

31st August 2020

Dear parents and carers

Further to my [message last week](#), I am writing to update you on the school's position regarding face coverings for the new term. We will write again in 2–3 days with a few final reminders about next week, but I thought you would appreciate an update on this particular issue as soon as possible.

Typically, the situation has changed yet again since my last message. Firstly, it has been announced that Trafford will have its local restrictions lifted from 2nd September, although other areas where some staff and students live are still subject to the extra restrictions. Secondly, the government have issued more information about a 'tiered' approach to measures that schools will be expected to adopt if the incidence of Covid starts to rise in any given area, with one of these being the compulsory use of face coverings.

Having given the issue plenty more thought, and taking into account the fact that the great majority of parents and staff who have been in touch over the last few days have expressed strong support for the use of face coverings, we will start the term with face coverings being used in certain, limited situations. **Please, therefore, make sure your child comes to school with an appropriate face covering and a re-sealable plastic bag in which to store it.**

Students will be expected to wear face coverings at the following times:

- During lesson changeovers, when indoors
- In lunch queues
- Any other times, at the direction of staff, when significant numbers of students are indoors and in very close contact with one another and/or where different year groups may be mixing indoors.

Students will never be expected to wear face coverings in lessons or outside. This means they will never need to wear them for more than short periods during the school day.

We will review this policy after a couple of weeks and keep it under review thereafter; we are quite prepared to change it if appropriate.

Half a dozen of you have been in touch to say that you think face coverings are unnecessary, and I have considered your reasons carefully. I don't intend to rehearse all the various arguments for and against face coverings in this letter, but will say that I certainly do not see this in any way as a 'political' statement; I am merely a headteacher trying my best to navigate through a mass of often conflicting information and to do what is best for Lymm High School students and staff. On balance, we simply feel that using face coverings in the limited manner outlined above will not be difficult to achieve and will not bring any great hardship for students, but it will provide reassurance for a significant number of staff, parents and students – especially for those who are in more vulnerable categories or live with people who are.

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We are also slightly concerned that our school buildings make it relatively difficult to keep year group bubbles separate at all times (e.g. we will have to have different year groups using the same toilet facilities) and to avoid 'bunching' of large groups indoors on some corridors. Starting the term with face coverings will afford some extra protection while we get to grips with our new systems. If we find that the other measures we have in place do, in practice, allow us to prevent students bunching together indoors too often, then we may be able to relax the approach. Similarly, if we find most students really aren't capable of wearing them properly most of the time, then we might re-consider.

I have included a few more details about face coverings below this letter. Please do make sure you read them before term starts.

Thank you in anticipation of your support.

Kind regards



Gwyn Williams

Face coverings: FAQs

Where will my child need to wear a face covering in school?

Students will need to wear face coverings during lesson changeovers, especially when on corridors and in other instances where there is a high volume of students and distancing is not possible and/or they are in contact with students from other year groups – e.g. lunch queues and possibly toilet queues. We will explain all this clearly to students on the first day back.

Will staff be wearing face coverings as well?

In most cases, staff will also be wearing face coverings in the same scenarios. However, it is likely that they will sometimes need to remove masks to allow more effective communication – e.g. when on duty in certain areas. If it proves impractical because a member of staff has to keep taking the covering on and off, then they may choose not to wear the covering if they are confident they can socially distance.

What kind of face coverings are required?

We recommend reusable face coverings, so that students can use them more than once. If you want your child to wear disposable ones, they will need to take care to dispose of them properly and bring a plentiful supply with them.

What will they do with the face covering when not wearing it?

*We are asking all student to bring a **sealable plastic bag** to keep their face covering in when not in use.*

Do you expect a particular colour or design of face covering?

No. All we ask is that face coverings do not contain any slogans/messages/images that may be considered political, controversial or offensive.

How should my child use their face covering?

We will be talking to students about how to wear coverings on their first day back, but you may want to watch [this video](#) from the World Health Organisation with your child so they know how to wear their face covering safely. The key points are:

- The face covering needs to cover the nose and mouth when being worn.
- Students should avoid touching the front of the face covering or the part that has touched their mouth or nose.
- Students should wash/sanitise their hands before and after touching the face covering, including taking it off or putting it on. We are already expecting students to bring in their own hand sanitiser, which will help with this. There are also lots of sanitiser dispensers around the school and bottles in each classroom.
- Coverings should not be worn if they become damp or dirty. We will have spares in Student Services for this eventuality.
- In between uses, coverings should be kept in a sealable plastic bag. Students must make sure they all have one of these.

How often should face coverings be washed?

Reusable face coverings will need to be washed at the end of each day, ready for your child to wear the next day. You can wash and dry reusable face coverings with normal laundry – follow the washing instructions for the fabric and use normal detergent.

I think my child needs to be exempt. What should I do?

We understand that some people are less able to wear face coverings and do not want to cause any distress in these cases. Please contact your Head of Year or Student Services to let us know if you think there are good reasons why your child should be exempt from this policy.

I don't agree with the policy and don't want my child to wear a mask. What will you do if they don't?

We know there are strong feelings on both sides of the debate about face coverings and we respect these different opinions. We certainly do not want to get into arguments with students or parents over this – there is plenty enough else to be thinking about at the moment. Our strong preference is for this to be something that we implement by appealing to everybody's sense of social responsibility and good nature. Even if you are not convinced about the value of face coverings, we would really appreciate your support in going along with us for the time being.

It would not make sense to make the policy optional, given that the logic behind wearing face coverings is primarily to protect *other* people rather than the wearer. We therefore ask for your understanding that the school has to take a position on this one way or the other and, as with many rules, this means we cannot please everyone. As mentioned above, we will keep the whole policy under review.