



21st March 2022

Dear Parent, Carer or Guardian,

RE: COVID Control Measures

I hope this letter finds you well and enjoying the spring sunshine!

This week is an exciting one for our school community as we look forward to our first school show since the pandemic began two years ago. The students and staff have been involved in Grease: the musical, rehearsals all day and the soundtrack has been reverberating around our school all day. It certainly has been 'electrifying!'

On a more serious note, cases of COVID-19 have started to rise again among students and staff and whilst illness from the virus has generally been mild, it has started to once again cause disruptions to the day to day running of our school. You will have read in the daily Echo today that several schools in the region have been forced to move certain year groups to remote learning or create a rotation system as a result of staff absence. We are fighting hard to avoid this!

The dominant variant which is now in circulation within the community is BA.2 which is a sub-variant of Omicron, is similar to Omicron in terms of severity and its vaccine escape which is encouraging. It is, however, estimated to be 80% more transmissible as a result of its ability to spread and because there are little or no control measures in place to reduce the spread.

Our staff absence, much of which is COVID related, is currently running at 15% of the total staff. We are managing this absence using our Cover Supervisors and creatively collapsing groups. In order to minimise and mitigate the risk of further staff absence, **I have reluctantly today asked all staff to resume wearing a face covering in and around the classroom.**

We kindly ask all visitors to the school to also wear a face covering and this includes parents, grandparents and families coming to our show over the next few days.

We have also seen a rise in the number of cases in our students over the last week and particularly over the weekend. Whilst school continues to follow the Government advice that self-isolation is preferred for all those who test positive for COVID-19, in order to reduce the disruption to our community, **we are now reluctantly recommending a face covering is worn by our students in the corridors and communal areas.** I want to be clear here that what we are recommending now is not mandatory (and young people will not be challenged for not wearing a face covering) but in the spirit of transparency, if cases do start to increase exponentially, we may have to move through the following steps:



1. Move to mandatory face coverings in communal areas.
2. Move to recommended face coverings in classrooms and mandatory in communal areas.
3. Move to mandatory face coverings in classrooms and communal areas.

Other control measures such as good ventilation and hand hygiene stations continue to be maintained.

I hope that we will not have to move to these 'enhanced' control measures and we will do everything we can to avoid the mandatory re-introduction of face coverings in all areas but particularly in classrooms where students have been working hard on developing their oracy and presentation skills. Our priority, of course, is the continued face to face teaching and learning experience for our students (and staff).

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please do discuss this with your young person at home so that they can understand where we are and where we might be if cases continue to rise. Thank you also, for your support in advance, as we aim to continue to deliver an exceptional provision but with reduced staffing which brings along a number of logistical challenges.

We will do our very best!

Warmest Regards,



Harry Kutty
Headteacher

