

Wednesday 23rd September 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

School Update Face Masks

As a school we have kept our new way of working since fully reopening under constant review as I am sure you would expect of us. As part of this review I can confirm that we are moving to an additional preventative measure from Monday by expecting all students and members of staff to wear a face mask when in a communal area (unless there is a medical reason for not doing so).

The rationale behind the move to this position relates to a number of factors: the rising number of cases in the country that are no longer predominately in the North East; the change in the weather meaning windows may not be as open as we have enjoyed thus far this term; and, the fact that we are now moving into the period of seasonal coughs and colds.

Part of our review includes analysing the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in West Sussex and in our town. For the total number of cases so far from the start of the pandemic up to 21st September West Sussex is in the 9th decile (10% sections) of local authorities, in other words in the 10% category above the lowest 10th of local authorities. For total cases so far, West Sussex is ranked 126th out of 149 upper tier local authorities and when the data is broken down further into districts or boroughs (lower tier local authorities) Crawley is ranked 313 out of 315 where the higher the number the better the news! For the week 13th-21st September the confirmed infection rate in Crawley was 2 per 100,000. Whilst this news is encouraging of course we should not be complacent. If interested in reading the data please see the link below which is on our website in the 'About Oriel' page:

http://www2.westsussex.gov.uk/public_health/west_sussex_covid_weekly_data.pdf

The efforts that you, your family and our community have clearly been making to keep the virus under control is something that I feel we should support further by behaving as a school community in the way that is expected of us in shops and on public transport. At this time of year when coughs and colds take place we must take reasonable steps. Further to the guide that I sent with my letter to you last Friday I have attached a letter for you from the DfE that was sent to schools today.

I remain convinced that the way we reopened the school was right and proper and if we were at the start of term again I would not have changed a thing for many reasons: the local data was very good and the national data indicated a decline in infection rates; the weather was very good and forecast to be so for some time and crucially for some of our anxious families who had been worried throughout August about going back to school we wanted the school to be as normal an experience as possible.

I felt that it was also extremely important that our Year 7 students could settle in quickly and being deprived of the ability to read the expressions of the staff and older students around the school seemed unhelpful and unnecessary given the local and national picture at that time. The picture has changed however; it is an evolving situation nationally and we all have our part to play. Thankfully we are not in a local lockdown situation where the wearing of face coverings would be mandatory, but it seems sensible

to take this course of action as a preventative measure as part of our contribution to keeping Crawley out of a local lockdown and for the wellbeing of our school community.

The World Health Organisation is very clear when it states that the wearing of a face mask does not protect you from contracting the Coronavirus, but it helps prevent an infected person, who may have no symptoms, from spreading the virus.

It is therefore out of respect for each other that we are adding this measure to the others that we have adopted in our new way of working.

This respect for others attitude and the correct manner of wearing a face mask will be included in all the year group assemblies taking place this week.

To be clear the wearing of a face mask will not be expected of staff or students in lessons, but of course we will respect the right of anyone to choose to do so. In a similar vein it will not be expected of Sixth Form students in the common room or in Sixth Form breakout areas. For PE lessons the students should be wearing their mask as they move into their year group base room, go through the removal process and leave the mask in their bag in the room and make their way under the escort of their teacher to their practical learning space. In some MFL lessons the teacher may ask a student to briefly remove the mask for a speaking component.

The wearing of face masks will not be required in outdoor areas at break and lunch, before and after school.

If we have wet lunch or break arrangements in action then students will be expected to wear a face mask unless they are eating / drinking as the arrangements necessitate students being in communal areas.

We will put posters on display in rooms around the school reminding everyone of the steps required: hand sanitising upon entry into the room, removing the mask (if so wished) and placing in a plastic bag. At the end of the lesson / mentor time: use hand sanitiser, remove the mask from the plastic bag and place over the face (covering both nose and mouth) will be the routine before the students leave the room.

Other face coverings will not be acceptable and the use of visors will not remove the expectation of wearing a face mask. Our students should ensure that they carry their own hand sanitiser at all times and they will be responsible for the safe keeping of their own face mask.

Our students have been exceptionally good in the way that they have adapted to our new ways of working; I shall be thanking them when I speak to them in their assembly this week. I am confident that they will understand the purpose of the use of a face mask and through the use of it be a part of our school culture of caring for and respecting others in our school community.

I thank you in anticipation of your support for this additional measure.

With my best wishes to you and your family

Yours faithfully

Philip Stack
Headteacher