

Education Services

Framework for Recovery, Resilience and Re-connection (RRR2020)

Children and Young People and Face Coverings – Advice – Updated 24 August 2020

This guidance has been updated to take into account the latest advice from the World Health Organisation.

From their web-site [WHO advice](#)

WHO advises that people always consult and abide by local authorities on recommended practices in their area. An international and multidisciplinary expert group brought together by WHO reviewed evidence on COVID-19 disease and transmission in children and the limited available evidence on the use of masks by children.

Based on this and other factors such as children's psychosocial needs and developmental milestones, WHO and UNICEF advise the following:

Children aged **5 years and under** should not be required to wear masks. This is based on the safety and overall interest of the child and the capacity to appropriately use a mask with minimal assistance.

WHO and UNICEF advise that the decision to use masks for children aged **6-11** should be based on the following factors:

- Whether there is widespread transmission in the area where the child resides
- The ability of the child to safely and appropriately use a mask
- Access to masks, as well as laundering and replacement of masks in certain settings (such as schools and childcare services)
- Adequate adult supervision and instructions to the child on how to put on, take off and safely wear masks
- Potential impact of wearing a mask on learning and psychosocial development, in consultation with teachers, parents/caregivers and/or medical providers
- Specific settings and interactions the child has with other people who are at high risk of developing serious illness, such as the elderly and those with other underlying health conditions

WHO and UNICEF 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 the last paragraph which is particularly relevant. Note that WHO and Unicef are not advocating the widespread use of face coverings for those aged 12 and over. Therefore, schools should consider their use carefully in consultation with their school community taking

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into consideration the advice in this document for their local context about where, when and for whom face coverings would be appropriate.

The Scottish government guidance states that:

Anyone (whether child, young person or adult) wishing to wear a face covering in school should be enabled to do so. Evidence suggests that face coverings do not provide significant protection for the wearer, rather they primarily reduce the risk of transmission and help suppress the virus. As the wearing of face coverings/masks becomes more commonplace in Scotland, it is possible that more people may choose to wear a face covering in the school setting, particularly on the initial return to school. Should the prevalence of the virus in the population start rising, nationally or in parts of Scotland, schools may wish to encourage the wearing of face coverings, especially among adults and older young people in secondary schools, as part of an enhanced system of approaches to reduce transmission.

The last part of this guidance is particularly relevant in that it allows schools to encourage the wearing of face coverings as part of an enhanced system to reduce transmission. If you wish to encourage your young people to wear face coverings please ensure that you discuss with your staff group, Parent Council and Students Council to outline why the school considers it appropriate at this time.

You must ensure that you have taken steps to assess the impact on young people with additional support needs:

The impact of wearing a face covering for learners with additional support needs, including any level of hearing loss, should be carefully considered, as communication for many of these learners including hearing impaired young people relies in part on being able to see someone's face clearly. This is also important for children and young people who are acquiring English and who rely on visual cues to enable them to be included in learning. Individuals who may not be able to handle and wear face coverings as directed (e.g. young learners, or those with additional support needs or disabilities) should not wear them as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission.

It would be helpful for you to ensure that your staff have guidance which is specific to your context, for example, if you have enhanced provision for young people with language and communication needs or hearing impairment.

There is also Public Health guidance related to young people who are exempt from wearing masks (similar to the rest of the population) and this would also be applicable in school settings.

Similar to in the community, young people should not be challenged by individual members of staff for not wearing a face covering as there may be a very good reason why this is the case. If a member of staff is concerned then they should email the pastoral care teacher or year head. They should not discuss with other staff or pupils.

Teachers may have to adjust their approaches to learning and teaching, if they are choosing to wear a face covering, for example, through using more visual cues and prompts. If the teacher is maintaining 2 metres physical distancing then they should not need to use a face covering, which could assist in the delivery of the lesson.

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Finally, schools should not be issuing face coverings. Staff or young people wishing to wear face coverings should provide their own. Please also consider the environmental impact of disposable face coverings and the advice below on washing for cloth ones.

When issuing information to encourage the wearing of masks the guidance states:

Schools should raise awareness amongst children, young people and staff about the correct way to remove and store face coverings when those who use them (e.g. on public transport) arrive at school. Cloth face coverings should be washed regularly and in accordance with current advice.

We hope that this advice is helpful and we will continue to communicate with you if there is any change to national advice.

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24 August 2020