



20th August 2021

Dear Parents,

## **RE: COVID-19 Safety Measures for September 2021**

I apologise for intruding once again into your summer holiday. As September approaches, we are working hard at school to ensure that we can open according to the latest government guidance for schools in relation to COVID-19, whilst taking into account our particular demographic of pupils, parents and staff.

### **New Guidance**

The general 'feel' of the guidance is more relaxed than in the previous academic year, but much of this new approach assumes that the majority of parents and staff will be double-vaccinated before end of August 2021, and that all secondary aged pupils and all staff will be testing for COVID-19 using Lateral Flow devices, twice weekly for the whole of September.

Using the data collected from parents last year around consent for COVID testing and vaccinations, we have had to assume that a significant proportion of our pupils will not be testing twice weekly in the Autumn term. We have also assumed that a number of our staff will not take up the vaccination for COVID-19 before the end of August. With this in mind, and given the increase in COVID-19 positive cases in the South Hams currently, we have decided to take a cautious approach to stepping down our COVID precautionary measures to safeguard our school.

### **Our System of Controls**

As such, we will retain the following System of Controls:

1. Good Hygiene - robust hand and respiratory hygiene for all pupils, parents (when visiting) and staff
2. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes
3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated
4. Follow public health advice on testing, self isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

### **Public Health England has recently changed the guidance in relation to self-isolation.**

Any adult who has received two COVID-19 vaccinations and all children, pupils and students aged under 18 years and 6 months, do not now need to self-isolate should they be considered a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19, even if the confirmed case is within their own household.

This means that staff who do not need to self-isolate, and all pupils at SDSS under 18 years and 6 months who usually attend school should continue to attend as normal unless:

1. The staff member, child, pupil or student becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19
2. The staff member, child, pupil or student tests positive for COVID-19 (either with a Lateral Flow device or PCR test).

Any staff member, child, pupil or student who tests positive with a Lateral Flow device (LFD) test must self-isolate and seek a PCR test to confirm the LFD result. So long as the PCR test is taken within two days of the LFD test, a negative PCR test result will override a positive LFD test result and the self-isolating individual can return to school.

A positive PCR test will require the individual to self-isolate according to the government guidelines.

NHS test and trace will now undertake all contact tracing.

## **Bubbles**

We have made the decision to keep some of our bubbles in place to minimise the risk of full school closure, should we see a significant rise in positive COVID-19 cases in the coming weeks and months. The greatest risk to our school is the potential need for staff to self-isolate (due to not being fully vaccinated). Please note that we have not asked our staff to disclose their vaccination status to protect their right to privacy and that we have therefore had to make assumptions where raw data is not available.

As such, we will have the following bubbles for the Autumn term:

**Kindergarten bubble** - all three classes will form one bubble.

**Hood Manor bubble** - Classes 1-5 will form one bubble.

**High School bubble** - Classes 6-12 will form one bubble.

## **Testing**

The Government is asking schools to continue to support asymptomatic testing as part of its strategy for a safe return to school. Our school will not be operating on-site testing.

As such, **all school staff and pupils in Classes 6-12 are invited to collect the appropriate self-testing kits from the school office from Wednesday 1st September 2021.**

The Government strongly recommends that school staff and pupils/students take at least two tests during week commencing 30th August, and then to self-test twice weekly until the end of September when this advice will be reviewed. Testing is not mandatory and does not form a condition of employment for our staff.

## **Face Coverings**

The new government guidance does not require staff, children, pupils or students to wear face coverings during the school day. However, where pupils use public transport, the advice is for face coverings to continue to be used during travel to and from school. For this reason, we will have the necessary bins available at our entry points to allow for safe removal of face coverings.

## **Drop Off and Collection Arrangements**

Please double check the new [drop off and collection times](#), which include details on bubbles, designated gates, classroom allocation, and of course the short day options for classes 1-3. There are some amendments to our timings so it is imperative that you review the times to avoid any confusion. Any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me: [kaycee.fordham@sdsteiner.org](mailto:kaycee.fordham@sdsteiner.org).

## **School Office Opening Times**

Please note that the School Office will remain closed during the school day for the foreseeable future. It will open each morning and each afternoon to support families arriving late, and to allow parents the opportunity to ask questions, deliver things to the school etc. Opening hours will be: 8.30am - 9.00am and 2.45pm - 3.30pm each day.

## **Transport**

We would ask that where possible, parents and pupils do not use public transport to travel to and from school as this carries an additional risk of virus distribution. Instead, families are asked to use their own transport, walk to school or cycle using the designated cycle path.

## **Car Park and Vehicle Drop Off System**

We will continue with the staggered drop off and pick up times which require your cooperation to work effectively. Parents are asked to arrive promptly at their designated time (not early and not late) to allow their child to go through the gates swiftly, and to limit the number of cars in the queue and/or car parks.

Late arrivals should not enter school with a different bubble and in this instance, parents will need to accompany their child to the School Office, where you will need to wait until such time as all bubbles have been admitted and it is clear to move through the buildings without the possibility of mixing bubbles.

***As this will of course be incredibly inconvenient and stressful for all concerned, we ask that you make every effort to arrive within the correct time window.***

**Kindergarten families and those in classes 1 and 2** should park and walk to their designated gate/s. Once you have dropped your child/ren, please leave the site swiftly to allow other parents to use the car park. Parking is limited.

**Families for classes 3-8** should use the vehicle drop off and pick up system where possible. Please drive very slowly, and queue closely to provide maximum space for vehicles to queue safely.

**Students of class 9-12** can be dropped in car park 3 (by Hood Barn) and wait to be met by a teacher.

Where families have more than one child at different drop off and pick up times, it might be easiest to park and make your way on foot to collect them from their designated gates.

## **Physical Distancing at School**

Social distancing measures have now ended in the workplace and in schools. However, we would ask that our parent community consider the potential implications of very close contact including physical contact at this time, given the information contained within this letter. It is perhaps also prudent to consider those for whom this ongoing situation has been very stressful and worrying. Hugs are great but save them for your nearest and dearest when at school please.

## **Returning to School**

If you or your child have any concerns about returning to school, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or Jeff ([jeff.van.zyl@sdsteiner.org](mailto:jeff.van.zyl@sdsteiner.org)) for support.

With all that said, I look forward to welcoming you all back to school on Monday 6th September (or a little later for our Kindergarten families!).

With much warmth,

Kaycee Fordham  
**Facilities and Health & Safety Manager**  
**Executive Assistant to Education Manager**