

Questions and Answers

Public Health England have confirmed a case of coronavirus in St Michael's Catholic College. Below are some questions that have been sent in. If you wish to ask a question please post it below on the form and we will answer general questions as soon as we can

Updated: 16/11/2020

How many cases of Coronavirus have been confirmed?

Two positive cases have been confirmed with a number of days of each other amongst our Year 13 pupils. The college were made aware of this on Sunday 15th November and as a precaution the decision has been made to ask all Year 13 students to move to remote learning for the next 2 weeks. Prior to this the 34 students had been contacted and traced through our robust collect tracing system – we are now asking all of our Year 13 students, including those who have not been direct contacts of the positive cases to self-isolate for the next 2 weeks. No further staff have been impacted by this latest positive case.

Which year group is affected?

The case is in Year 13 and contained within Year 13. Students have been contained within their bubble year groups while in school.

Have the classrooms been cleaned?

We know that the virus can possibly survive on surfaces for up to 72 hours so Year 13 classrooms, toilets and regular touch points have been deep cleaned as of Monday 16th November prior to students arriving at college. This is in addition to the thorough cleaning that already happens in school throughout the day and each evening.

Why isn't the school closing?

As the cases have been contained to Year 13, the advice is to open the school as planned with all the systems of control in place such as hand washing, good respiratory hygiene, enhanced cleaning and protected groups. We will also continue to ask all necessary visitors inside school to wear a face covering and carry out temperature checks on adults. All pupils/staff when within the building moving around must wear face coverings. This is what has allowed us to contain these cases to Year 13.

How do I know if I came into contact with the infected person?

As we keep a record of what contacts are made throughout the school day we know who came into contact with the infected person and have notified those who need to self-isolate as a precaution.

Do parents and staff wear face coverings when on the school site?

All parents visiting the college are asked to wear a face covering as they are not part of our bubbles. The guidance provided by the government does not recommend face covering for secondary pupils or staff unless in certain circumstances. All staff wear a covering when moving around the building, some continue to wear these while teaching which is their choice. All students when walking around the building wear face-coverings.

What size are classes at St Michael's?

School classes will return to normal which for us will be up to 30 pupils per class. We would not be able to have classes of 15 and have everybody back full time. The government guidance is clear that schools are not allowed to have part-time provision or rotas in place.

If we have been in contact with a parent/child that has been asked to self-isolate by the school, are we also required to self-isolate and then track those we've subsequently had contact with also?

No, the advice to self-isolate from Public Health England (PHE) is only for those who had direct contact. In this case contact was fairly minimal and it is a precaution that some are being asked to self-isolate. Obviously, if you develop symptoms then you should self-isolate along with your household and let the school know as soon as possible.

Does the infected person have another sibling within the school in another year group?

No. Siblings of students in Year 13 should continue to attend college as normal. Those within the household do not need to isolate unless the individual who has been asked to isolate develops symptoms – should this be the case, please contact the college to let us know.

Will It be better to keep the children home a bit longer until this episode is over?

Due to the systems in place we have been able to quickly identify those who came into contact with infected persons, so we are expecting this to be contained and not develop into an outbreak. We will of course remain vigilant and put into place all the measures for keeping the school open.

If the people that have been asked to self-isolate get tested and it comes back negative, are they allowed back into school before the 14 days is up?

Public Health England have been clear that even with a negative test, the individual must remain self-isolating for 14 days in case they develop symptoms after the test was taken.

Can you confirm more details of the infected person/people?

As you might expect we cannot release any further details of the person in respect to their privacy. As explained above we know who this person was in contact with and they have been informed and will self-isolate.

I want to keep my child at home, can I do this?

We can understand your concerns and we wouldn't open the school if we didn't feel that situation was contained. You will be aware that the government has announced that all pupils should return to school and continue their education.

Should I get my child tested?

We believe that tests are only available to those with symptoms. If you have been contacted by us and asked to self-isolate then this should be for 14 days. If your child develops symptoms over the next two weeks, you should get a test and your household should self-isolate for 14 days from the start of the symptoms.

My children are not in Year 13. But still very concerned as within the household we have vulnerable people. Will it be better to keep the children home a bit longer until this episode is over?

We are confident that we have identified all the people who came into contact in the same room for more than 15 minutes with the infected person, so for everyone else the risk is no different than it was before. We have asked Year 13 students to self-isolate as a precaution. We can understand that those of you with vulnerable households will be more concerned, but the risk has not changed.

Can children wear a mask in school and in the classroom?

Students are wearing a face covering in school while they walk around the building, some continue to wear these during their lessons and that is ok if they can take responsibility for wearing it and using it correctly.

My children were told to self-isolate by the school and PHE. How will their Free School Meals be reimbursed?

The college will issue a supermarket voucher for those students on free school meals who have to self-isolate for 14 days as we did during the lockdown period. All families with students on FSM should have already received a supermarket voucher from the college for the half term.

What happens if i don't send my child in?

We will be in touch to have a conversation and discuss your concerns. 95% of pupils continue to be back at school and unless your child is self-isolating or is shielding, then they should be attending school. We haven't used fines at St Michael's because we have good relationships with our families and hope that through discussion we can encourage pupils back to school. However, it is in the guidance from the government that if a parent decides to home school their child then they should inform Ms Corcoran in writing and they will be removed from the school roll.

Can the school take the temperatures of people entering the building?

The guidance does not recommend this and would be challenging for us to do with the number of children we have. If a child is hot to the touch on their front and back, then they should remain at home. If we suspect that someone is unwell then we will check and follow our procedures.