

Friday 28th May 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re. Half Term

On the last day of this half term, as we approach our week's break, I felt it important to write to congratulate the whole of our community on the strength of our commitment to ensuring that we keep all of our students in school and learning. Since our return to onsite education on Monday 8th March, I am delighted to confirm that we have not had to ask any student or member of staff to self-isolate. This is a great testimony to our adherence to our procedures and our collective hard work. Thank you for your support with this.

You will recall that I wrote on 15th May following the relaxation of the expectations on face coverings in schools. At this time, we gave all students and staff the opportunity to continue to wear face coverings in classrooms. This was following discussions with members of staff, with students, with Governors, with Unity Schools Partnership (our multi-academy trust), with Havering local authority and with union representatives. The general consensus was that the use of face coverings (alongside our other control measures) has proven very successful in preventing outbreaks of Covid-19 at St Edward's. We therefore requested the support of parents/carers with the continuation of the wearing of face masks in classrooms as much as possible. We also expected the continued use of face coverings by adults and students in all communal areas.

I hope that parents/carers will understand that school staff feel the same way about this decision as we plan for the second half of the Summer term. We want to do all within our power to ensure that all students at St Edward's can remain onsite and learning. We continue to hear of outbreaks in schools locally and students and staff are facing difficulties related to outbreaks of new variants in schools nationally. You will have seen this reported widely in the press, including in Schools Week: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/covid-schools-close-sites-after-surge-in-indian-variant/>. We want to avoid this at St Edward's at all costs.

It is with this in mind that we will continue to encourage students and staff to wear face masks and adhere to our other safety measures. As previously, it is not an expectation or 'rule' that students wear face masks in classrooms. Of course, if you do not want your child to continue to wear a face mask in classrooms, this is your choice. We will support parents/carers with whatever decision they make for their child. Thank you to parents/carers for your continued support with all of our preventative measures.

To provide context, we remain in the position where some of our staff have had the first dose of the vaccine but many have not. Very few staff have had both doses of the vaccine. That said, as the vaccine roll out continues successfully, we have high hopes for

the time when normality resumes across the country. We are looking forward to no longer expecting the continued use of face coverings.

Today I have had cause to reflect on how far we've come since the pandemic first took hold. In May 2020, I shared with parents/carers a note from Bishop Peter. I invite you to remember one key point of Bishop Peter's note:

At the heart of church school education is the reality of Christian hope: a hope that will enable our young people to fulfil their potential, care for others and flourish in a world that will be very different beyond this time of pandemic restriction. Christians are called by God to learn, love and serve in the world in which he has placed us with all its wonder, tragedy and challenge. What you as teachers provide to nurture that hope and fulfilment can never be underestimated and is to be treasured. You can change lives and no more so than at a time like this. Please know you are prayed for and valued as we continue this extraordinary journey.

+Peter

We have moved so far in the past year and we are all eagerly awaiting news of the further lifting of restrictions. What remains the same in the year since Bishop Peter wrote to us is the extraordinary power of education to change lives. Our HOPE values teach us that it is up to us what the future looks like: when it comes to our future, we think it, we speak it, we write it, we actualise it through every thought, word and behaviour. Our ambitions remain the same at St Edward's, that we ensure our young people are supported to be happy and able to fulfil their wonderful potential. As we celebrate a successful half term, we remain acutely aware of the legacy that we strive to fulfil: at St Edward's, we want all members of our community to be supported to live 'Life in all its fullness'.

I wish all St Edward's families a very happy Half Term break and look forward to the first day of the second half of the Summer term on Monday 7th June.

With my very best wishes.



Jodie Hassan
Headteacher