

21 September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you to ask for your help please. I am going to bring in some additional measures around the management of COVID cases within school and the impact this will have in the way we run the school on a day-to-day basis for the short and medium term. I would also like to ask for your support around the type and nature of food and drink being brought into school.

### **COVID and mitigation within the school:**

Currently we have 844 students on roll, which is 100 more than the site was originally built for and as a result we have corridors and classrooms that are full to the brim. We have been asking the local authority for help with the buildings, but we are still in the process of trying to get a plan together with them. I am often asked about the 'Boys' school, but the reality is that the boilers haven't worked for six years and the main part of that school is simply not fit for anyone's children to be taught in. I say this; because it is impossible to ask students to maintain any distance in our classrooms or corridors and whilst we are currently using the field at lunch and break, the weather is turning colder, and inevitably we will see the return of winter weather and the closing of the school fields.

We track all cases of COVID and we are seeing what appear to be small clusters of cases within year groups, this is not a surprise given the removal of so many steps to limit transmission at the start of this academic year and we have had 20 confirmed cases this academic year so far. Whilst the risk to children and teenagers appears to be minimal, there is a risk and we need to take steps to protect everyone we can within our community and there are more cases now than any similar timescale across the last two academic years. Whilst much of the statutory guidance with regard to COVID in schools has been withdrawn, I do believe that we have a moral obligation to try to do what is right by our community, this includes keeping as open a curriculum and extra-curricular provision as possible, whilst taking proportional steps to mitigate risk. However, if we want a full PE offer, singing and instruments in music, an 'open evening' to be of value to our community, 80 students across a range of years playing tennis together, 40 students in cookery clubs together, 90 students attending rugby and so on, and so on, we need to take some steps elsewhere to balance the risk.

To this end, we are going to require face coverings in school again from Monday 27 September 2021 and until the end of this half-term Friday 22 October 2021 in the first instance. Staff and students will wear face coverings in communal areas, students will wear them in lessons and staff will make a judgement about what is best in their opinion with regard to students' learning in their lessons – all staff will make a decision as to the wearing of a face covering dependent on rooming, distance and the nature of discussions taking place. I have to say that it is likely that we will need to reintroduce face coverings for a second time this academic year as we move further into winter, but the aim is to move back out of face coverings if the number of confirmed cases fall or there appears to be less of a cluster effect at the end of this half-term.

I have asked tutors to talk through the reasons why during pastoral time this week, but can you please talk to you children as well.

The other significant mitigation we have is ventilation, in effect keeping all the windows and doors open. Our school was built in 1953 and we have the original radiators and pipework, the vast majority of windows are original, so even with the doors and windows closed, it isn't always warm. Can I ask that you please provide a plain black jumper or cardigan with no visible logo for the winter months or a plain white t-shirt or vest to be worn under the shirt. We have some spare jumpers and a few t-shirts and we can provide some limited help to buy jumpers. If you need support, please email [schooloffice@psf.wirral.sch.uk](mailto:schooloffice@psf.wirral.sch.uk) and mark the email jumpers. We will continue not to allow hoodies in school and coats will only be worn as a last resort, so please layer up your children as it gets colder, because doors and windows will remain open.

### **Sugary drinks, energy drinks and multipacks of chocolate and sweets:**

We do not allow energy drinks, bottles or cans of pop or large quantities of sweets and chocolates in school. I took this decision as it was apparent that some students were using lunch money to buy quite simply ridiculous amounts of sweets and pop. These then become a distraction or they are eaten in a huge quantity and students end up making themselves feel sick, or they are bouncing off the walls, and impacting upon everyone's learning.

We will confiscate and return full packets, bottles or cans at the end of the day, if, however, they are open when we see them, we will need to dispose of them as they are collected.

I am not trying to be the food police, but we cannot have students coming into school with two 1.5litre bottles of coke and fanta, plus 20 packets of fruit mentoes and expect them to be able to focus on their learning, and allow others to learn. Again, I will ask that form tutors talk to your children, but please support the school and talk at home about the distraction that this causes. Students are here to learn, not to supply their friends with a lifetime's worth of sweets; please, please help us to manage the sometimes crazy amounts of sugary and caffeine filled products we see. A pint of mixed slushie is never going to make it past me on the gate and I am sure that you can understand why.

As ever, we rely on your support and it makes a huge difference to the whole school when you talk about what we are trying to do in school, when you explain as we have, why we are doing the things we do for each other. Your children have been brilliant before and during COVID and you play a huge part in that happening, thank you.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Flanagan', with a stylized, cursive script.

Kevin Flanagan  
Headteacher