

[Extract from [Scottish Government guidance](#) page 16-19]

Face coverings [Note: updated effective from 31st August 2020]

79. The Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues has provided updated advice on the issue of face coverings in schools, in light of the latest scientific evidence and the [advice of the World Health Organisation](#), which was published on 21st August 2020.

80. The advice notes that the volume of evidence supporting the initial scientific position on a key benefit of face coverings (protection of others from infection by the wearer) has grown. There is also emerging evidence to suggest that the wearer of a face covering can be protected.

81. This section of the school reopening guidance has been updated in light of the advisory group's updated advice, and the feedback received from stakeholders on the early experiences of school reopening.

82. A definition of face coverings (which should not be confused with PPE) can be found [here](#). Use of face coverings in the circumstances set out in this guidance should be seen as just one mitigation within a package of measures. The other mitigation measures in this guidance, including physical distancing for adults, environmental cleaning, personal hand and respiratory hygiene, grouping of young people and maintaining distancing between young people in secondary schools where possible, remain vitally important.

83. Anyone (whether child, young person or adult) wishing to wear a face covering in school should be permitted to do so.

84. Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. Further information on exemptions can be found in wider [Scottish Government guidance](#).

85. Face coverings should not generally be required in classrooms or other learning and teaching environments. However, face coverings should be worn by adults where they cannot keep 2m distance and are interacting face-to-face for a sustained period (about 15 minutes or more) with other adults and/or children and young people.

86. Face coverings should also be worn in the following circumstances (except where an adult or child/young person is exempt from wearing a covering):

- where adults and young people in secondary schools (including special schools and independent and grant aided schools) are moving about the school in corridors and confined communal areas (including toilets) where physical distancing is particularly difficult to maintain; and
- in line with the current arrangements for public transport, where adults and children and young people aged 5 and over are travelling on dedicated school transport (see School Transport section).

This approach reflects precautionary judgements based on the latest scientific advice and the experience of school reopening to date. It is limited to the specific environments identified above for the following reasons:

- These are areas where mixing between different (age) groups is more likely, increasing the potential for transmission of the virus;

- Experience and feedback has demonstrated that crowding and close contact in these areas is more likely, and that voices may be raised resulting in greater potential for creation of aerosols;
- The scope for effective ventilation is often less;
- There are less compelling counter-balancing arguments regarding the potential impact of face coverings on educational outcomes in these areas of the school estate; and
- For school transport, the adoption of an approach to face coverings applying to children and young people aged 5 and over will be consistent with the current approach on public transport.

87. Face coverings may also play a particularly important role when prevalence rises, and their use may be increased in specific local contexts on the basis of risk assessments and local factors, including as follows:

- Local Incident Management Teams may recommend a further strengthening of the use of face coverings in other areas of the school (e.g. classrooms) when dealing with local outbreaks (see Outbreak Management).
- Individual local authorities and secondary schools (including special schools and independent and grant aided schools) may wish, following the relevant local authority processes and appropriate risk assessment and consultation with school communities, to consider strengthening the use of face coverings in other areas of the school (e.g. classrooms) to address specific local circumstances (e.g. particular concerns or anxieties around distancing or confidence building in the context of local or wider outbreaks).

An example of this local “stepping up” of measures may be the use of face coverings in secondary school classrooms where any form of distancing is impossible, in circumstances where increased community transmission is being seen.

88. In making any such local decisions on the stepping up of use of face coverings, it will remain vitally important to consider the potential impact on children and young people, including via the appropriate use of Equality Impact Assessments. 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. In classes where any such impacts are anticipated and no alternative mitigations are reasonable, schools may wish to consider the use of see-through face coverings which are increasingly available. Some children and young people may need additional support/reassurance about the reasons for adults wearing face coverings.

89. It is vital that clear instructions are provided to staff and 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. The key points are as follows:

- Face coverings should not be shared with others.
- Before putting on or removing the face covering, hands should be cleaned by washing with soap and water or hand sanitiser.

- Make sure the face covering is the right size to cover the nose, mouth and chin. Children should be taught how to wear the face covering properly, including not touching the front and not pulling it under the chin or into their mouth.
- When temporarily storing a face covering (e.g. during classes), it should be placed in a washable, sealed bag or container. Avoid placing it on surfaces, due to the possibility of contamination.
- Re-usable face coverings should be washed after each day of use in school at 60 degrees centigrade or in boiling water.
- Disposable face coverings must be disposed of safely and hygienically. Children and young people should be encouraged not to litter and to place their face coverings in the general waste bin. They are not considered to be clinical waste in the same way that used PPE may be.

Further general advice on face coverings is available [here](#).

There should be regular messaging from schools to adults and children and young people about these instructions. These risks must be considered when deciding locally whether to step up measures.

90. Local authorities and schools should consider carefully how to address any equity concerns arising from the use of face coverings, including in respect of the impacts on certain groups of pupils and the costs of providing face coverings for staff and children and young people. It is reasonable to assume that most staff and young people will now have access to re-usable face coverings due to their increasing use in wider society, and the Scottish Government has made available a [video](#) 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/unsafe, schools should take steps to have a contingency supply available to meet such needs.

91. No-one should be excluded from education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering. See the section on Supporting the Wellbeing of Children and Young People for guidance addressing concerns regarding adherence to school policy or procedure.

92. Any additional costs of implementing this updated guidance (for example in respect of contingent provision of face coverings, or additional cleaning costs) will be considered via the arrangements for funding of Education Recovery that have been agreed between the Scottish Government and COSLA.