



St. Thomas More High School

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16th October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I write hoping you are all keeping well with just one week to go before half term, following our second full review of our risk assessments and systems of control in response to the request to fully open schools from September. We review our systems weekly but fully evaluate and revise our systems of control if needed every three weeks.

We continue to operate year group 'bubbles' and our enhanced cleaning throughout the day and limited movement of students around the school during the day, means we are able to use all our specialist rooms and full curriculum offer. Students are responding responsibly to reminders of frequent handwashing and making space, with many now carrying and using their own hand sanitiser. We are asked to redouble our efforts to prevent the spread of coronavirus and help keep local rates down so please do check that your child has their own sanitiser to use and more than one clean face covering to wear if they choose to do so or must do so on their journey between home and school.

Attendance

We have been reassured that attendance since our full return on 7th September is above 95% overall, with no year group falling below 93%. Thank you for your support of us as a school in sending your children in, we hope this indicates your confidence in us here at St Thomas More. If you call in to report your child's absence, please be clear in your message of the reason. If you have been contacted by NHS Track and Trace please forward a copy of the information regarding the isolation period to our Attendance Officer via email to office@st-thomasmore.southend.sch.uk

Face coverings

We have many students choosing to wear a [face covering](#) and will review their mandatory use around school as the alert level has moved to Medium. In my regular meetings with our local Director and Deputy Director of PHE, they are clear that only when worn correctly does a face covering protect us all from the spread of coronavirus Covid-19. If disposable face coverings are worn they must be changed frequently and certainly daily; face coverings must be worn covering the face from the bridge of the nose to below the chin and fit well. We do still have some material face coverings available to purchase from school via the [School Gateway](#).

Remote Learning

Earlier this week we announced, that students will be able to [download the full Microsoft Office Suite of programs](#) (Word, PowerPoint, Excel etc.) on up to 5 devices which will enable us to start rolling out the use of Microsoft Teams and Microsoft SharePoint throughout the school to offer a unified remote experience to supplement our email system and the Office products currently installed in our computer rooms. Staff have started their training and we ask for your forbearance during this time of transition as staff adapt to this new system and learn its intricacies. Please see the [document](#) sent earlier this week from Mr Marshall and email him if you have any questions at JMARSHALL@st-thomasmore.southend.sch.uk. He will send out further information over the next few weeks and in the meantime the VLE and email system are still accessible for students to use via the school website, where an Office 365 link has also been added.

COVID-19 Alert levels

Earlier this week the Prime Minister made a [statement](#), on the response to the pandemic. He set out a three-tiered system of local COVID-19 Alert Levels in England – medium, high, and very high. Southend on Sea Borough Council have provided us with clarification included here. Southend on Sea Borough currently sits within the Medium level and Essex has moved into High.

[Information on local COVID alert levels](#) has been released, including what they mean, why they are being introduced and what the different levels are.

- o [A postcode search](#) is released to check local area restrictions.
- o [Information on local COVID alert levels](#) is updated.

In addition, as far as schools are concerned, travelling between home to school for both pupils and staff is allowed, irrespective of which tier the local authority area is in. This includes where the pupil or member of staff travels from an authority in a higher tier such as London or Essex CC area. Southend Borough Council have issued the following [statement](#)

“At the current time we do not believe that our rate of infection merits a request to move up tiers. However, we are very concerned about how quickly our rate is increasing and we will therefore continue to monitor our local data closely and daily, and are ready to take proactive action if we believe it is needed to prevent further spread.”

Parents Evenings and Sixth Form Open Evening

In light of the changes above, it is with regret that we have been unable to invite parents into school for Year 11 and Year 13 Parents Evenings. Instead, staff have been working hard to produce reports for these year groups which will be sent home before half term. We are also making plans for our own Year 11 students who would have attended a Sixth Form opening evening in November. This event too, has been cancelled.

Throughout the pandemic we have sought to take a considered and balanced approach. We still believe that this is the right path to take in the interests of public health and protecting our local and school community whilst balancing the need for our young people to be in school learning and enjoying a gradual return to an enriched school day.

We cannot thank you enough for your support throughout this time. Individually and collectively we can make a difference.

Keeping you all in our prayers,

Yours sincerely,



Mrs G Ackred
Headteacher