



Monday 21st June, 2021.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Information regarding;

- 1) The wearing of face coverings in school
- 2) Lateral Flow Testing

As I'm sure you're all aware, there has been a significant rise in the number of cases across Warrington in recent days. This has resulted in a number of infections in local schools and in some cases this has meant that whole year groups/bubbles have needed to isolate for 10 days. We've been fortunate in that the number of cases affecting our school community remains relatively low, but we recognise that this can change very quickly; especially where community transmission continues to rise.

At this moment there is some suggestion that some mitigating actions that were removed by the government earlier in the year – for example the wearing of masks in indoor spaces – should be reintroduced. The particular concern, of course, is that although cases are rising nationally the North West is bearing the brunt of what is being described as the “third wave” and so perhaps we should be considering more robust action to support the reduction of infections.

I'm aware that opinions are polarised and some feel that society should adopt a cautious approach, whilst other want a more rapid return to normality. Our decision making has to be rooted in what we consider to be the best course of action for our school and wider community. Our priority is the health and wellbeing of people and we don't want to contribute to a rising infection rate that potentially results in illness or more severe consequences for individuals in school or in the community.

Quite apart from potential illness, the prospect of a greater period of disruption to education for pupils remains a real threat. It looks as though the vaccination programme has had an impact on the number of people requiring hospitalisation which is extremely positive. Nevertheless, where cases develop those infected - and pupils and staff who have been in close contact with these individuals - need to undertake a period of isolation for a number of days. In addition, as we've seen locally, a run of cases in any particular year group can result in entire year groups needing to be sent home. After a significant period of disruption to the education of our young people in the last 15 months it's incredibly important that they attend school at every opportunity.

We are therefore minded to encourage our pupils to return to wearing masks when indoors at school. This was a strategy adopted by the government as pupils returned to school following the wave of cases in January to March and given the prevalence of the virus in Warrington at present, we feel it would be appropriate for pupils to undertake this action of mitigation should they wish.



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THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST C/O PRIESTLEY COLLEGE, LOUSHERS LN, WARRINGTON WA4 6RD. COMPANY NUMBER 10689247

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Principal: Mr J Carlin BA(Hons) NPQH



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In addition, I also want to remind parents of the importance of pupils undertaking their LFT rapid tests where they have signed up to do so. Pupils who registered for testing in the spring were issued with their latest batch of tests to use at home last week. If you did sign up for the rapid testing programme and didn't receive these please do let us know. Pupils should undertake tests twice weekly, 3-5 days apart, recording results both with the NHS and school via the form we set up online. Testing can help us identify where pupils are potentially at the point of developing the virus or identify where we have asymptomatic cases, in both scenarios this helps us to prevent the spread of the virus across our school and the wider community.

I'd like to thank you for your ongoing support at this time and wish you and your family all the very best.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Carlin.
Principal.



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