

August 28th 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

As we approach the start of term next week, I am writing with a further update to our risk assessment where it relates to face coverings following the publication of new government guidance earlier this week.

The new guidance can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education>

The guidance was prompted in part by the statement published by the World Health Organisation on 21st August which can be found at:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-children-and-masks-related-to-covid-19>

The main change in the guidance does not apply to us but to schools in areas “where there is a high rate of transmission” ie those which are under a local lockdown. In these areas, the wearing of masks in communal areas is now compulsory.

In areas like Cheshire East the government is still not recommending the use of face coverings. However, they have modified slightly their advice to schools like ours so that it now says:

Nationwide, the government is not recommending face coverings are necessary in education settings generally because a system of control, applicable to all education environments, provides additional mitigating measures. Schools and colleges will have the discretion to require face coverings in communal areas where social distancing cannot be safely managed, if they believe that it is right in their particular circumstances.

Examples of where education leaders might decide to recommend the wearing of face coverings - for pupils and staff - in communal areas of the education setting include:

- ***where the layout of the school or college estate makes it particularly difficult to maintain social distancing when staff and pupils are moving around the premises***
- ***where on top of hygiene measures and the system of controls recommended in the full [opening guidance to schools](#) and [FE colleges and providers](#), permitting the use of face coverings for staff, pupils or other visitors would provide additional confidence to parents to support a full return of children to school or college***

In the light of this additional discretion, we have decided to permit students to wear face coverings in the Academy corridors if they wish to do so. This will not now need to be part of an individual risk

assessment. We are also encouraging staff to consider whether or not they wish to wear a face visor wherever they are within 2m of students. Please note this is entirely optional, but if students wish to wear fabric face coverings they are welcome to do so long as they wear them correctly (see below)

The government position on the wearing of face coverings in classrooms remains unchanged:

On the basis of current evidence, in light of the mitigating measures education settings are taking, and the negative impact on communication, face coverings will not generally be necessary in the classroom even where social distancing is not possible. There is greater use of the system of controls for minimising risk, including through keeping in small and consistent groups or bubbles, and greater scope for physical distancing by staff within classrooms. Face coverings can have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom should be avoided.

While we agree that fabric face coverings are not generally necessary in class, we have made provision in a small number of individual risk assessments for a small number of staff and students, in the light of their individual circumstances to do so.

The most important thing to stress is that face coverings **must** be used safely. The government guidance provides very clear instructions on this:

It is vital that face coverings are worn correctly and that clear instructions are provided to staff, children and young people on how to put on, remove, store and dispose of face coverings in all of the circumstances above, to avoid inadvertently increasing the risks of transmission. Safe wearing of face coverings requires cleaning of hands before and after touching – including to remove or put them on – and the safe storage of them in individual, sealable plastic bags between use. Where a face covering becomes damp, it should not be worn and the face covering should be replaced carefully.

and we will have posters around the Academy to reinforce these rules. Our tutorial work with students will also help to ensure they all understand what is expected of them in the safe use of their face coverings and I would be very grateful if parents could also play their part in reinforcing these requirements as well. Please note in particular the need to provide students with a new (or freshly washed) face covering each day and a sealable plastic bag so they can be safely stored when not in use.

On a wider point, last Sunday, the chief medical officers of England and the three devolved administrations issued a statement on the reopening of schools. Much of what they say would have been equally true, and rather more timely, had they said it at the beginning of June rather than the end of August but, in spite of that, it is a useful summary of the science (as opposed to the economics and the politics) behind reopening.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-the-uk-chief-medical-officers-on-schools-and-childcare-reopening>

In this statement, the medical officers emphasise the importance to students of getting back into school, not least from the point of view of their wellbeing. Overall, this is a view that I wholeheartedly support. It is important, however, to recognise that alongside the excitement that our students will feel, for some, next week will be a time of a anxiety. (To be honest, I don't think I can remember the start of a school year since I was four that I did not look forward to with a combination of excitement and anxiety.) Many anxieties will, I am sure, be addressed by the return to school routine and the normal interactions with teachers in lessons and tutors at form time. However, I want to draw your attention to three additional strands of support that we have put in place to support any students who experience difficulties on their return to school after so long away:

1. Our pastoral team will provide drop in support at the end of the school day. We always say that we don't want any of our students to go home at the end of the day worried about anything that they have not shared with staff. In the present climate, we want to formalise that by making sure that students know exactly where to go if there is anything they are worried about at the end of the day.
2. Tony Togneri, the pastor of St George St Baptist Church, who has been a pillar of strength and support throughout the lockdown period, has agreed to continue to provide additional support to the Academy and its students. Tony will be happy to discuss any practical or emotional support that our students or their families might need and can be contacted on: 07595 728739.
3. We have commissioned two days a week of counselling from Just Drop In (JDI). JDI have worked very effectively with many of our students from their base in town and I am delighted that they will now be working even more closely with us by supporting our students here on the Academy site. If you would like to discuss whether this would be of benefit to your son or daughter, please email Anne.Dutoy@macclesfieldacademy.org.

If there is anything at all that you would like to discuss relating to your son or daughter's wellbeing, please do not hesitate to contact their tutor or a member of the pastoral team.

Thank you so much to you all for your messages of support during the very difficult six months we have just all been through. I cannot wait to see all of our students in school next week- with or without face coverings!

With every best wish to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Anne Dutoy', written in a cursive style.

RICHARD HEDGE

Headteacher

The Macclesfield Academy

Park Lane

MACCLESFIELD

SK11 8JR

Email. richard.hedge@macclesfieldacademy.org

PA: Lara Nolan

Email: lara.nolan@macclesfieldacademy.org