



## Pensby High School

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Headteacher: Mr K Flanagan

21 June 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I want to update you after Headteacher's were asked to attend a public health briefing on Friday 18 June 2021. At this briefing schools were given 'strong recommendations', but schools were not asked or told to take any specific actions. The two most pertinent **recommendations** that school considers requesting that students wear face coverings at all times within school and to consider the reinstatement of in-school testing. Both of these have obvious benefits, both have obvious costs. I am passing these recommendations on to you as recommendations and not instructions to you or your children.

I run a school and I do so inside a clear legal framework. A framework that allows for me to use my experience and my values to develop with my staff, and governors the working practices within the school. My values and views are carefully set within parameters that apply equally to all students, in all schools. Policy is rightly set by central government and not by individual Headteachers. Whether I agree with the policy or not, it is there to represent the best interests of all, account for the personal bias of those who work in school and promote equality. I am comfortable in running my school, even when there are policies I do not agree with, as I see how important it is that I am held accountable within a framework. However, I am not a public health specialist and therefore I cannot make a judgement as to the appropriateness or not of public health actions and policies.

I would ask that at home you consider the recommendation to wear a face covering, we will encourage students to make an informed choice given the new variant, but we are not equipped to give directions around public health practice. Until there is a direction, we will not make every student wear a face mask, I do not feel that I have the moral legitimacy to do so. Equally we will not reinstate in-school testing with the impact that this has on learning until we are directed to do so, therefore I am requesting that you continue to engage with home testing and please ensure that tests are taken every three days or so. Testing in-school has a huge impact on lessons and learning, and I do not have the knowledge or skills to know when the loss to learning is outweighed by the risk to our community, it would be morally wrong for me to make a decision around this, when I simply do not know if it is warranted or not. Again we will wait for direction and protect students' learning as best we can.

I hope that you understand that my reluctance to move to either of these positions is not one of disagreement with the principles, but rather an acceptance that I simply do not have the skills to make judgements that require me to weigh up the impact on learning versus the impact on the wider public health of our community. I only understand the learning aspect, so therefore any choice I make would be little more than guess or an aspect of personal bias on my part. If any instruction is given, we will follow it, but schools cannot be the place where policy such as this is made. We are too close to the outcome of decisions for it not to be impacted upon by our own personal values and views, and that is not fair to my community. Decisions such as this should be taken without fear or favour and not as a result of my personal feelings.

Yours faithfully

Mr K Flanagan  
Headteacher