

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

From 8 March 2021, new advice applies to the use of face coverings by staff, pupils and students in schools and further education in England. Further information can be found in the [guidance for schools](#), [guidance for specialist settings](#) and [guidance for further education](#). There is separate [guidance for early years and childcare providers](#) and [guidance for higher education](#).

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.

We know that the predominant new variant of coronavirus (COVID-19) is more transmissible; however, Public Health England (PHE) advice remains that the way to control this virus is with the system of controls, even with the current new variants. We are further strengthening these measures to provide more reassurance and to help decrease the disruption the virus causes to education.

Implementing the system of controls creates a safer environment for staff, pupils and students where the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) infection is substantially reduced. The use of face coverings in recommended circumstances is one element of the system of controls and must be implemented in line with other guidance.

Where pupils and students in years 7 and above are educated, it is recommended that face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. Face coverings do not need to be worn by pupils when outdoors on the premises.

In addition, it is recommended in those schools, that face coverings should be worn in classrooms or during activities unless social distancing can be maintained. This does not apply in situations where wearing face coverings would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons.

In primary schools it is recommended that face coverings should be worn by staff and adult visitors in situations where social distancing between adults is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas). **But children in primary school do not need to wear a face covering.**

We are taking this additional precautionary measure for a limited time during this period of high coronavirus (COVID-19) prevalence in the community. These measures will be in place until Easter. As with all measures, we will keep it under review and update guidance at that point.

Transparent face coverings, which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate, can also be worn. There is currently very limited evidence regarding the effectiveness or safety of transparent face coverings, but they may be effective in reducing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Those who rely on visual signals for communication, or communicate with or provide support to such individuals, are currently exempt from any requirement to wear face coverings in schools or in public places.

Face visors or shields should not be worn as an alternative to face coverings. They may protect against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are unlikely to be effective in reducing aerosol transmission when used without an additional face covering. They should only be used after carrying out a risk assessment for the specific situation and should always be cleaned appropriately.

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

Exemptions

Some individuals are exempt from wearing <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

This applies to those who:

- Cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical impairment or disability, illness or mental health difficulties
- Speak to or provide help to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate

The same exemptions will apply in education and childcare settings and you should be sensitive to those needs, noting that some people are less able to wear face coverings and that the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

Safe wearing and removal of face coverings

You should have a process for when face coverings are worn within your school and how they should be removed. You should communicate this process clearly to pupils, staff and visitors and allow for adjustments to be made for pupils with SEND who may be distressed if required to remove a face covering against their wishes

Safe wearing of face coverings requires the:

- Cleaning of hands before and after touching – including to remove or put them on
- 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. Staff and pupils may consider bringing a spare face covering to wear if their face covering becomes damp during the day

You must instruct pupils too:

- Not touch the front of their face covering during use, or when removing it
- Dispose of temporary face coverings in a 'black bag' waste bin (not recycling bin)
- Place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them
- Wash their hands again before heading to their classroom

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.

Telford & Wrekin Council are advising schools to encourage parents to wear a face covering when dropping off and picking up their children from school.

Access to face coverings

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Due to the increasing use of face coverings in wider society, staff and pupils are already likely to have access to face coverings. PHE has also published guidance on [make a simple face covering](#).

You should have a small contingency supply available for people who:

- Are struggling to access a face covering
- Are unable to use their face covering as it has become damp, soiled or unsafe
- Have forgotten their face covering

No pupil should be denied education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering

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](#)

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