

Dear Parents,

Throughout the pandemic we have become used to having to change course at short notice; I apologise that this is another such moment!

Yesterday I notified parents that from Monday 17th May pupils in senior school would no longer be required to wear face coverings in lessons and in communal areas. Given the news about increasing transmissions rates of new variants in the North West, we did ask our local Public Health team if there was any local advice.

Today Headteachers of Oldham Schools have received an email on this subject from the local Public Health team. It states:

You will be aware that the Prime Minister has confirmed progression to the next stage of the roadmap on 17 May including the lifting of the requirement for pupils to wear face coverings in secondary schools and colleges, and staff within the classroom.

Government guidance states that the reintroduction of face coverings for pupils, students or staff may be advised for a temporary period in response to particular localised outbreaks, including variants of concern, with advice from Directors of Public Health. We are seeing increasing spread in the North West of variants of concern. Several areas in the North West, particularly in Greater Manchester, have seen a recent increase in infections, including amongst young people. Evidence suggests that face coverings continue to be an effective way of reducing transmission. Within schools, they may reduce the extent of transmission and reduce the likelihood of bubbles needing to be asked to self-isolate at home, enabling you to maximise the amount of face to face teaching that can be offered this school year.

As a result, you may want to promote the continued use of face coverings for all, including pupils, as part of your robust system of controls to reduce potential COVID-19 transmission in school until the end of this half-term. This measure is likely to be most appropriate in communal areas and areas where social distancing may be difficult.

We have been very pleased with the absence of cases in school for many weeks. We are also conscious that the next two school weeks are very important for Years 11 and 13 in particular, as they enter their formal evidence gathering period. We are very keen to do all we can to keep as many of our pupils in school as possible.

Therefore, in the light of this we have decided that we will ask all senior school pupils to continue wearing their face coverings in lessons and communal areas next week beginning Monday 17th May. We will now review this decision on a week by week basis.

Once again I am sorry for the change of plan.

Yours sincerely,

CJD Mairs
(Principal)