

Date: 12 December 2020

## Keeping our schools and early years settings safe: a message to all parents and carers

Ref: Wearing face coverings in school and nursery playgrounds

Thanks to the hard work, sacrifices and the care people have shown for the wider community, the number of new cases we are seeing in South Gloucestershire is slowly reducing. However, the numbers of new cases are still too high and the health system under too much pressure for us to relax and so we have been placed in Tier 3, which is the Very High Alert level.

Only by doing the right thing and by continuing to follow the new rules will we continue to make progress towards a safe future for everyone.

**Schools and nurseries remain a safe place for our children and young people and we know that any transmission within them is low. This is because of the work that our headteachers, managers and their teams have taken to ensure really good risk measures are in place. We want to see our children and young people in education, as this is the best for their learning.**

### What we are advising you to do

To help keep reducing local cases and to keep staff and children in our schools and nurseries as safe as possible, **we are strongly advising all parents and carers to wear a face covering during drop off and pick up.**

Encouraging parents and carers to wear face coverings in the playground goes beyond the government guidelines for educational settings, which state that face coverings should be worn where social distancing is not possible inside. However, in areas of high community transmission of the virus, schools and nurseries have discretion to encourage adults to wear face coverings in the playground.

Exemptions for wearing face coverings apply including people with breathing difficulties or living with a disability. You can read the guidelines for face coverings in education here:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education)

and the general guidelines for face coverings here: when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make your own here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own).

### Why we are asking you to do this: the reason for using face coverings

Covid-19 usually spreads by droplets from coughs, sneezes and speaking. These droplets can also be picked up from surfaces, if you touch a surface and then your face without washing your hands first. This is why social distancing, regular hand hygiene, and covering coughs and sneezes is so important in controlling the spread of the virus.

The best available scientific evidence is that, when used correctly, wearing a face covering can reduce the spread of coronavirus droplets in certain circumstances, helping to protect others.

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However, **they are not a replacement for social distancing and regular hand washing.** It is important to follow all the other government advice on Covid-19 at [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)



If you have **any** symptoms of Covid-19 you and your household must isolate at home - wearing a face covering does not change this. You should arrange to have a test to find out if you have Covid-19: [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](http://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test)

If you are a contact of someone who has tested positive you must self-isolate - wearing a face covering does not change this.

You can read our guide on self-isolating [www.southglos.gov.uk/testing](http://www.southglos.gov.uk/testing)

We need to take every precaution available to ensure that educational settings can continue to operate as fully as possible. The wearing of face coverings when people are gathering in large numbers in an open space will help with this.

### What role will schools and nurseries take in this?

Your school/nursery will follow this request from the council and keep the school community informed with timely reminders about this request. School and nursery staff will also be strongly advised to wear a face covering when outside during the morning drop off and afternoon pick up.

We are confident this is something everyone will support, to help reduce the spread of Covid-19 and move us into a lower tier as soon as possible.

Thank you for your continued efforts to keep South Gloucestershire safe.



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