

10th September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you to provide further information following the confirmed case of COVID-19 that the school was informed about yesterday.

Firstly, I would like to reiterate that it was always recognised that the reopening of schools nationally carried a degree of risk. As stated in the school's reopening document, *COVID-19: Plan for full reopening in September: Vyners School* ([click here](#)), the overarching principles for the risk management of reopening schools in September 2020 are that measures are proportionate and based on Department for Education (DfE) and Public Health England (PHE) guidance ([click here](#)); the reopening of schools is an exercise between balancing the school's commitment to providing an education for all students whilst minimising any risks in relation to contraction and transmission of COVID-19. School leaders support the government's ambition that all children and young people return to their place of education and have access to a full curriculum.

In line with DfE guidance, the majority of secondary schools are operating year group bubbles as this allows students to access classrooms across the range of specialist subjects that they study. However, this does mean that each child will interact in lessons with different students within their year group. School leaders have carefully considered the risks and the DfE's ten control measures; the details are outlined in the school's risk assessment ([click here](#)).

The ten control measures in the DfE guidance all inherently recognise that positive cases of COVID-19 are likely to occur in schools, particularly if rates of transmission increase in the community. However, the control measures are in place to ensure that cases are minimised and reduce transmission. School staff have implemented a stringent system of controls in order to mitigate such an outbreak and will continue to work with PHE to manage the current situation.

As a reminder there are a number of actions that your child can take to protect themselves from the coronavirus:

Do

- *wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds*
- *use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available*
- *wash your hands as soon as you get home*
- *cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze*
- *put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards*

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Mr Gary Mullings BA (Hons)
Headteacher

A number of inquiries have been received throughout the day about the current situation. The responses to these inquiries are summarised as follows:

- **My child is in the same bubble as the student with the positive test for COVID-19. Do they need to self-isolate?**

The advice from Public Health England (PHE) is that individuals only need to self-isolate if they have had close contact with the individual who tested positive for COVID-19. Close contact is defined as within 2 metres for a period of 15 minutes or longer.

- **If the student with the positive COVID-19 test has siblings, do they need to self-isolate?**

Yes. All members of the household need to self-isolate.

- **I believe that my child has had close contact with a sibling of the student who tested positive. Does my child need to self-isolate?**

No. If a sibling develops symptoms or has a positive test, school staff will contact all families of students who have had close contact with the sibling to advise them of the next steps. School staff will update the wider school community of any further positive COVID-19 test results.

- **My child uses the same facilities as the Sixth Form bubble. Should I be concerned?**

The canteen areas are thoroughly cleaned before, during and after each sitting to ensure that there is a limited risk of contamination. Each year group has its own designated toilet facilities that are cleaned throughout the day. All students are expected to follow preventative hygiene measures; these control measures allow the school to operate year group communal spaces.

- **Are face masks now mandatory at Vyners?**

School leaders had anticipated that face masks would become mandatory at some stage during this term. Currently, the seasonal conditions allow effective ventilation and the majority of students are spending their break times in external spaces. Given the positive COVID-19 case, school leaders are now strongly recommending that students and staff wear face masks in corridors when moving between lessons or in communal areas within the building¹. However, the use of face masks in corridors and internal communal spaces will be mandatory from **Wednesday 16th September 2020**. This will allow time for an effective induction period and acquisition of appropriate items.

¹ This will not apply when students are eating in a seated area within one of the school's canteens.

It will be important that all members of the school community understand how to use face masks correctly. By the end of the week, all students, during a virtual assembly, will have watched a video to assist them with the induction process. I would ask that all parents and carers watch this video ([click here](#)) and reinforce the key points with their child. Should any children be exempt from wearing a face covering, I would be grateful if their parent/carer could contact Mrs Opie in the school office at office@vynersschool.org.uk.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the community for its unwavering support during these unprecedented times. I will continue to provide information to parents and carers on a regular basis and trust this letter provides clarification and reassurance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Mullings', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gary Mullings
Headteacher