

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: 25/11/2020

How many cases of Coronavirus have been confirmed?

In the latest incident, only one positive case has been confirmed and it is highly likely the source came from outside the school. The college was made aware of this on Wednesday 25/11/2020 and followed our detailed action plan. The infected person has been isolating since Tuesday 24/11/2020 and as a precaution 0 members of staff and 20 pupils have been asked to self-isolate.

Which year group is affected?

The case is in Year 9 and contained within Year 9. Students have been contained within their bubble year groups while in school. This is not linked to the previous cases reported by the college on the 16th November 2020.

Have the classrooms been cleaned?

We know that the virus can possibly survive on surfaces for up to 72 hours so Year 9 classrooms, toilets and regular touch points have been deep cleaned as of Wednesday 25/11/2020. This is in addition to the thorough cleaning that already happens in school throughout the day and each evening. The college had previously scheduled a deep clean of the premises for during the half term before being made aware of this most recent case.

Why isn't the school closing?

At this stage we only have a single case and we have been able to identify all the close contacts that person had very quickly and they will self-isolate for 14 days as a precaution. 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 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.

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.

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 person, 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 9. 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. All the people self-isolating are doing so 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. The majority of pupils are 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.