

St Wilfrid's Catholic School

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Headteacher: Michael Ferry BEd (Hons) MA NPQH

Diocese of Arundel & Brighton and West Sussex County Council

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Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your families continue to stay safe and well.

My reason for writing to you now is to be completely transparent with you in providing an update of the impact of the pandemic on the school and to inform you of the actions I need to take as we move into the second national lockdown.

I wrote to you shortly before half term regarding confirmation of positive test results for two students and three members of staff during the final week of half term. All three of these were classed as isolated cases as they were not connected in any way. Unfortunately, over the half term break I was made aware of sixteen positive test results of students together with two from staff.

The result of this was that although thirteen of the student cases were isolated, three of them fell under the classification of "multiple" cases ie. there is a clear social link between the identified close contacts of each. These three cases were all in Year 13 and so very reluctantly, I made the decision that Year 13 would work from home for the duration of this week. Since returning to school yesterday I have received confirmation of a further four positive results from students.

Although the number of positive cases has risen quite quickly, the number of students which are having to self-isolate remains relatively small. Whereas some schools have sent home a whole year group because of one positive test result, the very fact that we continue to maintain a high standard of class and year group "bubble integrity" has meant that on average, only 6 students per positive case have had to self-isolate.

Currently there are ten members of staff who are self-isolating after having been identified as being a close contact (either with a positive school case or with a member of the public). This, coupled with other non COVID-19 related staff absence has meant that had Year 13 not been working from home this week, that I would have had to send another year group home yesterday and ask them to work from home for the remainder of the week.

As we move into the start of a national lockdown it is currently not possible, due to the lack of staff I have available, to have all students in school from next week. Therefore, after much consideration and consultation I have made the decision to operate a three-week rotation which would see Year 8, 9 & 10 working from home for one week at a time. The model looks like this:

W/b Mon 9th November (Monday INSET DAY – school closed)	Year 9 work from home & Year 8 & 10 in school
W/b Mon 15th November	Year 8 work from home & Year 9 & 10 in school
w/b Mon 23rd November	Year 10 work from home & Year 8 & 9 in school

As of next Tuesday, Year 9 will work from home. Work will be set through the Teams platform which students are familiar with. This plan will be under constant review and should the situation improve, we will return to all year groups being in attendance as soon as possible.

The reason I am making this decision now and providing you with this information is to give you as much notice as possible. This is not something which can be planned for and implemented at the last minute from a school point of view and I am crucially aware of the possible implications from a parental perspective.

The rationale behind choosing Years 8, 9 & 10 is that they are considered “legally mature” enough to be able to work from home without supervision and it allows for some form of protection to Years 11 – 13 who are currently expecting to sit exams at the end of this academic year.

This is far from ideal but under the current circumstances this option ensures that the school can remain open and that all classes can be staffed by an adult. Students simply cannot attend and be unsupervised and there is a significant risk of this being the case if I took no action.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Ferry', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Michael Ferry
Headteacher