



27.8.20

Dear Parents and Carers,

Face Coverings in Scottish Schools

Ellon Academy Covid-19 Update – Face Coverings

This is an initial message to inform parents/carers about the wearing of face coverings for pupils from Monday 31st August. We expect more detailed guidance from Aberdeenshire Council, so this detail will be personalised for Ellon Academy and included in the weekly up-date for parents, issued on Fridays, if it is received on time, or as soon as it is available.

Scottish secondary school pupils have been instructed by the Scottish Government to implement the wearing of face coverings for pupils in corridors, communal areas and school buses from Monday 31st August.

Education Secretary John Swinney said the new rules would apply to all pupils aged over 12. He said **the guidance** had been updated based on **new advice from the World Health Organization** (WHO).

There will be no requirement to wear face coverings in classrooms where distancing measures are in place.

- **WHO says children over 12 should wear masks**

Mr Swinney said individual exemptions could be granted for health reasons, but the guidance would be "obligatory" for all secondary, special and grant-aided schools. He said "From August 31st, young people over the age of 12 in secondary schools, should habitually be wearing face coverings when they are moving around schools and corridors and in communal areas where it is difficult to deliver the physical distancing."

He also said the Scottish government had acted in the light of the new WHO advice based on evidence that teenagers can infect others in the same way as adults, but had decided to go further by extending it to school transport.

"It's part of the general measures we are taking to ensure we keep pace with the emerging advice about how to keep our schools open and to keep our schools safe," he said.

Ellon Academy

Aberdeenshire Council's advice for schools is that individual pupils and staff are expected to provide their own face coverings, but at Ellon Academy, we will keep a stock of reusable ones for those who forget/lose etc. Pupils who are entitled to Free School Meals will be provided with face coverings.

From Monday 31st August at Ellon Academy, all pupils and staff should be wearing face coverings on the school bus, in corridors and communal areas.
(Individual exemptions will still apply for specific reasons, e.g. health)

Exemptions from the Wearing of Face Coverings:

As per my letter of 27.8.20 (attached), pupils are required to wear face coverings in school from Monday 31st August.

We are aware that there may be pupils who have genuine health and wellbeing related issues which prevent them from complying with this mitigation, so if this affects your child/children, please send a letter to confirm the health and wellbeing related reason, to your child's register teacher on Monday morning, so we can confirm this, and ensure that staff are aware (confidentially). This will ensure that your child is not challenged about non-compliance by school staff.

We are encouraging pupils to wear washable fabric face coverings for environmental reasons., and they should be washed regularly using normal detergent

- Pupils should remember to:
Wear over mouth and nose
Only touch the straps/loops that goes over ears of face coverings
- Try not to pull it up or down or rest it on another part of your head
Take it off from behind your head, store it away and then wash/sanitise your hands

We will explain this to pupils at an extended registration on Monday as part of the virtual assembly for all classes and show a video which has been sent to schools regarding safe practice in using and wearing face coverings.

Pupils who do not comply with this new measure will have a discussion with a key member of staff, and we will be in touch with parents/carers to find out if there are other reasons that we need to take into account.

We are aware, that for some pupils, these further mitigations may be stressful, and we plan to be mindful and sensitive of this in our dealings with all young people. However, for many pupils and staff, this will be a welcome mitigation to further ensure the safety of all.

For more information regarding face coverings, please click on the link to the Scottish Government website below:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-preparing-start-new-school-term-august-2020-version-2/>.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/face-coverings/>

Here is an excerpt re face coverings in school from the new up-dated Guidance from the Scottish Government:

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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.

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.
- 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
- 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.

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](#).

No-one will be excluded from education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering.

I will include all of this information in my weekly up-date for parents, including any further guidance we receive today/tomorrow.

Thank you for your continued support and patience,

Yours sincerely,

P Buchan
Rector