

St Matthew Academy

St Joseph's Vale, Blackheath, London SE3 0XX

Headteacher: Ms Miranda Baldwin

Head of Primary: Ms Joanna Chick



11 October 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Please see below a joint letter from Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi and Health Secretary Sajid Javid to all parents of secondary school and college students to thank them for all their efforts in keeping education safe for all during the pandemic and talk about the importance of vaccinations and regular testing.

COVID-19 AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN ENGLAND

We know that children and young people have been hugely affected by the pandemic, both in terms of their education and their ability to socialise and participate in activities that benefit them outside of formal education.

We want to thank you as parents and guardians of secondary school for your support over the last eighteen months. We know this time has been difficult for many of you, as well as for the young people you care for.

As pupils return to the classroom, we would ask for your continued support to make sure your children are able to stay in face-to-face learning, by encouraging them to:

- test themselves for COVID-19 twice a week, and more frequently if they are specifically asked to do so. This way, we can find individuals who have the virus but are not showing symptoms, and stop them from passing it on to others.
- come forward for the COVID-19 vaccine. This is one of the best things young people can do to protect themselves and those around them.

We know that pupils have missed a lot of time in school and college since the pandemic started, and that there is no substitute for face-to-face learning. Keeping pupils in the classroom in the coming months is therefore a Government priority, both for their immediate and longer-term wellbeing.

We know that some of you will be concerned about the health risks to the young people you care for. We want to reassure you that the evidence shows that young people remain at very low risk of serious illness from COVID-19. However, we need to continue to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Young people who get ill will need to miss school or college, and may spread it to others. That is why we are encouraging you all to support your children to get vaccinated and to continue to test regularly. This will help to detect cases early, reduce spread, and keep pupils in education.

Vaccination

Vaccines are our best defence against COVID-19. They help protect young people, and benefit those around them. Vaccination makes people less likely to catch the virus and less likely to pass it on.

The COVID-19 vaccination programme for children aged 12-15 years has now started. Thousands of young people across the country have already taken the opportunity to receive their vaccine. If your child is 12-15 years old, a consent form and information leaflet from the [NHS](#) will be sent home allowing you to provide consent for your child to receive their vaccination at school.

We remind you that 16- and 17-year-olds can book their vaccination through the [National Booking Service](#) or find a convenient [walk-in site](#). Please do help your 16 and 17-year-olds to book a vaccination for yourself if you have not done so already, or if you have missed a second dose.

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Testing

We ask that you support and encourage your children to test twice a week at home, every week, with Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests. This will help us reduce the transmission of COVID-19 among our children. Please report and upload test results [online](#), even if they are negative or void, as this allows us to understand the virus and take additional action when needed.

In addition to regular twice weekly testing:

- Children who receive a positive LFD result should isolate and book a PCR test to confirm their result.
- Children who are identified as a close contact by NHS Test and Trace should take a PCR test and continue to go to school while they wait for their result.
- In response to potential outbreaks, your school, college or local health team may advise additional testing. For example, if your child is identified as a close contact, they may be asked to take daily LFDs, while they wait for their PCR result. In this scenario, they should continue to attend school as long as their LFD results remain negative.

Additionally, please encourage your child to [follow guidance on wearing face coverings](#) in crowded spaces with people they don't know well, for example on school transport.

We know that many of you will have questions or concerns about this, and we understand that, therefore this link will help with some of questions you and your family may have [frequently asked questions](#). The NHS website (www.nhs.uk) is an excellent source of advice, which we hope will be able to answer many of your questions about testing or vaccination. If not, you can call the 119 service who should be able to help with questions on testing. When you get a vaccination consent form for your child, it will include details of how you can ask further questions of your local teams.

Thank you again for your support.

**Sent by St Matthew Academy on behalf of
Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi and Health Secretary Sajid Javid**