



We are called to be the hands and face of Jesus as we learn, love and grow together

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Dear parents and carers

I must begin by wishing you and your families a happy new year. I do hope that you have managed to enjoy something of a break and a celebration, albeit in a rather different manner, over the holiday period. We all pray that 2021 delivers a much-needed element of hope as vaccines are rolled out.

Currently, we plan to fully open the school on Monday unless we are directed that it is unsafe to do so.

Given all that you will have been following in the news about a return to school in January, I have delayed writing to you until this evening hoping for some more definitive advice. Unfortunately, this has not been forthcoming although things could still change within the next 24 hours. It should be noted that schools do not receive any prior warning of announcements relating to the status of schools. Senior leaders have been busily preparing for all eventualities, just in case.

What we do know, however, is that professional associations have presented legal challenges to the Department for Education in relation to a full reopening of schools at this time and that one union has advised its members to request the right to work from home following regulations relating to Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act. This does not amount to industrial action but relates to an individual's right to ensure that their workplace is safe. I will know more about the number of staff that this impacts on by tomorrow afternoon after which the SLT will be able to make a decision in relation to the safe staffing of the school.

It is only right that I warn all families that although we plan to reopen fully on Monday 4th January, this may not be possible if we do not have sufficient staff.

Equally, should the government U-turn on its decision to keep all schools fully open, the school may need to use Monday in order to organise Critical Worker / Vulnerable pupil groups (who will be able to be taught in school) and remote learning procedures for all other pupils. As such the school would be closed to ALL pupils on this day. Should this be the case you will be informed.

To prepare for what might be, I will be sending a link to an online questionnaire in relation to Critical Worker provision tomorrow with a timescale for completing. This will allow us to prioritise places, should we need to, to those most in need of 'in school provision'. More details will follow tomorrow with the survey link.

Regardless of whether the school is open to all pupils or only to Critical workers / vulnerable pupils, plans have been put together to ensure that given the new strain of the virus that we are dealing with, as many appropriate mitigations are in place to protect pupils, staff and families. These will include the following measures:

(1) Staff will be wearing their masks in school more routinely, in and out of the classroom.



- (2) Pupils are permitted (but not required) to wear masks providing they do so independently without risk to themselves or others.
- (3) Bubble sizes will be reduced to 30 pupils (class sized) except in Reception where staffing and supervision makes this impossible.
- (4) A continued commitment to observing 2m social distancing between staff and between staff and pupils. (If we are only open to Critical Workers and Vulnerable children, maintaining 2m pupil to pupil will also be possible as numbers will be limited in each class. This will not be possible if we are fully open to all).
- (5) A continued commitment to ventilation of all rooms being used. If cold weather demands that ventilation is decreased, regular but limited full ventilation will occur according to school policy. The uniform code will continue to be relaxed in order to allow warmer clothes (e.g. thicker sweatshirts / a gilet / under-armour etc) when needed.
- (6) You will be asked to adhere to the staggered start and finish times and to not mix with other families on site / or on the way home. The responsibility of protecting pupils and staff by not mixing and by adhering to Tier 4 rules is essential if all are to be protected. Please do not linger on site or in places beyond the school site at the end of the day.
- (7) Parents are reminded that they are not part of their child's bubble and as such the school bubble does not extend beyond the school day.
- (8) Please adhere to current childcare regulations. These regulations allow **one** consistent person from outside of your household to be a member of your childcare bubble. This cannot change over time or from day to day.
- (9) Only one adult should accompany children onto the school site at the start and end of the day – this is vital in reducing the footfall across the site and has not always been strictly adhered to. This must be a priority moving forward, particularly whilst we remain in Tier 4.

The school risk assessment is currently being updated and will be shared tomorrow. This may also be updated in the days ahead following further advice from Herts County Council.

Equally important will be our continued focus on ensuring that pupils and staff displaying symptoms of Coronavirus are isolated for at least 10 days (as is their household) or until a negative test result is received.

The official symptoms of Coronavirus remain the same:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature); or
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual); or
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

In children other early symptoms have been reported such as a continuous headache or an unsettled tummy. If your child is generally unwell, please keep them at home and monitor for further symptoms particularly whilst transition rates locally are high. If you are unsure, please contact the school office for advice.

Please ensure that if any member of your household develops symptoms, phone or email the school immediately (absence@stvincent.herts.sch.uk) and arrange a test as per previous instructions. If any households have been isolating over the Christmas holiday period, please ensure that the school is aware of the timescales for this isolation. **Your child must not return to school following isolation until an agreed date has been confirmed by the school.**

If a bubble needs to close, or if an individual needs to isolate, the school will advise you of the work pattern that will be implemented and of procedures for feedback.



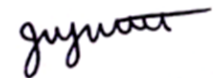
As things are changing very rapidly, I urge everyone to look out for Parentmails over the next few days and be aware of our Twitter feed (accessible via the website) and class social media groups.

I am sorry that I have nothing more definite to tell you today but will Parentmail as soon as I have any news to share.

Should you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to email me via head@stvincent.herts.sch.uk. I will respond to you as soon as I am able to.

Praying that our start to the Spring Term is as positive as it can be and assuring you of my attention during these uncertain times.

May God bless you and those most dear to you.



Jon White
Headteacher

