



Dear colleagues,

Continued use of face coverings in schools

Thank you for your ongoing support during the pandemic by continuing to follow the latest government guidance.

On Monday, the Prime Minister announced changes linked to England's progress along the roadmap out of lockdown. This included the intention to relax measures for the use of face coverings in schools from Monday 17th May. The exception to this is for those areas where there are local outbreaks.

In our locality and in neighbouring areas there are cases of a variant of SARS-CoV2 (the virus that causes COVID-19). This variant is spreading quickly and has contributed to a rapid increase in the number of people with COVID-19.

Following discussions with Councillors, Blackburn with Darwen's Management Team and the Director of Public Health, Blackburn with Darwen Council is asking schools to retain the use of face coverings, as per the current arrangements, until further notice.

As we now have more detailed analysis of case finding across the North West, we know that there have been instances where young people attending school or college have unintentionally contributed to the spread of the virus.

We believe it would be irresponsible to wait until we have higher levels of the newer variants of SARS-CoV2 circulating before we act.

We know that this will be understandably disappointing for our pupils, we want to thank them for all the efforts you and they have been making over this difficult period.

We hope that you understand the need for additional caution at this time.

Please be aware that we have been in discussions earlier this week with the DfE to try and get to an agreed position earlier than today.

We will continue to keep the situation under review and will inform schools as soon as our local guidance changes.

The national position is also that face coverings **MUST** continue to be worn on school transport.

We have attached a draft letter for you to send to your parents to help with getting this messaging out as soon as possible.

Please also find for your reference the latest information shared by the Council, including additional vaccination clinics available. <https://theshuttle.org.uk/>

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours faithfully

Jayne Ivory, Julie Gunn, Dominc Harrison