

## NEWS STORY

# Statement on face coverings in schools and colleges

Statement from Vaughan Gething, Minister for Health and Social Services and Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education on face coverings in schools.

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It is vital children and young people, parents and the education workforce feel confident that all measures are being taken to protect them as they return to schools and colleges.

Welsh Government has already issued operational guidance to schools and colleges, and schools have worked hard to implement safety measures. The opportunity for pupils to attend school before the end of the summer term to check in, catch up and prepare allowed schools to test these measures.

Today we publish the additional [advice from the Technical Advisory Group following its review of the use of face coverings in schools](#).

It builds on recent publications from the UK Chief Medical Officers and Deputy Chief Medical Officers and the World Health Organisation.

We are advised that while face coverings are likely to be of little value in children under the age of 11 years, the rates of infection and transmission increase after from the age of 11 onwards and could have a role in risk mitigation.

The current advice from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales is that face coverings are recommended for all members of the public over 11 years in indoor settings in which social distancing cannot be maintained, including schools and school transport.

We will amend our operational guidance for schools and FE to require settings and local authorities to undertake risk assessments of their estates to determine if face coverings should be recommended for their staff and young people in communal areas. This will also include school and college transport.

As part of the risk assessment we recommend that staff, students, families and unions are engaged. Social distancing is still required in the class room, so face to face teaching without coverings can continue. The overall interests of the young person must be given priority in these assessments and there must be no risk of exclusion from transport to school. Face

coverings may need to be provided to young people who don't have them, if they are recommended locally.

At present, the incidence of coronavirus in the community is low, but we expect to see clusters of cases, which may require additional local control measures. In addition to the support provided and advice by our Test Trace Protect service these should be taken in accordance with our recently published Coronavirus Control Plan.

This guidance will remain under review as the pandemic continues and may change if community prevalence changes across Wales in the future.

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