

Dear Parent /Carer

I hope that over half term you and your family were able to get a break and that if you have experienced Covid-19 that you are feeling better or are on the road to a swift recovery. With the recent announcement of the new lockdown I thought it would be appropriate to update you on the continuing preventative steps we are taking to minimise positive cases at Great Sankey High School.

Working with the Trust, whilst acknowledging that in recent meetings Public Health representatives recognised and praised the strong control measures adopted by the school, we have been reviewing what further actions the school could take to further reduce transmission. As always, **the priority is to implement a proportionate, proactive and measured response based on expert opinion.**

While the current government guidance does not require students to wear facemasks during lessons you will have likely seen the response in other European countries and, in particular, in Scotland who are now advocating older students wear masks during lessons. With high transmission rates in young adults we have therefore **made the following changes:**

Year 12 and 13 students will now be required to wear masks during lessons;
Key Stage 4 students will be expected to wear masks in indoor practical subjects such as catering and DT where movement around the classroom forms part of a normal lesson. **In non-practical subjects, mask wearing will be optional** while providing class teachers the discretion to ask students to remove them if it will improve participation and involvement in lessons.

For students in Key Stage 3 we are making the wearing of masks in lessons optional, while again providing class teachers the discretion to ask students to remove them if it will improve participation and involvement in lessons.

Alongside our existing measures **we are also going to place a greater focus on natural ventilation** this half term and windows and classroom doors being opened **to provide constant background ventilation.** Obviously, **the school heating system will be on but as we move into the colder months we would encourage students to wear additional base layers** under their uniform. If it becomes particularly cold teachers

will allow children to wear coats in class. While this is not ideal, **recent updated guidance from the DFE has emphasised the importance of air-circulation in reducing virus transmission.**

In addition to the above, **the school has recently been asked to participate in a study to monitor the infection and transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) as part of a sample of primary and secondary schools across the country.** The study is being conducted by Public Health England in partnership with the Office for National Statistics, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, working with the Department for Education and is funded by the Department for Health and Social Care.

With the recent surge of cases across Warrington and the high number of asymptomatic cases being seen, the Trust and I agreed immediately to participate. **Students in Year 7 and 8 and staff will be asked to enrol in the national pilot and letters and information on this has already been shared.** I would encourage as many students as possible to get involved. Finally, following the half term break and community feedback, we have been asked by the Local Authority to remind parents of the absolute necessity in following government guidance and lockdown rules that are in place outside of school including the need for young people to adhere to social distancing rules and not gather groups.

Thank you for your continued support. Further updates on curriculum activities and initiatives will be shared over the coming weeks, in the meantime, let us hope that the lockdown has the expected impact in reducing the R rate and that the restrictions can be eased as soon as is possible.

Yours faithfully

John Shannon