

## Walsall Public Health

13 October 2020

Dear Parent and Carer

### Face coverings for pupils in year 7 and above

New coronavirus restrictions have been announced for Walsall residents as a result of the government's new local alert system. They will come into effect on Wednesday 14 October.

Walsall has been placed in the alert level 'high' as our infection rates are above 100 per 100,000 people. Due to the high rate in the number of COVID-19 cases, everyone in Walsall is being asked to follow the regulations to reduce the spread of the virus.

**We would ask all students in Years 7-13 (at secondary school/ college) to now wear face coverings in corridors and communal areas. The same is the case for staff and visitors. This is to provide additional protection in areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain. Face coverings can be removed at break times when seated at a table to eat or drink.**

It is not necessary to wear face coverings in the classroom, where schools already have protective measures in place (for example desks set out in rows 2 metres apart).

We ask that you support your child in complying with this request by ensuring they have an appropriate face covering with them every day and that they abide by the requirements to wear it in communal areas. We would also ask that your child is provided with a sealable plastic bag in which to store their face covering when it is not being worn

If your child has a health condition that prevents them wearing a face covering, then please contact the school so that they can discuss your child's requirements.

We would also like to remind you of the importance of wearing face coverings on public transport and on dedicated school transport when possible.

This policy has been put in place to protect all pupils including your child and all staff. The same expectations are on staff. It is very important that all students engage with this. In line with national guidance these measures relate only to secondary age pupils. If you have primary age children they do not have to wear face coverings in school.

We would also like to remind you that if your child displays any of the symptoms of coronavirus

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss of, or change to, your sense of smell



- a loss of, or change to, your sense of or taste

Then they must stay at home and you will need to book a test - telephone NHS 119 or visit [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus). A face covering does not change this.

Thank you for your support to keep our pupils, staff and Walsall community safe.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Gunther', written over a faint horizontal line.

Stephen Gunther  
Director of Public Health

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who does a face covering protect?

HM Government



NHS

Face coverings are 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).

### How do I wear a face covering?



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

### [Find out more on how to wear a face covering](#)

### Can I make my own face covering?



Yes, there is a simple guide available. A cloth face covering should cover your mouth and nose while allowing you to breathe comfortably so be considerate of materials and fabrics that may irritate different skin types.

[Find out more on how to make your own face covering](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

### Why doesn't my child need to wear a face covering in the classroom?

Face coverings will not need to be worn in classrooms, because other protective measures have been introduced by the school e.g. rearranging classrooms so social distancing measures can be applied.

## How do I know if my child does not have to wear a face covering?



There are some circumstances where people may not be able to wear a face covering. These include;

- children under the age of 11 (Public Health England do not recommended face coverings for children under the age of 3 for health and safety reasons)
- people who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- if you are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate

[Find out more on who is exempt from wearing a face covering](#)

[Access exemption card templates](#)

## Where should my child store their face covering?

Once removed your child can store their reusable face coverings in a plastic bag. It is important to wash the face covering regularly and follow the washing instructions for the fabric. You can use your normal detergent and wash and dry it with other laundry.

Please throw away the face covering if it is damaged.

## What should my child do when wearing a face covering?

They should;

- wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on
- avoid wearing on neck or forehead
- avoid touching the part of the face covering in contact with their mouth and nose, as it could be contaminated with the virus
- change the face covering if it becomes damp or if touched
- avoid taking it off and putting it back on a lot in quick succession (for example, when leaving and entering shops on a high street)

## How should my child remove their face covering?

They should;

- wash 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

### **Other useful links**

What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

Read a statement by the four UK Chief Medical Officers on the reopening of schools and childcare <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-the-uk-chief-medical-officers-on-schools-and-childcare-reopening>