



Horsforth School

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Our Ref: PCB/TRH/JFI

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Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope this letter finds you and your loved ones safe and well.

There is much to be optimistic about right now. We don't need to wear masks in classrooms and cases are dropping but I am very cautious with regards to how quickly we will relax in school. The priority has to be to prevent lost learning, preserve staffing levels and protect our most vulnerable members of the school community.

As always, I have kept the reminders in as well as key, new updates.

Masks in Corridors and Communal Areas

As you know the Government removed the recommendation for masks to be worn in classrooms. As a school, where transmission of COVID has occurred it has been very rare in classrooms but most common in communal areas (especially break and lunch).

We have removed masks in classrooms and I greatly welcome this. It is a barrier to communication and learning, is uncomfortable for some students and we have not had significant COVID transmission in classrooms.

The Government is saying that schools do not need to wear masks in corridors and communal areas from the 27th of January.

At Horsforth we will continue to wear masks in corridors and communal areas until the case rate drops further and I would like to share my reasoning for this.

- We have over 1500 students and around 160 staff. This means our school is significantly busier and more congested than a supermarket, cinema or other indoor venue. Almost all students move at each lesson changeover.
- Wearing masks in corridors is for a very short period of time (minutes).
- All Year groups have an outside space they can go to for break and lunch (where they can take off their mask) so do not need to socialise with a mask on (but must if they choose to socialise indoors, this is where transmission takes place). Students need only wear masks for a very short total time during the day (minutes).

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- Mask wearing is for short periods interspersed by long periods not wearing a mask.
- Transmission has, in the vast majority of cases, occurred in communal areas and not classrooms.
- National case rates are still extremely high (but thankfully dropping).
- Leeds case rates are still extremely high and above the National average at 1221 per 100k.
- Horsforth West case rates are still extremely high at 1291 per 100k.
- Case rates in school age children are rising (with every other age group dropping).
- The impact of wearing masks at Horsforth has been significant and positive (greater and updated detail below):



I have previously shown you this graph of Horsforth School attendance versus the national average. I have updated it. You can see the clear and significant impact of mask wearing on attendance from September (vertical purple line), when we brought masks back in corridors and communal areas. At this time the Government advised not wearing masks. Wearing masks from September was the right thing for Horsforth School and this has since proven to be supported by the data.

Quite a few schools did this but later than us and as a result the gap narrows around November. Wearing masks in classrooms (red line) had a positive impact nationally (probably because the schools with very poor attendance may not have been wearing masks at all) but our attendance has held steady.

Omicron is, thankfully, a less serious risk to health but can still lead to serious illness and worse for vulnerable people.

My concern is twofold.

Firstly, lost learning. Too much learning has been affected for too many students. I want to remain fully open with all our fantastic teachers able to be in school and all our wonderful students getting the high quality, face to face education we offer. I do not want students having to isolate, learning to be online or teachers having to isolate and therefore for us not to have enough staff for all lessons and all Years.

Secondly, to protect the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable members of the school and community (students, staff, loved ones of members of the school).

‘Opportunity and achievement for all’

So, to recap, at Horsforth we will continue to wear masks in corridors and communal areas until the case rate drops further. We will review this every week as a Leadership Team.

If you are interested in tracking case rates (all numbers correct on Thursday 20th when this was drafted) I find a useful website to be: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/30/covid-uk-coronavirus-cases-deaths-and-vaccinations-today> as well as BBC news (I have no special sources). Another good source is the Government website but not always up to date: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

