

Date: 1st November 2021

Dear Head Teacher

Re: Introduction of Face Coverings in Communal Areas

In line with the national guidance ('Contingency Framework') the local authority and schools in Wigan are working together to plan for and respond to cases of COVID-19 amongst staff and students in a way that prioritises the quality of education and support to which students and staff are normally entitled.

[Guidance for schools: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-schools-coronavirus-covid-19) explains the actions school leaders should take to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their school, and lists baseline control measures that should be in place in all settings:

1. Ensure good hygiene for everyone.
2. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes.
3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated.
4. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Alongside this, we have a range of wider COVID-19 support and measures available in the borough which also benefit schools, including:

- the provision of regional guidance for schools through Greater Manchester Directors of Public Health Group,
- a range of risk assessment and management templates to support schools and other educational settings,
- regular comms and support for schools and other educational settings in relation to interpreting the available guidance,
- daily tracking and monitoring of the levels of COVID-19 in individual schools in Wigan allowing timely and proportionate response,
- a robust approach to outbreak management, which includes formal risk assessment and recommendations for enhanced or exceptional infection control measures where appropriate.
- The local roll out of 12-15 year old vaccination programme in our local schools.

However, we acknowledge that COVID-19 prevalence is high at present, particularly amongst our 12-19 year old cohort, and therefore we have recently worked with colleagues across Greater Manchester to develop an Educational Settings COVID-19 Management Framework, which is intended to maximise the available flexibilities within the DfE guidance and support schools to rapidly implement appropriate measures in a range of different scenarios. If you have not received a copy of this Framework, please email p.jamieson@wigan.gov.uk for a copy.

In addition to this, we are also strongly recommending education settings across Wigan encourage the wearing of face coverings in communal areas for staff, visitors and students (year 7 and above), with effect from Monday 1st November 2021.

This should help to ensure that children and young people can continue to receive education in as normal a way as possible. We have carefully considered this decision in particular, considering that this measure will; have minimal impact on education, will be effective in reducing risk of transmission, and will support accelerated vaccine roll out.

Please note that any wearing of face coverings beyond this measure e.g. in classroom, will still require Director of Public Health sign off.

We will continue to closely monitor and review the level of COVID-19 in our schools and will work with school partners to implement further measures as appropriate.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Kate Arden MBChB MSc FFPH
Director of Public Health



Cath Pealing
Assistant Director of Education