

PONTYPRIDD HIGH SCHOOL



FACE COVERING POLICY

This policy has been agreed by the Governing Body and includes the following information:

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2. Rationale
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Date of policy:	August, 2020
Adopted:	August 28 th , 2020,
To be reviewed:	Autumn, 2020
Member of staff responsible:	Headteacher
Committee Responsible:	Health and Safety / Premises Committee

1. Aim

From Tuesday, September 1st all students and adults (plus all others on the school site where appropriate) should wear a face covering when moving around corridors and when in communal areas in school where physical distancing is difficult to maintain.

Our single and most important aim is to maintain the health and safety of students, staff and therefore all members of the school and wider community.

This policy is presented after thoughtful consideration for all known and relevant factors. Further, and when in doubt, every individual should use their best judgement and common sense when wearing face coverings amongst our community by keeping in mind the phrase, 'my mask protects you, your mask protects me.'

2. Rationale

World Health Organisation (WHO) guidance on face coverings was published on 21st August 2020, strongly recommended that face coverings are to be worn by all secondary school based staff and secondary mainstream students in certain settings and at certain times.

The Welsh Government has made its own statement (August 25th, 2020) that the use of masks by children and adolescents 12 years or older should follow the WHO guidance. The Local Authority has issued its own guidance which supports all of the above.

Given the limited evidence on the use of masks in children for Covid-19, this policy is informed by advice received but also guided by the following public health and social principles:

- To prioritise the best interests, health and well-being of each child and adult
- To enable all associated with Pontypridd High to work and learn in a safe environment to the best of their ability.

On the basis of the above, Pontypridd High will expect face coverings to be worn by all staff and students when moving around common areas of school buildings including corridors, lifts, stairwells, toilets, canteen areas where physical distancing is unlikely to be maintained. We believe that by expecting people to wear face coverings we are:

- supporting the scientific position on their benefit in protecting others from infection by the wearer
- supporting emerging scientific evidence that suggests the wearer of a face covering can also be protected.
- recognising that it is difficult to physically distance in schools.

We have a school roll of over 900 students and 100 staff on site each day. This policy will help us to reduce the risk of the spread of infection.

Whilst recognising the value face coverings can make to improving safety, it is also noted by all health professionals that these are not a substitute for hygiene and safety measures such as being tested when displaying symptoms, self-isolating when unwell or advised to, social distancing, enhanced cleaning regimes and regular hand-washing.

3. Risk assessment

Underpinning this policy is a risk assessment of specific factors that influence how our school operates and how all people move from place to place in order to work and learn. This includes different settings where other controls such as adequate distancing cannot be maintained.

This policy will take into account the overall balance of risks and benefits to all, including individuals with additional needs or disabilities.

4. Expectations for the wearing of face coverings

When SHOULD a face covering be worn ?

Face coverings must be worn (except by those who are exempt) in all of the following areas and times:

Entry to school buildings

Everyone should wear a mask on entry to every school building because that is always a communal area or access to a corridor

In corridors

Control mechanisms such as one-way systems, single file and staggering of class times are in place for September. However, there will be occasions on arrival to school, between lessons, at break/lunch and at the end of the day when there could be crowding or congestion. In order to reduce the risk of transmission everyone should wear a mask when walking through corridors in all school buildings.

At break and lunchtime

Everyone should wear a mask when accessing the school canteen in the main hall, the café or bytezone area.

It is recognised that face coverings are not totally practical during eating and drinking. Students will need to remove their mask to do so and should wherever possible ensure they are situated two metres away from others, perform the necessary hand hygiene and replace the mask when they are done.

In classrooms

All students will be able to sit alongside each other in classrooms. In this context there is no obligation for students to socially distance but they should be 2 metres away from the member of staff present.

Staff and students can wear face coverings in classes where they choose to do so.

Other control measures such as the availability of hand and surface hygiene, forward facing seating positions, no shared materials, reduced face-to-face contact and speaking more quietly are encouraged.

Specialised classroom / learning environments such as laboratories, technology workshops, drama, physical education

Wearing a face covering will be acceptable in many specialised settings, so long as it fits the individual well and has no loose parts hanging down that may come into direct contact with other hazards so that the risk of contamination is likely to be minimal.

However, there will be certain locations or activities where the risk of wearing a face covering for a particular activity is deemed to be unacceptable. In such cases, whole school and local Faculty risk assessments will consider the appropriateness of such work matched against WG guidance where social distancing cannot be consistently maintained.

