



SCHOOL UPDATES & REMINDERS

RETURN TO SCHOOL:

It has been wonderful to have all our pupils in school this week, and especially to see the smiles on their faces as they have enjoyed time with their friends and teachers, their learning and play, and everything else that school has to offer. Thank you, on behalf of all the staff, for all that you have done to prepare your child(ren) for their return. We hope to enjoy the continued successes of our pupils' return over the coming weeks and look forward to sharing with you news of what we get up to via our weekly News Bulletin and school Twitter feed (@whickhamstmarys) – which can also be viewed on the front page of our school website.

So that we can continue to build on the successes of this week, we would ask that you pay particular attention to the pointers listed below. Thank you for your ongoing support and co-operation.

School Start Times

As you will be aware, we have operated staggered start and end times since the outset of the academic year to ensure that pupils are able to get in to school safely and efficiently. The staggering of these times does mean however that classes are on differing timetables throughout the day. It is important that pupils are in school as early as possible, within their allotted slot, to maximise their access to the full learning provision on offer at school. **This is particularly important for pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, where pupils should be in class for 8:40am**; if pupils arrive at 8:55am, when the gates close, they will have missed at least 15 minutes of learning time which, when combined over the year, will amount to a significant figure.

Reading

Please could all families ensure that their child's reading folder (including all school books) is **returned by Monday**. School will make contact next week with any family from whom we have not received folders to ensure that much needed books are returned to school. We would appreciate that any family who genuinely believe a folder/book etc to be lost get in contact with the school office by Monday to discuss this.

Homework

Given the gargantuan efforts that our parents and carers have made with remote learning over the past term, we have taken the decision that the only 'homework' pupils will be expected to complete each week is reading. Should parents wish their child to continue with further study at home, there are a wealth of online services that can be used – please refer to our class Curriculum Booklets and the resources shared throughout the recent period of remote learning. Any other activities or opportunities that may be suggested by the school/class teachers will be optional for the remainder of the term; this will be reviewed and further information shared at the start of the Summer Term.

Contact with Teachers

Please be reminded that, with all pupils now on site, teachers will cease communicating with parents via eschools messenger. Apologies to any parents who may have contacted a teacher over the past week or so in this way and have not received a reply.

Any messages for class teachers should be emailed for their attention to stmarysrcprimaryschool@gateshead.gov.uk, or a telephone appointment made via the school office.

School Shoes

Please be reminded that **all pupils are expected to attend school in appropriate school shoes every day** – apart from their designated PE day. Pupils should not wear boots or trainers on a regular basis. We will be understanding where pupils cannot, for whatever reason, wear appropriate footwear to school for a short period of time (eg. unforeseen damage to school shoes, a foot injury etc), but would ask that parents inform the school office every time such an instance should occur. Thank you to those parents who have taken the time to have this conversation with school already in anticipation of their child's return this week.

We appreciate that access to shoes 'in-store' is somewhat limited at the moment, but we would ask parents to use readily available online services to purchase the requisite footwear (returns can be made very easily should sizing be an issue).

We do not anticipate that pupils will continue to come to school in boots or trainers over the coming week, as there has now been ample time for this to have been sorted. We expect school to be open to all pupils for the remainder of the school year, and it is important that we continue to maintain our high standards throughout this period.

It is also important that we remind all families that if they are struggling to afford any essential school items – including uniform and shoes – school can offer support to ensure that all our children have everything they need for the school day. Mr Wheatley would actively welcome a confidential conversation with any family in this situation; please just contact the school office to make an appointment.

Hair

As stated previously, we completely understand that pupils' access to a 'professional' haircut is severely limited at this time. That being said, it is important for health and safety that **all long hair is tied back appropriately** throughout the school day.

Hair bands and other accessories worn to school should be simple and in-keeping with the school uniform policy (eg. No oversized bows or novelty/over-the-top hairbands).

OUTDOOR LEARNING SESSIONS:

Next week, **Reception class** and **Year 2** will be taking part in some outdoor learning sessions. As such, pupils will need a pair of wellies and some gloves – they will be spending a bit of time gardening in the school allotment! Please do not rush out to buy anything new, and of course, please get in contact with the school office if you are unable to provide these items, for whatever reason, for your child. Please also ensure that every item of clothing is clearly labelled with your child's name.

