



## The Use of Face Coverings in Educational Settings

### Introduction

This guidance is intended to support early years and childcare providers, schools, including alternative provision, and colleges with new advice on the use of face coverings.

This guidance applies to the use of face coverings by staff and pupils who are attending the school settings during the lockdown period.

The use of a face covering is strongly recommended for some settings but is not mandatory activity.

### What a face covering is

In the context of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, a face covering is something which safely covers the nose and mouth. Staff and pupils can buy reusable or single-use face coverings. They may also use a scarf, bandana, religious garment or hand-made cloth covering but these must securely fit round the side of the face.

Face coverings are not classified as PPE (personal protective equipment) which is used in a limited number of settings to protect wearers against hazards and risks, such as surgical masks or respirators used in medical and industrial settings.

Face coverings are instead largely intended to protect others, not the wearer, against the spread of infection because they cover the nose and mouth, which are the main confirmed sources of transmission of virus that causes coronavirus infection (COVID-19).

If you wish to find out more about the differences between surgical face masks, PPE face masks, and face coverings see the MHRA's (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency) [regulatory status of equipment being used to help prevent coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

### Face visors or shields

A face visor or shield may be worn in addition to a face covering but not instead of one. This is because face visors or shields do not adequately cover the nose and mouth.

### General approach to face coverings



The [World Health Organisation published a statement on 21 August about children and face coverings](#). They now advise that “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.”

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.

### Early Years Settings

It is not mandatory for face coverings to be worn in these settings, but it is strongly recommended in situations indoors where social distancing between **adults** in settings is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas). In these instances, settings have the discretion to recommend the use of face coverings for adults on site, for both staff and visitors whilst acknowledging some individuals may be exempt.

### Primary Schools

It is not mandatory for face coverings to be worn in these settings, but it is strongly recommended in situations indoors where social distancing between **adults** in settings is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas). In these instances, settings have the discretion to recommend the use of face coverings for adults on site, for both staff and visitors whilst acknowledging some individuals may be exempt.

During lockdown, on the basis of current evidence and 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. There is 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, aiming for 2 metres wherever possible. Face coverings can have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom should be avoided

### Secondary Schools/Post-16 Education

It is recommended that pupils in Year 7 – Year 13 and staff wear face coverings. It is not mandatory for face coverings to be worn in these settings, but it is strongly recommended in



situations indoors where social distancing between **adults/pupils** in settings is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas). In these instances, settings have the discretion to recommend the use of face coverings for adults on site (staff and visitors) and pupils whilst acknowledging some individuals may be exempt.

During lockdown, on the basis of current evidence and 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 where social distancing of 2 metres is maintained wherever possible. There is 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

### All settings

During a period of lockdown, it is strongly recommended that students, staff and parents/visitors wear a face covering if they need to use Public Transport, on arrival in the school grounds, when moving around the building indoors and outside and when using communal areas.

### 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, education settings 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.