent to school if a household member is waiting for a test result following displaying symptoms.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. Conley". The signature is written in a cursive style and is followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that extends to the left and then curves back up to the right, ending under the 'y'.

MRS LUCY CONLEY
SLAT EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER