



SCHOOL UPDATES & REMINDERS

THANK YOU:

Dear Parent/Carer,

At the end of a thoroughly rewarding first half term of school, I would like to take a moment to say a sincere thank you to you all for the support and co-operation you have shown over the past eight weeks. You know that our amazing staff worked tirelessly to ensure that school was safe and ready to welcome back all our pupils in September, and that they have continued to do so to keep our doors open to all pupils for the duration of the term. This has been no mean feat, but it has certainly helped to know that we have had the backing of our families during these unprecedented times. It has been a continual joy to see the smiling faces of our children at the school gate each morning and to witness first-hand the positivity, determination and resilience with which they have tackled the fresh challenges of this new educational landscape within which we find ourselves. Thank you for readying and reassuring your children as they have returned to school, and for all the words of encouragement and praise we have received since the start of term.

Undoubtedly, we are gearing up for renewed challenge when we return to school on Monday 2nd November. As a staff, we are ready for the occasion – should it arise – for which we would need to continue delivering our school curriculum 'remotely' if pupils are instructed to fulfil a period of isolation at home. You may be aware that this eventuality has affected a large number of schools locally and nationally, and whereas I take some pride from the fact that we have made it through 8 weeks without any of our classes being affected in this way, I know that in the majority of these cases, schools affected will have been powerless to prevent the spread of coronavirus among their school communities – and that, unfortunately, St Mary's is no exception. In this vein, I have attached our school Remote Learning Policy for your information. I would encourage you to read the policy in preparation for the eventuality of a partial or full class closure which could affect your child(ren) over the coming weeks and months, and to act upon the points raised for parents, with particular regard to: access to, and familiarity with, eschools; resourcing and access to internet ready devices at home; online safety. We will continue to do all we can to safeguard against this scenario however it is prudent for us all to be prepared at this time.

I hope that you all have a safe, restful and enjoyable half term break. Our children need time to unwind following a 'full-on' first half term, and I do hope that you will all find time to get outdoors and enjoy the suitably seasonal Autumn weather! As you will already be acutely aware, we are – both as a region, and nation – on a knife-edge with regards the continued spread of coronavirus. We have been asked by Council and Public Health leaders to remind you all of your duty to adhere to the local restrictions currently imposed upon us in the North East region – for the greater good of our society: its most vulnerable, our NHS and of course schools. 'Bubbles' cease to exist in essence over the holiday period (even for friendship groups in the same class), so groups of children and families must ensure that there is no indoor mixing of households and that the 'rule of six' is adhered to in private gardens and public spaces – both of which are restrictions that have been introduced by the government to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and are enforceable by law. It is vitally important that – though difficult – we all continue to follow these rules with consistency and to encourage our children to do the same even if this means revising plans for holidays (Halloween, firework displays etc).

I would finally like to draw your attention to the information regarding 'COVID Half-Term Protocols' found below. Even over the half-term break, schools continue to play a vital role in supporting Public Health with contact tracing in the event of a positive COVID-19 case among their pupils and staff. It is critical that school are made aware at the earliest possible opportunity of a positive test outcome, so I would ask that you all take the time to read the guidance and ensure that you follow the processes laid-out if your child is affected in this way (please remember, News Bulletins can always be retrieved from eschools or the school website to remind you of the protocols to follow).

