

Communication for schools and parents regarding the wearing of face coverings, 28.8.20

Following the Welsh Government's announcement and publication of the *Technical Advisory Group Advice on Face Coverings for Children and Young People (under 18) in Education settings* earlier this week, Council and school leaders have been urgently seeking clarification at a local and national level regarding key aspects of the guidance around the wearing of face coverings.

Currently the only change to the advice in the Welsh Government Operational Guidance for Schools is that schools and colleges should undertake risk assessments to determine if face coverings should be **used in areas outside the classroom, in communal areas** such as corridors within the school estate.

Plans should take into account the overall balance of risks and benefits to all in the setting, including individuals with additional needs or disabilities who may be exempt from such decisions.

Despite the responsibility for operational planning and preparation for reopening lying with each individual school, the Education Service and Council have been working in collaboration with schools to provide support where possible and an agreed local authority-wide approach.

However, due to the pressing timescales associated with final preparations for reopening next week and the urgent need to provide clear communication for parents and pupils regarding the wearing of face coverings, the Council's current position is:

- For all secondary pupils it will become mandatory (unless exempt on additional learning needs or medical grounds) to wear face coverings on home to school transport
- For secondary schools, we recommend the wearing of face coverings in all communal areas such as corridors where controls such as social distancing are not possible (unless exempt on additional learning needs or medical grounds)
- The overarching principle set out in our operational guidance still stands, which is to reduce the number of contacts between learners and staff and to social distance as far as practicable and maintain the integrity of contact groups (in secondary schools these include year cohorts). As a result, we are not currently recommending the wearing of face coverings in classrooms.
- Head teachers have already undertaken risk assessments, supported by the local authority, based on the guidance Welsh Government has issued. We recommend schools and settings update their existing risk assessments during the first two weeks of their return.
- Schools should update parents through their own communications to make parents aware of the schools updated policy on the wearing of face coverings.

- Responsibility for the provision of an appropriate face covering lies with the parent/carer of the pupil.
- Parents and pupils must adhere to the individual school's guidelines on provision and wearing of face coverings.

On receipt of further clarification and guidance, we will review current recommendations.