

Dear Parents/Carers

Face masks – changing government advice

As you may be aware, the government recently changed their advice surrounding the wearing of face masks in schools. Previously they had said that the wearing of masks should not be necessary in any school. This has now been updated and the Department for Education has stated:

“Nationwide [while] the government is not recommending face coverings are necessary.... Schools will have the discretion to require face coverings in communal areasif they believe that it is right in their particular circumstances.”

As a school we are working with the Local Authority to closely monitor the local rate of infection. At the present time overall cases continue to remain low. Obviously, this is fast moving situation and we will respond accordingly to any changes.

Applying the new guidance at Woodside

In line with government guidance we will not be making the wearing of masks mandatory at this time in any area of the school.

However, we do recognise that some students will feel more comfortable wearing a face mask as they move around the building through communal areas. **At this time, we are happy for students to wear face masks in communal areas should they wish to.**

Please note:

- Masks must be plain in appearance
- Logos or motifs are NOT permitted
- Masks must be worn appropriately and sensibly
- We recommend a reusable mask for durability
- Any student intentionally misusing a mask will be required to take it off
- Students must follow instructions regarding the cleaning of hands before and after touching their mask. Facilities will be available in classrooms
- Students should come to school with a sealable plastic bag so that masks can be safely stored between use
- Students may wish to bring a spare mask with them stored in a separate sealable plastic bag. This is particularly important if a disposable mask is used as they have approximately a 4 hour life and this is insufficient for a school day

Wearing masks in lessons

Government guidance states:

“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 Face coverings can have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom should be avoided.”

In line with this guidance we ask that students do not wear masks in lessons. Should you wish to discuss this matter further please contact your child's Head of Year after 1st September when term commences for staff

How to wear a mask

It is vital that face coverings are worn correctly 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.

Face coverings are now widely available for purchase. In addition, Public Health England has made available resources on how to [make a simple face covering](#).

However, if 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 has become soiled or unsafe, the school will have a small contingency supply available to meet such needs.

Areas of intervention

Additional precautionary measures will be necessary in areas where the transmission of the virus is high. These areas are defined as [areas of national government intervention](#).

In these local intervention (lockdown) areas, 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.

Overall cases continue to remain low in our area and this guidance does not apply to Woodside at the present time.

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings in these circumstances. Currently the wearing of masks is not mandatory in school so exemptions will not be required at this stage

We continue to monitor the local situation closely. Further changes to government guidance and/or the local rate of infection will mean that we will review this information. We will of course keep you updated accordingly.

Early next week, we will be issuing some reminders about our plans for students returning to school.

Best wishes

Holly Hartley and Lynne Hardcastle