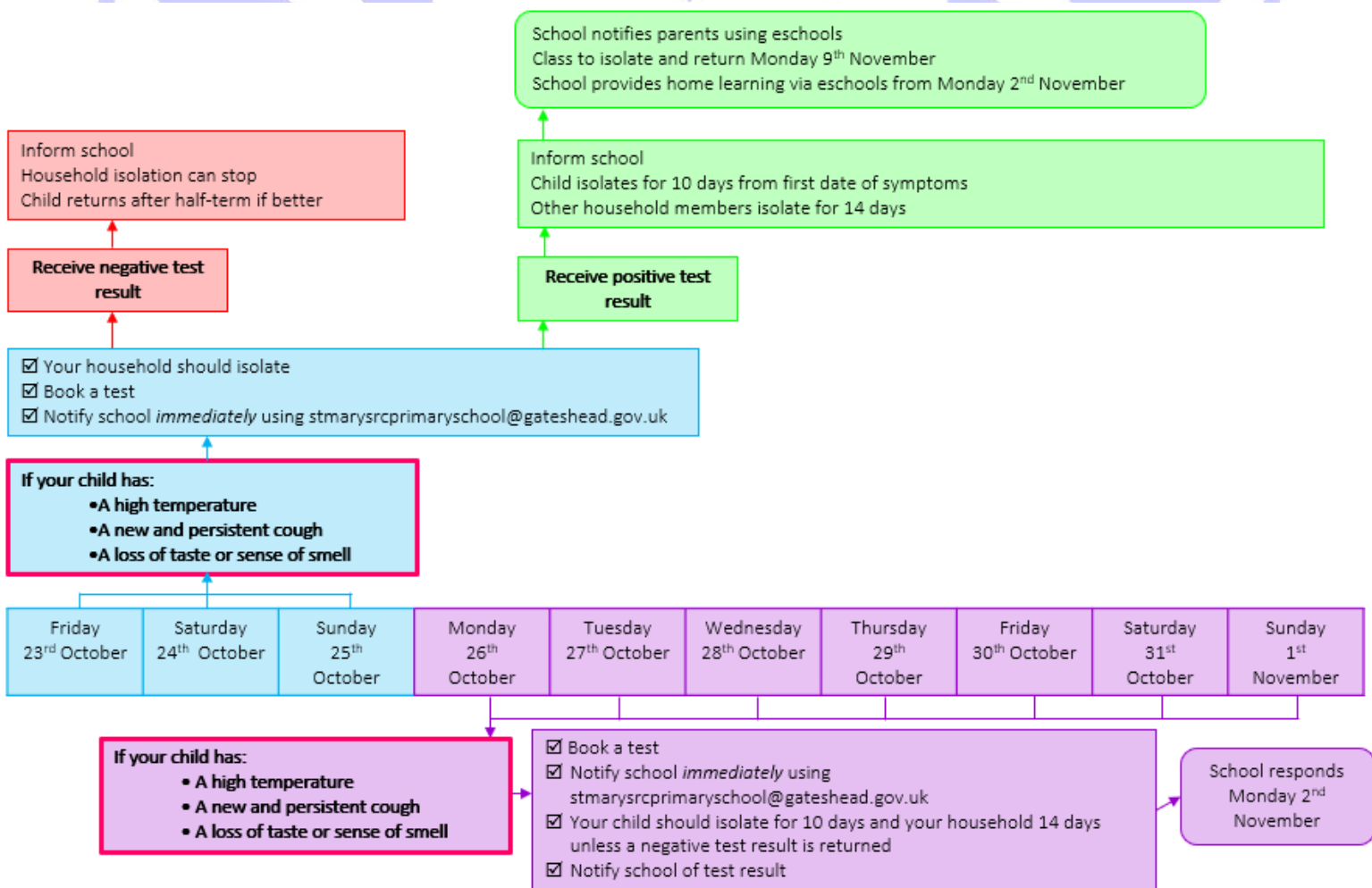
I look forward to seeing all our pupils back in school for start of Autumn 2. Upon our return, we will share information about events we have planned for the remainder of term including our plan for Advent and Christmas. It promises to be a great half-term!

Yours in Faithful Optimism,

Mr J Wheatley
Headteacher

COVID-19 HALF-TERM PROTOCOLS:

Please follow the below flowchart for any positive cases confirmed over the half-term holiday. It is critically important that we are made aware of a positive outcome as soon as possible – no matter when this should occur. Do not wait to inform us of a suspected or confirmed case as this needs to be reported by school, and we need to prepare ourselves to fulfil our duties with regards contact tracing and preparation of remote learning resources.



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD:

This year, in spite of revisions we continue to enforce in response to the global coronavirus pandemic, we will be collecting for the Operation Christmas Child shoebox appeal. Leaflets have gone home to explain how you can take part, and after half term we will share collection dates with you.

Please do not send in your filled shoeboxes until instructed, as we do not presently have the capacity to store the boxes for any longer than necessary in advance of their collection. Thank you!

PARENT TRAVEL SURVEY:

The Council's Road Safety team collect data each year to show how their various projects and interventions influence travel in the borough. They are presently asking parents and carers to complete a simple [survey](#) regarding travel to and from school to help with their work. Please could you spare a couple of minutes to take part in the survey and continue to help improve safe and sustainable travel in Gateshead. Thank you!

Y2 GREAT FIRE OF LONDON VIRTUAL WORKSHOP:

On Monday 2nd November, pupils in Y2 will be receiving a virtual workshop from *4Schools* at Durham University. As we are not presently taking pupils out of school on class trips, it is a great opportunity for the children to further their knowledge of the Great Fire – their current History topic – with this virtual offer. There will be no cost for pupils for the experience.

REMINDER – SCHOOL PHOTOS:

Please do not send any further photo orders into school. All orders must now be made online following the instructions on the order form.

OCTOBER HALF TERM:

School will close for October Half Term from 26th-30th October. Pupils will return to school on Monday 2nd November.