

October 8th 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Important News on Face Coverings! Please see below.

We are now in the sixth week of the new term and I continue to be hugely impressed at the way that our students have responded to the twin challenges of returning to school after such a long break and working within the constraints that are imposed by the safety measures in our Risk Assessment. Our **Year 7s** have built on the very positive start they made in the first few weeks and continue to impress their teachers with their enthusiasm and eagerness to learn. They have also engaged very well with the range of testing and assessment activities that we have put in place to help us find out more about their strengths and their areas for improvement and are beginning their Cognitive Abilities Tests this week. **Students in Years 8 and 9** have, almost without exception, made a good start across a wide range of subjects and have engaged well with their enrichment programmes which this half term have enabled them to enjoy a wide range of new activities. Next half term we will be using Year 9 enrichment time to support English as part of our recovery curriculum.

The overwhelming majority of students in **Years 10 and 11** have made a very promising start in their new Pathway subjects. Year 11 students have also responded well to their extended school day. I fully understand that this was not the most popular provision we have ever made for them, but I have been impressed by the sense of realism and responsibility with which they have approached the additional lessons in the core subjects. As you know, we are going to prioritise our Year 10 students for the government's National Tutoring Programme which will start in January. We do not expect full details of this programme for another month or so, but we have made contact with some of the possible providers and understand it is likely to involve 15 sessions of online tutoring for groups of up to three students at a time. We are currently identifying students who we think would benefit from this support but if your son or daughter is in year 10 and you would like us to consider them for this programme, please contact vicki.dooley@macclesfieldacademy.org.

I am pleased to be able to report that we still have had no positive coronavirus tests amongst any of our students. Last week, however, one of the Park Lane students who use the base within the Academy did test positive. The Park Lane students, arrive at a different time from ours, use different entrance and are completely self-contained in their own base. I discussed our safety measures in detail with Public Health colleagues and they advised that there was no need for any further action to safeguard Academy students and staff. The Park Lane class is currently isolating and we look forward to welcoming them back to the Academy next week. For the sake of transparency, I should also report that one of our non teaching staff has tested positive this week. The colleague concerned works part time and had not been in the Academy or in contact with Academy staff or students for over 72 hours before the onset of symptoms. Once again, I have taken detailed public health advice through the extremely helpful Cheshire East advice line for Headteachers and am pleased to confirm that there are no implications for our staff or students.

Although, the Academy remains less affected than many other schools by the increase in infections, you will know that at the end of last week, Cheshire East was designated an “area of concern”. Our Health and Safety Committee met last Friday afternoon and considered the implications of this change as well as a variety of other adaptations to the Risk Assessment. At that meeting, we concluded that, while we would need to change our “permissive” policy on face coverings if the Borough we designated an area of intervention, we would adopt a proportionate approach, recommending the use of coverings if Cheshire East were designated an area of enhanced “support” and requiring them if it became an intervention area.

Since then, two things have changed. It has come to light that there was a serious flaw in the system for reporting confirmed cases. This has affected the whole country but the effect locally is particularly severe. On Friday the published figure for the rate of infections in Cheshire East was 51 per 100000; by Monday evening this had been corrected to 113 per 100000. In a separate development, earlier this week, the Cheshire East Director of Education and Acting Director of Public Health issued advice to schools to introduce the wearing of masks in communal areas.

I have discussed these changing circumstances with senior colleagues and with governors and am now writing with news of two important changes to our safety measures:

1. *With effect from next **Monday, 12th October 2020**, all staff and students will be **recommended** to wear a face covering in the indoor communal areas of the Academy such as the corridors and the dining room (except when they are sitting down with their food and drink).*
2. *When we return from half term on **Monday 2nd November 2020**, all staff and students (except those for whom exceptions will be made on the grounds of disability or wellbeing) will be **required** to wear face coverings in the indoor communal areas of the Academy.*

Nationally, the Department for Education continues to advise against the use of face coverings in lessons and we will continue to follow that advice except in the very small number of cases where students are wearing face coverings in class as part of their individual risk assessment. In line with guidance from the Health and Safety Executive, we will continue to support colleagues who choose to wear face coverings in classrooms so long as this does not create difficulties for students who rely on lip reading.

These changes have a number of important implications:

1. All students wearing face coverings *must* have a sealable plastic bag with them in school.
2. Because students who are wearing face covering will need to clean their hands before and after taking the covering on or off (eg at the start of every lesson). This means that they *must* have hand sanitiser with them in school at all times.

(We are delaying making face coverings compulsory until after half term to ensure that families have time to make sure students have all the necessary equipment.

3. There are some staff and students for whom wearing of face coverings would cause added difficulties and may not be appropriate. These may include:

- i) Those who suffer from asthma
- ii) Those who are on the autistic spectrum
- iii) Those with heightened levels of anxiety
- iv) Those with a physical disability which makes it hard to take the masks on and off
- v) Those who provide support for a student or a member of staff who depends on lip reading

If your son or daughter falls into any of these categories and you would like them to be excused from wearing a face mask in the communal areas of the Academy, please contact their pastoral coordinator explaining the reason for your request:

Year group	Pastoral Coordinator	Email
7	Mrs Locke	Kerry.Locke@macclesfieldacademy.org
8	Ms Renn	Claire.Renn@macclesfieldacademy.org
9	Mrs Mathers	Debbie.Mathers@macclesfieldacademy.org
10	Mr Davis and Mrs Murray	John.Davis@macclesfieldacademy.org Gaynor.Murray@macclesfieldacademy.org
11	Ms Slade	Dyane.Slade@macclesfieldacademy.org

These are challenging and anxious times for us all and I am grateful for the many messages of support from parents over the last few weeks. I want to end, as I did last week, with a message of hope. These dark days will not last for ever and much as, right now, we are all having to draw on all our reserves of energy, fortitude and resilience, there will come a time when things get easier. In the meantime, please remember that we are all in this together and let us know if there is anything we can do as an Academy to support you and your family.

Finally please remember if you have a positive test result to support, please ring the Academy in school hours or **Text 07340 665057** after 3.30 or at weekends.

Take care and stay safe

With every best wish

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Hedge', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

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