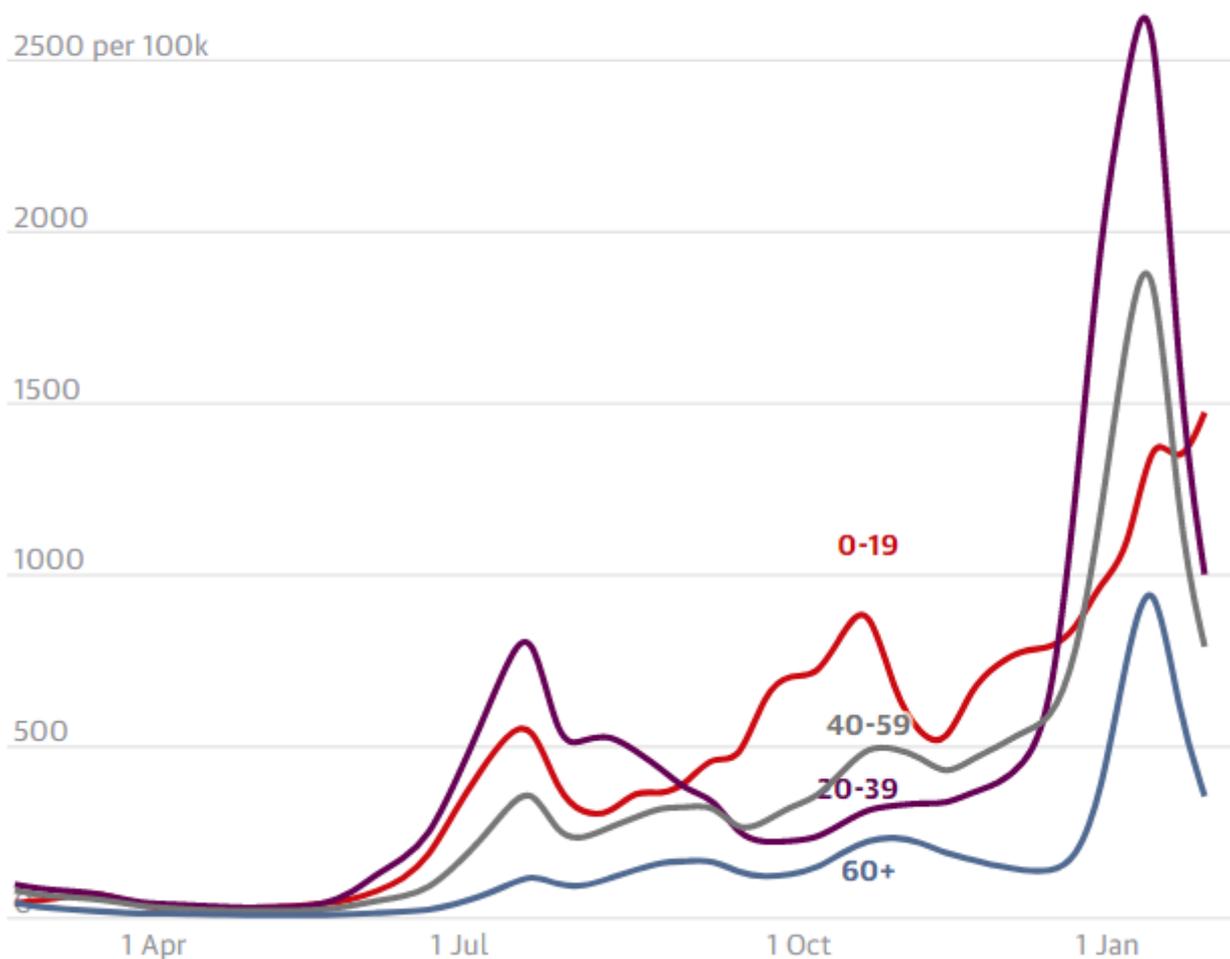
Relaxation of Measures

As measures are removed nationally there may be an expectation that school mirrors this. School is a much busier place than almost any other public event, other than an inside concert or nightclub.

My strategy will be to remove the risk reduction measures bit by bit rather than all in one go. This means we will be better placed to respond to any case rate rises and put the brakes on if needed.

We are reviewing when we bring back in person assemblies, begin evening events in person again etc. and will inform you if anything changes from our current plans.

England: coronavirus case rates by age group



Weekly coronavirus case rate per 100,000 people by age group in England. Data.gov.uk, latest 19 January, 2022

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It is probably worthwhile pointing out that the only age group where cases are not currently dropping is the 0-19 age group (red line) so it is prudent to relax slowly and see the impact.

My priority remains to prevent lost learning and protect the most vulnerable members of the school community.

Latest Progress and Attitude to Learning Data

On Thursday of this week, students were given their latest progress and Attitude to Learning (ATL) data as part of the progress review lesson. We would encourage you to look at and discuss this information with your son or daughter, and support them in completing any short-term targets that teachers may have set them.

The progress review sheets can be found stuck into student planners, or alternatively are available electronically on the SIMs Parent App. If you would like more guidance on our ATL and progress review system then please see <https://www.horsforthschool.org/useful-information/reporting-and-parent-communication-2/>.

Lateral Flow Tests (Home Testing)

Thank you so much for your support in continuing to perform lateral flow tests at home. We will continue to issue the kits through form time and will only delay if we have supply issues.

The link to reporting results to the NHS is here: <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid-19-result>. The link to report results to us is here: <https://forms.gle/RKzCqrFhzDS4CFK87> (**please also call or email the school if you test positive**).

Careers Information

Did you know it is National Apprenticeship Week w/c 7th - 13th February?

Horsforth school is committed to sharing the best and varied opportunities for our students. A whole range of different information linked to careers and opportunities can be found on our dedicated careers website - if you haven't visited the site already, please do so by clicking on the link below:

<https://sites.google.com/horsforthschool.org/horsforth-school-careers/upcoming-events>

Students should also visit 'Unifrog' and complete their interest and personality profile. Students have all been sent a login to do this. This helps identify jobs in the future which may appeal to their hobbies and interests; as Mark Twain says, 'Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life.'

www.unifrog.org

Sporting Fixtures

Girls netball

North West Leeds league matches:

Year 7 2 vs 1 Abbey Grange (won). Players of the match: Alice and Lillie

Year 8 6 vs 6 Abbey Grange (draw). Players of the match: Katie and Lillie

Boys football

North West Leeds league matches:

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Year 7 0 vs 1 Lawnswood (lost). Player of the match: Zack

Year 7 1 vs 0 Benton Park (won). Player of the match: Ben

Leeds Schools cup 1/4 final match

Year 9 3 vs 2 Guiseley (won). Player of the match: Alec

The team now progressed to the semi-finals - a fantastic achievement!

I am sorry for the long letter this week. It's been great to update you on our sporting successes and achievements but I really wanted to be able to explain our rationale for masks, the evidence for it, the fact we will review weekly but also our overall strategy for relaxation of measures.

Everyone at Horsforth wants to prevent lost learning, protect the most vulnerable and ensure we get the very best for our wonderful students.

Thank you for your continued support, kind messages and patience.

Take care, stay safe and best wishes.

Yours faithfully

Dr P Bell
Headteacher