14th April 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

**Face coverings to continue to be in place at St Joseph’s**

We have been told by the government that guidance around face coverings in education settings can be relaxed nationally from Monday. This is against a national backdrop of a 7% reduction in new positive cases compared to last week. However, the guidance allows for local decisions to reintroduce face coverings in response to localised outbreaks. Due to the current position in Bolton where there has been a 6% increase in the number of positive cases from last week (with the largest group to test positive being 0-15 year olds) we feel it would be foolish to relax any measures to keep students safe. Sadly, in recent weeks we have had 5 positive cases in school meaning that 124 students from across Y7,8 and 10 have had to isolate as contacts for 10 days. Most of these cases have been picked up by LFD home testing and students have been asymptomatic at the time of testing. This means that because cases have been found early enough we have been able to limit community transmission.

In our local community the pandemic is far from over and to protect staff (especially those who have not yet been vaccinated) and students and their families **the measures outlined in our risk assessment will continue, including the wearing of masks in communal areas, classrooms and areas where it isn’t possible to social distance.** We encourage you to test your child on a Sunday evening and again in the middle of the week to identify the virus in the early stages. Doing so will prevent larger groups of students having to isolate. Please see details of the focused action to combat the virus in the BL3 area of Bolton [Coronavirus – Bolton Council](https://www.bolton.gov.uk/covidtesting) and details of booking a vaccine if you are eligible [Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination - NHS (www.nhs.uk)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/).

We recognise that this disruption to learning disadvantages students from Bolton in ways that others in the country might not be experiencing, but we know that by working together we can rise above the challenges and bring success for our young people.

Kind Regards

Mr T McCabe

Headteacher