COMIC RELIEF:

We will be celebrating Red Nose Day in school on Friday 19th March. On the day, pupils can come into school in their own clothes and any suitable Red Nose Day attire (please don't feel the need to buy anything new). We would also like pupils to prepare their best (*appropriate!*) joke to share with classmates and as part of our weekly celebration assembly.

We would ask for a voluntary contribution of £1 per pupil for the appeal which can be brought in to school by pupils in a clearly labelled envelope on the day.

STAFFING UPDATES:

We have some further exciting news to share that Mrs Gardner is pregnant and expecting her second child in the Summer. Both Mrs Gardner and Miss Millican will be leaving school around Easter, and we are pleased to inform you that the school has appointed two new teachers to cover their planned absences. Miss Grant will take up post in Y5 over the coming weeks, working alongside Miss Millican in the first instance, and Miss Wilson will join us at the start of the Easter term in Y4. We wish Miss Millican and Mrs Gardner all the best in their continuing journeys of motherhood, and of course look forward to welcoming Miss Grant and Miss Wilson as new members of our St Mary's family. Parents of pupils in Years 4 and 5 have received a letter with further information via eschools.

CONTINUING COVID-19 PROTOCOLS:

Please share these protocols with all adults involved in providing care for your child.

If your child displays any of the following COVID symptoms:

- A high temperature
- A new, continuous cough
- A loss or change of the sense of smell or taste

it is vital that you:

- **Keep your child and any siblings/household members at home** and isolated;
- **Book a test.** Tests can be booked online <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or by ringing 119 if you have problems using the online service;
- **Notify school immediately** by emailing wsmcovid@gatedu.org.

You are strongly encouraged to book a test at a testing centre – rather than a postal test – to avoid the delay of critical information to contacts.

If any member of your household or **any close contact that your child has outside of school** develops symptoms, **your child must isolate immediately** and **must not come to school** until a COVID-19 test outcome is received by the symptomatic case.

ASYMPTOMATIC TESTING FOR COVID-19 FOR PARENTS AND CARERS:

Undertaking regular, rapid coronavirus (COVID-19) testing helps reduce transmission of the virus. Parents and other adults in households with children at school or college, who do not have symptoms, can now access regular, rapid coronavirus (COVID-19) testing. This includes childcare and support bubbles.

Tests are fast, easy and completely free. There are different ways for a household, childcare or support bubble to collect their test to take at home, twice-weekly:

- through your employer, if they offer testing to employees
- by collecting a home test kit from a local test site – anyone aged 18 or over can collect 2 packs of 7 tests
- by ordering a home test kit online – please do not order online if you can access testing through other routes, this frees up home delivery for those who need it most

You can find more information here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff>.

If you have any queries about the tests, and you live in England, please call 119 (free from mobiles and landlines). Lines are open every day from 7am to 11pm.

Children of primary school age (and below) without symptoms are not being asked to take a test.

Testing is voluntary, but strongly recommended to all who are eligible. Alongside the vaccine, washing hands, wearing face coverings, and maintaining social distancing, rapid testing plays a vital role in reducing transmission rates. Getting into the habit of regular testing as part of our everyday lives will help us all to play our part and do what we can to protect each other.

Lateral flow tests should **not** be used by anyone who has coronavirus symptoms. If anyone in your household has coronavirus symptoms they should get a test to check if they have coronavirus via the gov.uk website (here: <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>) or by ringing 119.

If you have been advised by your child's school or childcare setting that your child has been identified as a close contact of a positive coronavirus case they must isolate for 10 days, and you must follow the advice given by the school or childcare setting.

If your child is isolating because they have been identified as a close contact of someone with coronavirus they cannot return to the school or childcare setting before the end of the 10-day isolation period even if they have a negative test result (either PCR or lateral flow).

Lateral flow test kits should **only** be used by the person they were issued to. If you have a child in secondary school who is testing themselves at home the tests must not be used by anyone else in the household e.g. a sibling or parent.

Similarly, if you have access to lateral flow tests through your workplace you should not use these to test your children at home.

