

Education Services

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

Senior Phase Young People and Face Coverings – Advice

You will be aware that there has been some national coverage about social distancing in secondary schools.

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. However, please note that it does state older young people and we would consider this to be Senior Phase S4-6 young people. 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.

OFFICIAL

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.

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 for the Senior Phase.

OFFICIAL