**St Bernadette’s Catholic Primary School**

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Dear Parents/ Carers,

Please see below a letter from Dr Arif Rajpura, Director of Public Health

Dear Schools Community,

Many of you will have listened to the recent announcement from the Prime Minister on living with COVID-19 and the Government’s plan for removing the remaining legal restrictions. Whilst this may initially sound like a major change, in reality this is not the case, as removing legal restrictions does not change public health measures and guidance. In particular, these changes in no way affect existing long term advice that children who are ill should not be sent to school, especially if they have symptoms which might indicate other infectious gastro enteric or respiratory diseases.

Living with and managing the Coronavirus requires all of us to continue to follow safer behaviours to manage risk including the guidance that anyone who tests positive is advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least five full days. Following those five days the guidance should continue to be followed until two negative test results are received on consecutive days.

The Government is able to take this step now because of the success of the vaccination programme and I would strongly encourage any of you who have not yet taken up the vaccine to consider doing so now.

**What does this mean for schools?**

The guidance to self-isolate where you test positive is still in place and hasn’t changed. Parents should not send their child to school if they have symptoms or have a positive test result for COVID-19. If parents insist then the School can take the decision to refuse your child entry to school, if in their reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other pupils and staff from possible infection. Pupils with symptoms should book a PCR test which will still be available until the 1st of April.

The change you do need to be aware of relates to close contacts and is as follows:

* Where you are fully vaccinated and identified as a close contact you no longer need to test daily for 7 days.
* Where you are not fully vaccinated and identified as a close contact you no longer need to self-isolate.

If the number of positive cases in your school/nursery/college substantially increases you might be advised that additional measures are being introduced and the school will advise parents of any changing situation/measures.

Finally, I would strongly encourage all eligible children and staff to ensure that they are fully vaccinated.

Kind regards,

**Dr Arif Rajpura**
Director of Public Health