

Face Coverings and Face Masks in Education during Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

From 1 September this advice will apply to the **use of face coverings by staff and pupils** in some schools, and to learners in further education. This guidance is for schools and other education institutions that teach people in years 7 and above.

This is guidance, not mandatory activity, and any legal exemptions that apply to the wearing of face coverings in shops and on public transport also apply to this new advice.

At the date of issue the government is not recommending face coverings are necessary in education settings generally because a system of control, applicable to all education environments, provides additional mitigating measures but all schools and colleges will have the discretion to require face coverings in communal areas where social distancing cannot be safely managed, if they believe that it is right in their particular circumstances.

Examples of where you might decide to recommend the wearing of face coverings - for pupils and staff - in communal areas of your education setting include:

- where the layout of your school or college makes it particularly difficult to maintain social distancing when staff and pupils are moving around the premises
- where on top of hygiene measures and the system of controls recommended in the full [opening guidance to schools](#) and [FE colleges and providers](#), permitting the use of face coverings for staff, pupils or other visitors would provide additional confidence to parents to support a full return of children to school or college

It is vital that face coverings are worn correctly and that clear instructions are provided to staff, children and young people on [how to put on, remove, store and dispose of face coverings](#) in all of the circumstances above, to avoid inadvertently increasing the risks of transmission.

Safe wearing of face coverings requires cleaning of hands before and after touching – including to remove or put them on – and the safe storage of them in individual, sealable plastic bags between use. Where a face covering becomes damp, it should not be worn and the face covering should be replaced carefully.

On the basis of current evidence, the mitigating measures schools taking, and the negative impact on communication, **face coverings will not generally be necessary in the classroom even where social distancing is not possible** as in classrooms you will have greater use of the system of controls for minimising risk, including through keeping in small and consistent groups or bubbles, and greater scope for physical distancing by staff within classrooms. Face coverings can have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom should be avoided.

Staff wishing to wear face coverings in corridors, staff rooms and other areas where social distancing is difficult should be supported to do so, but as stated above face coverings should not be necessary in the classroom even where social distancing is not possible.

What to do if local restrictions (Lockdown) apply

If a local lockdown is implemented within Telford & Wrekin, in education settings where Year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain. As in the general approach, it will not usually be necessary to wear face coverings in the classroom, where protective measures already mean the risks are lower, and they may inhibit teaching and learning.

In the event of any local restrictions being imposed, schools and colleges will need to communicate quickly and clearly to staff, parents, pupils and learners that the new arrangements require the use of face coverings in certain circumstances. And consistent with WHO's new advice, schools and colleges should take additional precautionary measures in areas where the transmission of the virus is high. These areas are defined as [areas of national government intervention](#).

Access to face coverings

It is reasonable to assume that staff and young people will now have access to face coverings due to their increasing use in wider society, and Public Health England has made available resources on how to [make a simple face covering](#).

However, where anybody is struggling to access a face covering, or where they are unable to use their face covering due to having forgotten it or it having become soiled or unsafe, each school should take steps to have a small contingency supply available to meet such needs.

No-one should be excluded from education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering.

Exemptions

Some individuals are [exempt from wearing face coverings](#). For example people who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability, or if you are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate.

The same exemptions will apply in education settings, and we would expect teachers and other staff to be sensitive to those needs.

There is more advice on face coverings on [GOV.UK](#) that includes:

- [What a face covering is](#)
- [When to wear a face covering](#)
- [How to wear a face covering](#)
- [Making your own face covering](#)
- [Maintaining and disposing of face coverings](#)



Face coverings are not classed as personal protective equipment (PPE) as they:

- are generally not manufactured to a recognised standard and not CE marked
- do not provide a proven level of protection for work risks such as dust and spray

Don't forget the best ways of managing the risk of COVID infection in your school includes:

- social distancing or, where that is not possible, reducing the number of people in the work area
- high standards of hand hygiene
- increasing surface washing
- assigning and keeping people to shift teams
- using screens and barriers to separate people from each other

Surgical face masks

Surgical face masks are designed to be normally worn as identified in your school COVID risk assessment and advice within Telford & Wrekin Council's PPE guidance and PPE Provision table. They are issued for defined tasks that protect the user as they are used to limit the spread of infection.



Unlike face coverings, they:

- are manufactured to a recognised standard
- are resistant to droplets of fluids and splashes

For further information: [safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care](#)
[face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education](#)