



27 August 2020

Dear parents and carers

As you are aware the Government amended their advice on wearing face masks in school at 10pm on Tuesday night. The context was revised guidance from The World Health Organisation and the changing situation in Scotland. Since then I have read the detailed guidance from the Department for Education and spoken with my Senior Team and Health and Safety Team regarding the best way for us to implement this guidance in our school. There is a lot of argument, counter argument, rumour and hearsay around face masks in school and this wealth of information has led to some very forceful opinions on both sides from all stakeholders. As Headteacher I have to balance all of this information, listen to all parties and strive to build a consensus to see us through. Above all else I have to make sure that what we do is safe for your children, school staff and visitors to the school. I have always adopted the approach of following the guidance issued to us and adjusting the position of the school as the advice changes. In this instance the salient points of the Government guidance are:

1. The wearing of face masks is only mandatory in areas of local lockdown.
2. The wearing of face masks should only be adopted if:
 - a. The layout of the school makes it difficult to maintain social distancing when staff and students are moving around the school
 - b. On top of the measures and systems of control already in place in school, allowing face masks would provide additional confidence for staff, parents and students in returning to school.
3. The wearing of face masks applies only to communal areas or places in a school where social distancing between adults and students or students in different bubbles is challenging. Face masks are not to be worn in classrooms as they can have a negative impact on learning and communication.
4. If face masks are permitted they must be applied, removed and stored in a specific way and should be reusable rather than disposable.
5. The Department for Education advice is still against the wearing of face masks in educational settings unless the points above apply. The reason for this is that the measures of control present in schools provides additional safety measures. Masks can also undermine learning and communication. Improper use can also lead to an increased risk of transmission.

We are not a school in an area of local lockdown and as you will see from our risk assessment we have done everything expected of us to ensure that our school is as safe as possible for a full return next week. Our timetable reduces the amount of movement around the school for staff and students and reduces even further, the number of times when staff and students move together. Our one way system also supports social distancing and flow of students. Every year group will have their own entrance and exit to the building, complete with sanitiser station and each cohort will have their own toilets. Lunches will be staggered and we have developed the layout of the canteen and introduced new till points to support this. I have attached some pictures to this email to show some of the further changes we have made. I am however acutely aware of the very real anxieties and fears held by some parents and staff about returning next week. If wearing a face mask removes another barrier for returning to school then it is something we should consider.

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In this context I will not be directing any student or member of staff to wear a face mask. I will however support any staff member or student who chooses to wear one in communal areas of the school if it increases their confidence about being in school when term begins. Examples, but not an exhaustive list, of communal areas are corridors, staircases, canteen, library. **FACE MASKS ARE NOT TO BE WORN IN CLASSROOMS, DURING LESSONS OR IN OUTDOOR AREAS.**

If you wish to wear a face mask to school it needs to be a reusable rather than a disposable one. Snoods, scarves or other face coverings are not permitted in line with the guidance issued. Students will also need a sealed plastic bag to store the mask in when they are not wearing it. Students should also wash or sanitise their hands for 20 seconds before and after applying and removing it and they should not touch the front part, only the straps. They should also not be worn if wet. Please note that at this stage no other PPE is to be worn on site at all. I will speak to all students about how to wear face masks appropriately when we return next week.

We will also amend our behaviour policy to deal with students who wear or use face masks incorrectly. As with all our Covid 19 prevention measure we reserve the right to send students home if they engage in any action which jeopardises the health and safety of others in our school community.

I hope this explanation is clear and provides a compromise to support all perspectives on this sensitive issue within the current guidance. Above all else I hope it reassures you that I wish to do everything possible to ensure a safe return to school for all of us next week.

Best regards



Graham Cunningham

Headteacher
Longdean School

