

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you have had a restful Easter break, had time to catch up with friends and family, and have enjoyed some of the new freedoms which have come our way.

As we enter our summer term I do find myself feeling cautiously optimistic, but painfully aware that we are not out of the woods yet! I must admit I'm finding it tricky to set the 'St Mary's roadmap' out of COVID restrictions but, with the success of the vaccine programme and the low prevalence of the virus in our community, it is clear that the time is right to start making some changes – one at a time. What I feel we have done well so far is to do things together and to go at a 'speed' that has made the most cautious feel safe enough. Above all we have respected that we do not all feel the same way. I hope this will continue.

The change I am proposing for the start of the Easter term is to **remove the suggestion for children to wear face-coverings in the classroom**. I feel this is sensible because:

- Virus levels in our community are as low as they were in September
- Many staff have been vaccinated
- All staff are taking lateral flow tests twice a week, and every adult in the country has access to lateral flow tests (which I hope parents will take up)
- We have rearranged all the rooms so that teachers have clear space around their desks, and distance between them and children
- We are very good at keeping rooms well-ventilated
- We have strong hand-washing systems established

The choice of any member of staff, or any child, to continue to wear a face-covering in the classroom will be respected. Staff may choose to put on a face covering or visor when working closely with a child.

The biggest 'risk' I feel I am managing is around the **potential disruption to education on site through large numbers of people being asked to self-isolate** because they have been in contact with someone who tests positive. This is more likely now that more of us are mixing outside school (*remember, you only need to have been within 2m of a person for more than 15 minutes - inside OR outside - to be classed as a close contact.*) For this reason the following COVID-measures remain in place for the time being:

- All parents to act as their own 'track and trace' for their families, and to err on the side of caution and keep their child at home if they are at all unwell.
- All staff to keep 2m away from each other indoors (even within classrooms) AND outdoors
- Staff to continue to wear face-coverings in communal indoor areas (this can be a mask OR a visor OR both)
- Additional staffroom spaces will remain in place
- Children will continue to learn and play in their bubbles
- Parents will still be asked to wear face-coverings at drop-off and pick-up

The Marquee is back up, the sun is set to shine, and all the evidence shows that being outdoors is extremely low risk, so we should all be getting lots of vitamin D this term. Pack your sunhats and sunscreen, we've got a great term ahead of us!

Best wishes
Sarah Lewis

Confidently Me Belonging Together Challenged to Contribute

