



10 June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your family are well at this difficult time. You will know from previous letters from your child's Headteacher and myself that there is a slightly wider opening of schools this half term. Thank you for all your support with this and with your continued support with home learning.

One real advantage of being in a Trust is that our experienced operations team have been able to support and guide our Heads and our staff, this has ensured the schools have taken every step possible to keep the children in school very safe. I have chatted to some parents at the school gates and they have been really assured by the thorough plans of our schools.

Of course, there is so much news and often conflicting messages in the media so I have asked our team to provide you all with an update of the latest guidance, with a particular focus on face coverings. I hope this helps, especially if your child is attending school;

Government guidance on measures to control the virus

The Government's guidance for the reopening of schools has been implemented in our planning and opening arrangements. The guidance has given us our focus on the most effective measures first, i.e. avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms, frequent hand cleaning and good respiratory hygiene practices, regular cleaning of schools, minimising contact and mixing.

As well as the measures above, our upper and secondary schools have:

- ensured that only a quarter of pupils in year 10 and year 12 will be in school at any one time
- aimed to practise social distancing in line with the measures the government is asking everyone to adopt in public and in workplaces, including keeping pupils two metres apart from each other where possible
- plan that classes are no more than half their usual size, to allow sufficient distancing between pupils

For all of our schools we have implemented these measures and given further guidance to ensure that if illness does occur within school, the Government's guidance is followed, to limit the risk of the spread of any infection, including the use of personal protective equipment e.g. gloves, aprons, face masks which is appropriate only in very limited circumstances.



Outline of what the Government says - specifically the wearing of face coverings in school

The DfE guidance is currently:

"Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools or other education settings is not recommended. Face coverings may be beneficial for short periods indoors where there is a risk of close social contact with people you do not usually meet and where social distancing and other measures cannot be maintained, for example on public transport or in some shops. This does not apply to schools or other education settings. Schools and other education or childcare settings should therefore not require staff, children and learners to wear face coverings. Changing habits, cleaning and hygiene are effective measures in controlling the spread of the virus.

Face coverings (or any form of medical mask unless instructed to be used for specific clinical reasons) should not be worn in any circumstance by those who may not be able to handle them as directed (for example, young children, or those with special educational needs or disabilities) as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission."

We do acknowledge the sense of anxiety and personal preference of some staff and students

We have been mindful in our engagement with staff and students to acknowledge the anxieties people hold. Conflicting views and opinions are shared on the interpretation of scientific data through the media and these can further fuel concerns.

Irrespective of the Government's guidance which we must of course follow in our schools and which is based on the advice of the Government's scientific advisors, we acknowledge that for many staff, parents and potential students, the use of a face covering may provide a level of reassurance to the wearer, especially as we return to school.

Outline of our policy

As a result, the Trust has produced a local protocol on the use of face coverings by staff and students which I would like to share with you. We will now permit the wearing of face coverings if a member of staff, or student feels more comfortable with wearing the covering - this is a personal choice.

Our general principles are:

- wearing of a face covering is voluntary and at the preference of the wearer, it is not a requirement of the Trust for its students and we have not risk assessed face coverings as necessary other than as PPE for staff in those limited purposes set out in Government guidance
- face coverings are not provided by schools other than for use by staff as PPE in the circumstances outlined in guidance
- that face coverings are the responsibility of the wearer and are not to be shared. They must be considered to potentially be contaminated.
- suitable arrangements are made on site by the school for disposal of face coverings by the wearer



- face coverings are to be worn to cover the mouth and nose and are made of a plain material which may be coloured but not containing text
- that face coverings can be worn in and around the school site, including the teaching environment

The Trust's support for the wearing of face coverings by staff and students is a temporary arrangement and not a permanent change to the school's uniform policy. The Trust will keep this arrangement under review.

As a Trust we are focussed on implementing the controls we have already planned and we need to be clear that face coverings do not make you invincible and are not as effective as the other measures we have put in place from Government guidance.

We would also like you to consider the advice of the World Health Organisation and the potential risks associated with the continuous use of face coverings. These include:

- the potential for self-contamination due to the manipulation of the mask or covering with contaminated hands
- potential self-contamination that can occur if they are not changed when wet, soiled or damaged
- possible development of facial skin lesions and discomfort for young children, especially in hot weather
- false sense of security

If you choose on balance that you would like your child to wear one in school, Government guidance on how to make and wear a face covering is available which may be of interest;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

Please do let your school know if you intend to allow your child to wear a face covering by notifying the school office.

Thank you for your continued support, and apologies for a fairly technical letter, but we would like everyone to stay as safe and secure as possible.

Kind Regards

Adrian Rogers
CEO Chiltern Learning Trust
National Leader of Education