

Head Teacher
Letter sent via email

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Date: 5 March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

Face coverings for secondary pupils

Many of you will now be aware that the government has advised that staff and pupils in year 7 and above should wear face coverings indoors while in school, including in classrooms where social distancing cannot be maintained, with the exception of certain lessons such as PE. For most pupils in year 7 and above wearing a face covering in communal areas of their school has become part of their everyday routine, but we recognise the new advice will require parents and staff to offer some additional support to pupils to ensure the face coverings are worn safely.

The purpose of wearing a face covering is to minimise the risk of transmitting the virus to other people if you are infectious but don't have symptoms. We know that up to 30% of people with COVID-19 don't experience symptoms, and everyone who has the virus will be infectious in the two days before their symptoms start, so wearing face coverings is one of a range of infection prevention and control measures that have been introduced in schools to protect pupils and staff.

Face coverings have been introduced in response to the new variant of the virus which spreads more easily. We hope that by everyone playing their part and wearing a face covering pupils will be able to continue to receive face-to-face teaching, and a return to online teaching will be avoided in the future. We are extremely grateful for pupil, staff and parent/carer support for this arrangement and will be reviewing it on a regular basis to ensure that when the government assesses the risk to be low enough, the advice to wear them can be removed.

Although the wearing of face coverings has been extended, exemptions for wearing face coverings are still in place and further information about exemptions can be found here: <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>. Any pupil who has one of the conditions on the exemption list will not be expected to wear a face covering while in school.



Anyone communicating to someone who relies on lip reading will also be exempt from wearing a face covering.

To ensure that pupils wear their face covering safely we are asking parents/carers to provide the following to their children:

- A supply of four reusable face coverings per day (Face visors or shields should not be worn as an alternative to face coverings).
- A small supply of hand sanitiser for use when removing or putting on the face covering and there is not a supply nearby
- A ziplock bag to keep used face coverings in

No-one will be excluded from education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering. For any pupils that do forget their face covering or their face covering becomes damp or damaged and they do not have a spare, schools will have a small emergency supply of single use masks.

Pupils will be advised to change their face coverings regularly including when they get damp to ensure the face covering continues to offer protection and does not irritate the wearers skin. Providing four face coverings will ensure that pupils have a regular supply to enable them to be regularly changed. More information about making your own face covering can be found in the link above. I'm sure schools would also welcome any donations of reusable face coverings as an emergency supply. We would also encourage parents/carers whose children are friends with pupils that have communication needs to supply transparent face coverings to enable them to continue to communicate indoors.

Pupils will also be encouraged to leave the school buildings during breaks and lunchtime to enable them to safely remove the face covering and spend some time not wearing one.

Face coverings are part of a range actions that should be implemented to minimise the risk of spreading the virus. You should still:

- Maintain two metre social distancing from anyone outside of your household where possible
- Wear a face covering when entering public indoor buildings and travelling on public transport
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and warm water or hand sanitiser
- Undertake asymptomatic testing as a household twice a week
- Self-isolate with your household and get a PCR test if you develop symptoms of COVID-19 – even if your home test was negative
- Self-isolate for 10 days if you are a contact of a confirmed case

For the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 please visit

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/>

I recognise that this is another request so I would like to express my gratitude for all your support in helping reduce the rates of COVID in our communities.

Yours sincerely



Ian Ashworth
Director of Public Health