

1 November 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

We received advice from Public Health after school finished on Friday 22 October 2021 to reinstate face coverings within the communal areas of the school. I didn't want to send you this letter during the break as you and your children need a break from school, and worries about COVID. We do though need to follow the advice from Public Health as there are really significant numbers of confirmed COVID cases in schools nationally and locally. In the final week of last half term, about 8% of secondary age students had COVID. As a school we had a rate of less than half of the national figure at under 4%, but we will all need to work hard to keep the figure where it is and all your support is invaluable.

We will move back to face coverings in all communal areas on Thursday 4 November 2021 please, earlier if possible. At the moment we are not being asked to wear face coverings in classrooms and there are no further measures at this time. Can I also ask that students please bring face coverings in from home, the cost to the school is quite considerable and it simply means we cannot buy something else for learning. More importantly, we are experiencing increasing difficulties with the supply of many standard items once we have ordered them. Food for lunches and materials for lessons are simply not as readily available as previously, and we will not be able to supply face coverings to everyone who needs them if we cannot get them. We need your help as it is quite possible that we will simply run out of face coverings; please help by sending them in from home with your children.

Attendance to school has fallen across the country and this has been reflected here too, but I have to say that we are well above the national figure for attendance at the moment and that is down to you and your children. With your support we will get further and better placed in terms of examinations that we might otherwise be. More time in learning leads to better results and you are making a huge difference with this at the moment, thank you.

Please keep using the lateral flow tests and any positive tests should be then checked with a PCR test, if this is negative then it overrides the earlier positive lateral flow. Please though self-isolate whilst awaiting the PCR result. However, it is clear that you know your children better than anyone else and if you are worried or there is a high temperature, loss of sense of smell/taste or a new cough, please go and get a PCR test. I do realise that there is a growing feeling of inevitability that we are all going to catch COVID at some point, but if we can manage the rate that it impacts upon the school, we can manage some of the impact upon everyone's learning. Please help by testing regularly and then self-isolating if there is a positive result. We need to try to keep as many staff and students in school so we can actually teach in a meaningful way, and the half-term does not appear to have acted as a break on the rate of transmission, with numbers today being above the the number of positive case on the Friday we broke up for half-term.

Finally just a reminder, it is fine not to wear a face covering through choice; we simply 'bubble' those students together as to do anything else would be demonstrably unfair on the vast majority of students here who I have to say have been brilliant at wearing face coverings and thinking of others. If students have a medical issue that means they cannot wear a mask they are given an exemption lanyard. We ask for medical information not to support wearing or otherwise of a face covering, but to ensure that we know how to keep your child safe in school. We will ask for further medical information if you tell the school that your child cannot do the things that their peers do. It isn't because I am part of a cabal trying to take over the world, we just want to make sure that if you tell the school your child is not well, we can make sure that we contribute to making things better and not worse.

Thank you again for all your support.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K Flanagan', written in a cursive style.

Mr K Flanagan
Headteacher