

Government updates guidance on masks

Guidance for pupils and staff on the use of face coverings in schools and on school transport has been updated.

In light of the latest scientific and public health advice, including World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines, face coverings should now (unless exemptions apply) be worn:

in secondary schools, by adults and all pupils moving around the school, such as in corridors and communal areas where physical distancing is difficult to maintain

on dedicated school transport by all children aged five and over, bringing it into line with guidance for public transport.

While staff and students can continue to wear face coverings if they wish to, face coverings will not generally be necessary in the classroom as there is greater scope for physical distancing and face coverings can have an impact on learning and teaching. However it remains the case that where adults cannot keep 2 metres distance and are interacting face-to-face for a sustained period (about 15 minutes or more), face coverings should be worn.

Deputy First Minister John Swinney said: "We said that our guidance would be kept under constant review and, following updated scientific and public health advice and the experience of schools reopening, we are making changes that will apply from 31 August 2020.

“There is increasing evidence that face coverings can provide some protection for the wearer as well as those around them. We also know that some pupils have found it very difficult to physically distance when moving around school, which could increase the risk of transmission of the virus. And on school transport, as on public transport, there can be mixing between different age groups.

“We have worked with partners on the Education Recovery Group to update the guidance to ensure face coverings are worn in corridors and confined communal areas in secondary schools, and on school transport.

“Schools will be asked to ensure children and young people have clear instructions on how to put on, remove, and store face coverings. Any staff member or pupil will still be able to wear a face covering when they wish to do so.

“We want to continue to protect what we have achieved in suppressing the virus and re-opening schools, and to do the best for children in schools. Alongside this change to the wearing of face coverings, we need to reinforce the importance of maintaining high standards of cleaning, personal hand and respiratory hygiene and physical distancing, where possible. In situations where there is a local cluster, use of face coverings throughout the day may be required.

“The position will be kept under review to ensure that our approach remains commensurate with the evidence and the levels of transmission in Scotland.”