

BET recommendations on the wearing of face coverings in education

General principles

Following recent debate regarding the use of face coverings in public spaces and the possible extension of areas of school to be classified as public spaces, the BET has taken proactive measure to maintain the smooth reopening of schools next week.

The following guidance is based on The Department for Education's published advice on [Face coverings in education](#), published on 26 August. The following statements, taken from this document, should be taken into consideration:

"This is guidance, not mandatory activity, and any legal exemptions that apply to the wearing of face coverings in shops and on public transport also apply to this new advice."

"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."

BET guidelines

On the basis that BET schools have agreed that a collaborative and group approach has been the most successful way forward, the following should be adopted as standard practice*:

1. Face coverings to be worn by staff and students in secondary corridors and communal areas - not class or outside
 - We are in agreement with the government that students need to be back in school. Parents' confidence in our ability to keep their children safe is likely to provide the biggest barrier to a full return of children to school. Given the public debate and increased use of face coverings in public spaces, it is likely that their use in school would provide parents with additional confidence.
 - This should include all secondary students, even those who are not yet 12, on the basis that a two-tiered system would be hard to effectively monitor and guarantee.
 - The government does not currently advocate the use of face coverings in the classroom. Protective measures such as forward-facing seating arrangements, seating plans, hand sanitisation and ventilation already mean the risks are lower, and face coverings may inhibit teaching and learning to a detrimental degree.
 - Corridors may not be as easy to ventilate as classrooms, and even in designated zones the wearing of face masks may reduce contact and the risk of transmission between students who would otherwise not meet in a classroom setting
2. Face coverings not to be worn by primary students or staff
 - There is separate guidance for [early years and childcare providers](#) and [schools with children in year 6 and below](#).
3. Face coverings to be worn by visitors
 - Face coverings should be worn on arrival until in meeting room and only removed if the room is well-ventilated, a 2-metre distance can be observed and/or if a face covering impedes identification or communication to a prohibitive degree
4. Allow face coverings if individual chooses to do so

- If any staff, students or visitors to the school choose to wear a face covering in addition to the guidance above, they should be allowed to do so. However, they must agree to abide by the BET's guidelines on safe practice with the use of face coverings - see below.
- * Any interpretation of these guidelines to suit an individual setting should be discussed by the Headteacher and their respective BET link. They should be prepared to show why they have deviated from the above and how they justify this in terms of possible transmission of COVID-19.

Safe practice in the use of face coverings

It is vital that all parties (parents, staff, students and visitors) are given clear instructions on the safe and correct wearing, removal, storage and disposal of protective face coverings, and that all are clear that face coverings **do not provide protection to the individual - they protect others from themselves.**

A face covering is something which effectively covers the nose and mouth. It is not classified as [PPE](#), which is used in a limited number of settings to protect wearers against hazards and risks. You can buy reusable or single-use face coverings. You may also use a scarf, bandana, religious garment or hand-made cloth covering but these must securely fit round the side of the face. We will be asking that these are as plain as possible and do not carry any advertising or other messages which could be construed as controversial or offensive.

1. 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 two layers of fabric (the World Health Organisation recommends three depending on the fabric used)
 - Unless disposable, 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.
2. 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 be contaminated with the virus
 - Change the face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it
 - Avoid taking it off and putting it back on a lot in quick succession.
3. 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 give it to someone else to use
- If single-use, dispose of it carefully in a residual waste bin and do not recycle
- If reusable, wash it in line with manufacturer's instructions at the highest temperature appropriate for the fabric
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser once removed
- Once removed, store reusable face coverings in a sealable plastic bag until you have an opportunity to wash them
- If the face covering is single use, dispose of it in a residual waste bin. Do not put it in a recycling bin.

In case of local restrictions

Schools should take ensure that all parties are aware that additional precautionary may be required in areas where transmission of the virus is high and in the event of new local restrictions being imposed.

Supply of face coverings

The BET will not supply face coverings for staff or students, except in the case of medical emergency (schools have already received supplies). The following points are relevant:

- It is reasonable to assume that staff and young people will now have access to face coverings due to their increasing use in wider society, and Public Health England has made available resources on how to [make a simple face covering](#).
- However, where anybody is struggling to access a face covering, or where they are unable to use their face covering due to having forgotten it or it having become soiled or unsafe, education settings should take steps to have a small contingency supply available to meet such needs.
- No-one should be excluded from education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering.