

16 May 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I am sorry to write again, but the school has received advice from the Director of Public Health for Lancashire to maintain the use of face coverings in school.

I am sorry that this contradicts our earlier email, but the advice was not received until after the close of school on Friday.

I have included a copy of the wording from Dr Sakthi Karunanithi, Director of Public Health, below:

*"I am writing to you to advise that your students and staff should continue to wear face coverings despite restrictions relaxing nationally next week.*

*As you will be aware, we are concerned locally about the spread across the region of the variant of global concern that was first detected in India. This step would be a prudent one that will help reduce outbreaks in schools and colleges and help ensure you can stay open.*

*I am therefore recommending that you continue to follow the current guidance on face coverings until 21 June, the next landmark in the government's "roadmap". The guidance will be reviewed ahead of this date.*

*Continuing to use face coverings in schools and colleges along with maintaining hand washing, social distancing, fresh air, and regular testing will help to control the spread of the variant.*

*My counterpart in Blackburn with Darwen is of the same view as me and will be providing the same advice to head teachers in his area.*

*I understand that this is a tough recommendation to make but taking this step will help reduce outbreaks. This is vital so we can build on the good work to keep levels of infection, hospital admissions and the numbers of people becoming seriously ill low.*

*We want to do all we can to keep our schools and colleges open. The classroom is the best place for young people to learn. Wearing face coverings for just a few weeks longer until we control the situation is an effective way of helping us to do this."*

**Therefore, we will continue to recommend students to wear masks on corridors and in communal areas in school. This will still mean that students will wear a mask when entering the site in the mornings.**

**We will encourage students to continue to wear them in classrooms**, but this will not be compulsory. We are making this decision based on the low rates of infection locally but will continue to monitor the situation. As we continue to test for COVID at home, we will reassess our position at regular intervals. Exemptions will obviously continue to be supported.

I can only apologise for the mixed messages and thank parents for their understanding and support. Whilst the issue of face coverings can cause much debate, we are teachers, who despite expertise in many areas, are not

qualified to go against the advice we receive from the Local Authority. I hope you continue to trust us to manage the safety of the students as we have done since the start.

Thank you again for your support, understanding and endless patience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray Baker', enclosed in a faint, light-colored oval shape.

Ray Baker

Headteacher

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*"A learning community in pursuit of excellence"*

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