



Heart



Mind



Connect

Dear Students and Parents

I am writing in response to the changes to national guidance on the use of face coverings in secondary schools that has been announced this week and is due to take effect from Monday 17th May. Once again, I appreciate there is a range of opinion on this issue, with some people feeling very strongly at either end of the spectrum. That is why I would like to explain the school's position in some detail so that, whether you agree with us or not, you can at least see our reasoning and hopefully understand it.

Rather than following the national guidance, we intend to follow local Public Health guidance, as we have on a number of occasions over the last year. The overall rate of Coronavirus infections nationally is around 20 cases per 100,000 of population. In Calderdale the overall rate is a little over double that at 42 cases per 100,000, while the local rate of infection in secondary school age children is over 117 per 100,000, or nearly 6 times the overall national rate. The number of cases in secondary age children has doubled in each of the last two weeks. With secondary age school children being the most likely source of infection, local Public Health advice is to ask students to continue to use face coverings in classrooms and public areas, to help stop the spread of the virus in schools, especially while many people remain unvaccinated.

It is our view that the drawbacks to wearing face coverings do not yet sufficiently outweigh the benefit in reduced droplets and aerosols that result from the wearing of face coverings. Any additional risk of transmission converts into additional risk of periods of self-isolation for students and staff, and additional risk of illness or worse. Until the local rate of infection in secondary age children falls, our risk assessment and its mitigation measures will remain unchanged. Students and staff will still be expected to wear face coverings in classrooms and communal areas, just as we have been since our return to school in March (and with all the same exemptions).

We have suffered from too many tragedies in our community for us to relax now.

Thank you all,

Mr Perry