

## Face Masks in Schools

The Local Authority provided updated guidance to schools on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020 regarding the use of face masks in schools. The guidance recommended that staff are to wear face masks, as well as students in secondary schools. However, this does not apply when in the classroom or whilst eating and drinking.

Some children/young people may be unable to wear masks for a number of reasons and therefore provision needs to be put in place to ensure that all staff are aware of these individuals, so that they can be supported sensitively and not be subject to any disciplinary actions.

Wearing face masks can make it difficult for children/ young people who rely on lip reading and therefore this needs to be considered also.

### Social stories

There are a number of social stories that have been created to help children/ young people understand why face mask are needed. These include stories about themselves or others wearing face masks. Further information is below:

#### (a) Wearing face masks

The Autism Research Institute has produced a social story called “I can wear a face mask”. The story focuses on masks and how they are worn, what it may feel like and about other people wearing masks:

<https://www.autism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/face-mask-social-story.pdf>

The social story “I can wear a face mask” has also been produced in a table format:

<https://www.autism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/I-can-wear-a-mask-1-1.pdf>

Autism little learners have produced a social story called “Wearing a mask” which looks at the importance of wearing masks:

<https://www.st-lukes.newham.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=1460&type=pdf>

#### (b) Seeing others wear face masks

Autism Little Learners have produced an additional social story called “Seeing other people wearing masks”, which focuses on what people will look like if they are wearing a mask:

[https://www.middletonautism.com/files/shares/Sara/Seeing\\_other\\_people\\_wearing\\_masks.pdf](https://www.middletonautism.com/files/shares/Sara/Seeing_other_people_wearing_masks.pdf)

Sheffield Children’s NHS Foundation Trust has produced a social story called “Why are people wearing masks”. This focuses on why we need to wear masks and talks about the different masks that people may wear:

<https://www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/patients-and-parents/coronavirus-resources-for-children-and-families/>

### **(c) Seeing teachers wear face masks**

Autism Little Learners have produced a social story called “Why does my teacher look different” which focuses on teachers wearing face masks and helping the child or young person to understand that it is still their teacher under the mask:

<https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/media/329053/social-story-1-why-does-my-teacher-look-different.pdf>

### **Other resources**

Mind has produced guidance for children/young people who may be experiencing anxiety due to face masks, both wearing face masks and seeing others wear face masks. This includes ways to alleviate some of the anxiety they may be feeling:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/mask-anxiety-face-coverings-and-mental-health/>

Autism New Jersey have produced guidance on how to support Autistic children and young people to wear face masks. However, this may also be useful for other children and young people who may struggle with wearing a mask:

<https://www.autismnj.org/article/helping-individuals-with-autism-wear-face-masks/>

### **Additional advice and guidance for schools**

The National Deaf Society has provided guidance on how to communicate with a deaf child or young person as masks can cause difficulties for children/young people who often rely on lip reading. Visors or communicating in different ways are usually helpful. More information can be found at:

<https://www.ndcs.org.uk/blog/face-masks-and-communication-coronavirus-info-for-families-of-deaf-children/>

The government has produced an exemption from face coverings badge for people to download for free:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>