

Friday 14th May 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re. Face coverings in schools after Monday 17th May 2021

On Monday 10th May, the Prime Minister announced that the country will move to Step 3 of the roadmap out of lockdown on Monday 17th May. You'll have seen that expectations about face coverings in schools are being relaxed from Monday 17th May.

We have discussed this announcement with members of staff, with Governors, with Unity Schools Partnership (our multi-academy trust) and with union representatives. I have also attended a public health briefing led by Havering local education authority today. We are told that the DfE may change advice on face coverings in response to a particular localised outbreak, including those related to the introduction of variants of concern.

Having discussed the matter of face coverings at St Edward's, the general consensus is that the use of face coverings (alongside our other control measures) has been successful in preventing outbreaks of Covid-19 at school since our return to onsite education on Monday 8th March. Some parents have also spoken to me about the comfort that they have found from the knowledge that students and staff are wearing face masks. I hope our safety measures and the fact that we have not had to ask any member of the community to self-isolate since 8th March has helped reduce anxiety around the pandemic.

Obviously, we are all looking forward to no longer expecting the continued use of face coverings in classrooms. That said, staff at St Edward's believe that this is necessary for a while longer. Some of our staff have had the first dose of the vaccine but many have not. Very few staff have had both doses of the vaccine. The general consensus is, then, that we request the support of parents/carers with the continuation of the wearing of face masks in classrooms as much as possible. We also expect the continued use of face coverings by adults and students in all communal areas.

We continue to see outbreaks in schools locally. Schools in neighbouring boroughs have, since Easter, not only closed bubbles but have also had Covid testing units in school to provide additional tests for students and staff after an outbreak. A secondary school with 950 pupils in Long Eaton, Derbyshire, had an outbreak of more than 100 positive cases after the recent Bank Holiday weekend. Case rates in the area local to the school are now the highest in England at 187.2 per 100,000. The whole school was closed until Tuesday 11th May. We want to avoid this at all costs.

At St Edward's, we have been very successful in stopping the spread of Covid onsite and we wish to continue this. No one wants to go back into lockdown or see a return to remote learning. All of our infection control measures will help to stamp out any new outbreaks.

We clearly cannot enforce compliance with the wearing of face masks in classrooms. Of course, if you do not want your child to continue to wear a face mask in classrooms from Monday 17th May, this is your choice. We will support parents/carers with whatever decision they make for their child. At St Edward's, we will encourage staff and students to continue with the same precautions currently in place until at least Half Term. We will keep abreast of local case numbers as we approach the Half Term holiday and let parents/carers know of the plans for the second half of the Summer term based on the information received. Thank you to parents/carers for your continued support with these preventative measures.

With my very best wishes.



Jodie Hassan
Headteacher