

# Frequently Asked Questions in relation to face masks/coverings in primary schools

**Public Health have recommended that pupils in 3rd class to 6th class wear a face mask/covering while attending primary school.**

1. **What public health advice has changed in primary schools for the wearing of face masks/coverings?**

The National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET) has recommended the wearing of face masks/coverings by children in 3rd class and above in primary schools. This measure is a response to the very high case numbers in older primary school-age children and was considered by the NPHET as proportionate to the current level of risk posed by COVID-19. It has advised that this measure is being introduced on a temporary basis and is subject to review in mid-February 2022.

NPHET has also recommended the wearing of face masks/coverings by children aged nine years and above on public transport, in retail and indoor public settings, as already required for children aged 13 years and over.

Following the Government decision to accept the recommendation of NPHET, the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) has issued updated interim guidance on the use of face coverings in childcare and educational settings as set out in the link below:

[https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/1f9ba-interim-guidance-on-the-use-of-face-](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/1f9ba-interim-guidance-on-the-use-of-face-coverings-in-childcare-and-educational-settings/) [coverings-in-childcare-and-educational-settings/](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/1f9ba-interim-guidance-on-the-use-of-face-coverings-in-childcare-and-educational-settings/)

It has been widely accepted by the school community during the course of the global pandemic, that public health measures are put in place to protect the health and

safety of the school community as a whole, that they are consistent with national health policy put in place by Government and that they should be followed.

This is a temporary public health measure, in the interest of protecting children and the school staff and the school community. Throughout the pandemic, the education sector has consistently drawn upon public health expertise for the protection of the entire school community.

# What is the procedure where a child presents without a face mask/covering?

Where issues arise, schools will engage pragmatically and sensitively with parents to explore any particular difficulties arising for an individual child.

It is generally accepted by the school community that rules put in place to protect the health and safety of the school community should be followed. Every effort should be made to clearly communicate the public health reasons behind the wearing of a face mask/covering.

Face masks/coverings protect both the wearer and others around them. Cloth face masks/coverings are more effective than visors. In the limited circumstances where a cloth face mask/covering cannot be worn, clear visors may be considered.

Parents are encouraged to work with schools in a spirit of partnership and co-operation to ensure the safety of the whole school community.

In implementing the public health measure, it is not intended that any child will be excluded by the school in the first instance.

A solution-focused engagement between the school and the child’s parents /guardians should take place with a view to resolving issues that may arise.

The Department will engage with schools to offer guidance and support to reassure parents and to help schools resolve any issues. Where significant issues have not

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