Where a risk assessment does identify an unacceptable risk, Faculty's should seek additional advice as to whether a face mask or a different type of face covering would provide adequate mitigation.

With ALN or pastoral support

Staff and students should wear a suitable face covering in any 'one-to-one' support session or in smaller group contexts.

If a personal meeting must take place with family members or multi-agency support workers this should be managed in a space which allows for appropriate social distancing. Where possible meetings should take place digitally through Microsoft Teams to remove any risk of transmission.

When using school transport or public transport

Secondary age students travelling on dedicated school transport must wear a face covering, as they cannot sit together in their year groups. Not only will this measure help reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19 but also common colds and flu, which will also be a benefit.

A refusal to comply with this requirement will result in a child's place on school transport being suspended. This is not a decision for the school but Local Authority in partnership with each bus contractor.

One re-usable face covering per student will be provided.

Students who travel to school on public transport must wear a three layer face covering as mandated by the Welsh Government.

Learners must not touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing them. They must wash their hands immediately on arrival at school or home, dispose of temporary face coverings in a covered bin or place re-usable face coverings in a plastic bag for washing.

When should a face covering NOT BE worn ?

There is no expectation that staff or students wear a face covering when outside buildings and where appropriate in some classroom / learning environments (see below).

Staff may also remove a face covering where:

- they are alone in a single occupancy office or when seated at a desk in a shared office (provided in all cases 2m social distancing is consistently maintained).
- they are working in settings with protective screens in place such as reception areas.

Staff and students may also remove a face covering where:

- they cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition, including those with respiratory issues that impede breathing, mental health condition, or disability.

Can a face covering be removed in class ?

All classrooms should retain a 2 metre distance between the member of staff and those students attending.

Staff may remove face coverings when at their desk and when teaching. Staff may also remove them when they are in attendance at essential face to face meetings where 2m social distancing arrangements are in place. There will be other times when a face covering may not be appropriate for students such as during presentations or speaking assessments. Students will be advised by staff in such circumstances.

Students may choose to remove a face covering when seated in the classroom, participating in lessons and if learning is taking place outside.

Even so, face coverings are encouraged to be worn by students and teaching / support staff except where exemptions apply to individuals, or if asked to remove a face covering to aid communication.

5. Exemptions

In line with the exemptions that apply in public spaces such as on public transport and in shops, the requirement to wear face coverings in school buildings will not apply to those who have a legitimate reason. This includes:

- not being able to put on, wear, or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- if putting on, wearing, or removing a face covering will cause severe distress
- where interacting with someone who uses lip reading to communicate, or who has social communication impairments

Do I need to provide evidence that I am exempt from wearing a face covering ?

On an individual basis there is no requirement to provide evidence of a legitimate reason not to wear a face covering, or that others may be required to remove theirs, so they are easier to understand (eg. to lip read).

Some people may feel more comfortable showing something that says they do not have to wear a face covering. This could be in the form of a medical record.

As a school we do not want to make life in school any more difficult for anyone and will always try to work together to find solutions that work for everyone.

6. About face coverings

What is a face covering ?

A 'face covering' can be a covering of any type that covers the mouth and nose. It is recommended that it be made of cloth or other textiles and should preferably be at least three layers thick, and through which you can breathe.

Religious face coverings that cover the mouth and the nose count as face coverings for these purposes. Transparent face coverings which assist communication for those who rely on lip reading and facial expressions can also be worn.

Most face coverings are usually in the form of a 'mask' or 'visor' and principally act to protect others by reducing airborne transmission of Covid-19. It does not protect the wearer from infection from others.

What sort of face covering should I wear ?

A face covering should:

- cover your nose and mouth while allowing you to breathe comfortably
- fit comfortably but securely against the side of the face
- be secured to the head with ties or ear loops
- be made of a material that you find to be comfortable and breathable, such as cotton
- ideally include at least three layers of fabric (the World Health Organisation recommends three depending on the fabric used). **PHS will only supply and distribute face coverings with three layers.**
- unless disposable, it should be able to be washed with other items of laundry according to fabric washing instructions and dried without causing the face covering to be damaged

What we expect at Pontypridd High School

All students are required to wear a clean face shield and/or mask/cloth face covering that covers the mouth and nose whilst in corridors, communal areas and classrooms as appropriate.

