

25 January 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

The Prime Minister announced his review of Plan B measures on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> January announcing that from Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> January, secondary school pupils will no longer have to wear face masks in classrooms and that government guidance on their use in communal areas would be removed as of Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January. Following this announcement, a review of all the available data was undertaken across our Trust and a decision was made, in line with the DfE Contingency Framework and local Public Health advice, **to recommend the continued wearing of face masks in communal areas of our schools.**

Whilst case numbers in our schools are very slowly falling, they are still high across our Trust; as are levels of student and staff absence. We know that the resultant impact of this is a continued loss of face to face learning for our children, increased pressure upon our staff and school leaders and a continued threat to the safety and wellbeing of our school community; especially our most vulnerable.

The Director of Public Health for Sheffield has provided schools with a statement asking for us to be cautious and consider where we may need to continue to keep face coverings in place to manage a high number of cases, help manage business continuity and to continue to provide face to face teaching.

Our schools are doing all that they can to continue to provide face to face teaching and learning alongside balancing COVID secure measures to reduce transmission and keep pupils and staff as safe as possible. However, it is in the context described above that ***we are recommending the continued wearing of face coverings in communal areas in all our schools until February half term***, upon which this decision will be reviewed in light of the available data and guidance. This recommendation may be extended to classrooms in some schools should individual school data show a rise in cases or student and staff absence. This decision has not been taken lightly and has been made in line with recent advice from the Director of Public Health Sheffield and the guidance set out in the recently updated DfE Contingency Framework.

It is almost certainly going to be a difficult next few months for schools to manage. We will do all we can to ensure continued high-quality face to face provision but, there may be times when staff absence means that a switch to remote learning for some year groups, collapsing of classes or other additional measures may need to be taken to keep our schools open and to ensure learning continuity for all. These types of measures will always be a last resort and will be individual decisions taken and communicated by each school. I thank you in advance for your patience and understanding if such measures do need to be put in place.

Yours faithfully



Bev Matthews  
Chief Executive Officer