



The use of face coverings at GSHS – September 2020

As you may be aware, the World Health Organisation (WHO) published a new statement on the 21 August, advising “children aged 12 and over should wear a mask under the same conditions as adults, in particular when they cannot guarantee at least a 1-metre distance from others and there is widespread transmission in the area”.

In response to this announcement, on 26 August, the following update was released by Government

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education>

It says “nationwide, 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. **Schools and colleges will have the discretion to require face coverings in communal areas.... if they believe that it is right in their particular circumstances....** On the basis of current evidence, in light of the mitigating measures education settings are taking, and the negative impact on communication, face coverings will not generally be necessary in the classroom even where social distancing is not possible. . . **Face coverings can have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom should be avoided.**”

Further to this, on Friday 28 August we received this information from Wendy Burke, the Director of Public Health in North Tyneside:

“Based on the evidence to date, the known challenges in maintaining social distancing with young people and the potential increased confidence of parents and staff for full re-opening of schools, my recommendation as the Director of Public Health is that face coverings should be required in communal areas of schools across secondary schools for both pupils and staff as a means to preventing the transmission of Coronavirus in secondary schools”.

There is support for a consistent approach across the borough and our understanding is that all secondary schools in North Tyneside are accepting this recommendation from our Director of Public Health.

The advice from our Local Public Health Team is also that:

- Face coverings should be used **when moving around indoors** particularly in corridors and other indoor communal area such as entrance hallways and exits and other areas of the schools where there may be a gathering or mixing of cohorts of pupils and where social distancing is more difficult.
- As a general approach, they are **NOT necessary** in the classroom or other locations where pupils are being taught in a cohort such as a sports hall, dining rooms where pupils are eating and drinking and outdoors (the ventilation factor reduces the risk and it is much easier to social distance).

Therefore, having carefully considered this latest guidance and advice we have taken the following decisions:

- Students and staff are to wear face coverings **when moving around indoors** particularly in corridors and other indoor communal areas such as entrance hallways and exits and other areas of the schools where there may be a gathering or mixing of cohorts of pupils and where social distancing is more difficult.
- Students and staff are therefore required to wear face coverings in corridors as they go to registration, move between lessons, as they move to and from break and lunch and as they leave the school at the end of the day.
- Once students have arrived at their lesson or break/lunch area, face coverings can be removed.
- Students should put their face coverings on by the time they enter the school building.
- Those students and staff who are medically exempt from wearing face coverings are not required to wear them.
- As a general approach, face coverings are **NOT necessary** in the classroom or other locations where pupils are being taught in a cohort such as a sports hall, dining rooms where pupils are eating and drinking and outdoors (the ventilation factor reduces the risk and it is much easier to social distance).
- Students and staff therefore do not need to wear face coverings in lessons as the control measures in our risk assessment reduce the risk of transmission.
- Students and staff therefore do not need to wear face coverings at break or lunch when in the dining hall or in the canopy or yard.

This decision has not been taken lightly, bearing in mind that our local area is not currently identified as one where transmission of the virus is high. We do feel, however, that the use of face coverings during key times within the school day, will provide staff, students and parents with additional confidence with full-reopening of the school from September.

It is important though that face coverings are worn correctly in order to avoid inadvertently increasing the risk of transmission. This requires cleaning or sanitising of hands before and after touching face coverings, whether removing or putting them on, and safe storage within individual, sealable plastic bags between use.

Single use face coverings must be disposed of responsibly, using the general waste bins provided. Please ensure your child is provided with a face covering and appropriate bag for safe storage (if reusable) when they return to school in September.

Advice and guidance regarding face coverings, including how to make a face covering, can be found at <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>

Students will receive information during their induction sessions regarding responsible and effective use of face coverings.

We feel this is a proportionate decision based upon current guidance and advice from our Local Public Health Team and Director of Public Health. This approach will be reviewed as we move through the term.

We hope that you understand why we are adopting these measures and that they will help your child to feel safer about returning to school.

Guidance on the use of face coverings

A face covering should:

- cover your nose and mouth while allowing you to breathe comfortably
- fit comfortably but securely against the side of the face
- be secured to the head with ties or ear loops
- be made of a material that you find to be comfortable and breathable, such as cotton
- ideally include at least two layers of fabric (the World Health Organisation recommends three depending on the fabric used)
- unless disposable, it should be able to be washed with other items of laundry according to fabric washing instructions and dried without causing the face covering to be damaged

Where possible the reusable and washable face coverings are encouraged to prevent littering.

When wearing a face covering you should:

- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on
- avoid wearing on your neck or forehead
- avoid touching the part of the face covering in contact with your mouth and nose, as it could be contaminated with the virus
- change the face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it
- avoid taking it off and putting it back on a lot in quick succession

When removing a face covering:

- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before removing
- only handle the straps, ties or clips
- do not give it to someone else to use
- if single-use, dispose of it carefully in a residual waste bin and do not recycle
- if reusable, wash it in line with manufacturer's instructions at the highest temperature appropriate for the fabric
- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser once removed

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

Frequently Asked Questions on Face Coverings

What will my child need?

Your child needs to come to school with:

- A **face covering**. We'd recommend a reusable one so that they can use it more than once, as they'll need to take it on and off several times during the school day. If this isn't an option, they will need to bring in several single-use face coverings each day. Their face covering should be secured to your child's head using ear loops only
- A **sealable plastic bag** to keep their face covering in when they're not using it so that it doesn't contaminate (or get contaminated by) other surfaces in school

Where can I get a face covering?

- Reusable and single-use face coverings are available to buy in shops or online
- Instructions from the government on how to make a cloth face covering can be found at <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>

How should my child use their face covering?

- Watch [this video](#) from the World Health Organisation with your child so they know how to wear their face covering safely. We'll watch this in class too
- Their face covering needs to cover their nose and mouth when they're wearing it
- They shouldn't touch the front of the face covering or the part that's touched their mouth or nose
- They should wash or sanitise their hands before and after touching the face covering, including to take it off or put it on. They should store it in an individual, sealable plastic bag between uses
- If it becomes damp, they shouldn't wear it, and they should replace it carefully
- Single-use face coverings should be disposed of after use (**not** in a recycling bin)

How often will it need to be washed?

- Reusable face coverings will need to be washed at the end of each day, ready for your child to wear the next day
- If your child has taken a spare reusable mask from school, this will also need to be washed before they use it again
- You can wash and dry reusable face coverings with normal laundry – follow the washing instructions for the fabric and use normal detergent

What if my child is exempt from wearing a face covering?

- They won't need to wear one in school
- Please let us know by contacting the school if your child is exempt so that we don't ask them to wear a face covering

What if my child forgets their face covering?

- We'll have a small supply of spares available at school
- To be safe in the knowledge that everyone has one, please make sure your child has their own so that we can keep our supply of spares for emergencies