It is recognised that there will be occasions and situations which will need to be managed on their individual merit and context. This may include consideration of face covering type, style, supply, wearing, exemptions, misplacement or loss during the school day, renewal, safe putting on, taking off, storage or disposal.

Pontypridd High School will supply face masks where required. Where students plan to use their own face mask, the mask must be plain, with no words or pictorial or symbolic representations that may be considered controversial and/or would detract and possibly cause offence to others in our school. In such circumstances the student will be asked to wear a plain face mask supplied by the school.

How should I put on and remove a face covering ?

When wearing a face covering you should:

- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on
- avoid wearing on your neck or forehead
- avoid touching the part of the face covering in contact with your mouth and nose, as it could become contaminated with the virus
- change the face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it

When removing a face covering:

- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before removing
- only handle the straps, ties or clips
- do not share with someone else to use
- if single-use, dispose of it carefully in the pedal waste bins available and do not recycle
- if reusable, store it in a plastic bag and take it home to wash
- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser once removed

How should I look after my face covering ?

- Face coverings should not be shared with others.
- Make sure the face covering covers your nose, mouth and chin.
- Keep the face covering in a clean bag or container (eg. freezer bag or sealable plastic container)
- Avoid placing face coverings on surfaces or desks
- Re-usable face coverings should be washed every day
- Disposable face coverings must not create litter; please use the pedal waste bins available
- Dry masks on the highest dryer setting or use direct sunlight to dry masks.
- Ultra-violet light from the sun can kill up to 99.99% of pathogens on the sun-facing surface of a mask if it is left in the bright sun during the middle of a day for at least one hour. It is best to allow masks to be exposed to the sun and heat for an entire day.

7. Frequently Asked Questions:

Will the school provide face shield and/or face masks ?

Yes we will. One face mask will be provided to students. These will comply with minimum WHO guidelines. Where possible we would still encourage each family to have face masks available as replacements for use on school transport and / or in school itself.

What if I forget my face covering ?

Please go directly to Pupil Services where you will be able to get a replacement. While making your way there make the best attempt you can to cover your nose and mouth in the communal areas.

Does wearing a face covering mean that 2m social distancing is not required ?

Face coverings are not a substitute for good personal hygiene. They are an additional measure that should provide reassurance to others, particularly those who might be more vulnerable.

It is important to note that the definition of a contact of an infected person under the NHS Test and Trace system (who would be required to self-isolate for 14 days) does not take into account whether face coverings were worn, and so 2m distancing from others should be maintained wherever possible.

What should I do if I am concerned that someone is not wearing a face covering ?

Signage informing and reminding people of the requirement to wear face coverings is displayed prominently on entering school buildings and around the buildings. It is important to remember that some people will have legitimate reasons why they are not able to wear a face covering. Some of these reasons may be hidden and people should not be asked if they have an exemption, or the reasons for it.

If you are in any doubt please report this to a member of staff and do not confront or challenge any individual about the wearing of face coverings.

What should I do if someone asks me to remove my face covering to aid communication ?

Some people rely on lip reading or facial cues to aid communication. The wearing of face coverings by others can make this difficult or impossible. If someone asks you to remove your face covering to assist their communication then you should do so, paying particular attention to maintaining 2m social distancing during this period.

Will face coverings be provided to staff and students?

Staff and students will be issued with appropriate face coverings though everyone is encouraged to provide their own.

Contractors, visitors, and members of the public are responsible for providing their own face coverings for use in school buildings.

Can I wear a face shield / visor instead of a face mask ?

Visors (also referred to as face shields) are not a suitable alternative to face coverings. The primary purpose of wearing a close-fitting face covering is to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus from an infected person to others. Visors are considered less effective for the purpose of reducing transmission risk to others.

In contrast, visors are used principally and recommended to protect the wearer in close-contact situations. For example, in 'one-to-one' support sessions or in administering first aid.

What if people do not want to wear one ?

The new guidance on face coverings in schools has been introduced to protect everybody in our school community and your families. We all have that responsibility and it is a non-negotiable position unless you meet any of the 'exemption criteria'.

If you are worried about wearing a face covering, please speak to a member of staff.

Will school staff be wearing face coverings?

The same advice about wearing face coverings when moving around corridors and when in communal areas in school applies to school staff. Students should also continue to ensure they are maintaining 2 metres physical distancing from staff. Please note that some staff not wearing a face covering may also be exempt.