

## North Gosforth Academy Statement Regarding Face Coverings

Following the covid-19 pandemic we are committed to ensuring that students get back to school and formal education as quickly and safely as possible. You will already have received our student parent handbooks; a lot of work is going on behind the scenes to ensure students remain safe and continue their learning.

As you will be aware, there has been much debate in recent days regarding the use of face coverings in schools. The World Health Organisation (WHO) published a new statement on the 21st August, advising *“children aged 12 and over should wear a mask under the same conditions as adults, in particular when they cannot guarantee at least a 1-metre distance from others and there is widespread transmission in the area”*.

In response to this announcement, on 26th August, the government stated:

*“Nationwide, the government is not recommending face coverings are necessary in education settings generally because a system of control, applicable to all education environments, provides additional mitigating measures. **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.**”*

The document goes on to say –

*“On the basis of current evidence, in light of the mitigating measures education settings are taking, and the negative impact on communication, face coverings will not generally be necessary in the classroom even where social distancing is not possible. . . Face coverings can have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom should be avoided.”*

On Friday 28th August Wendy Burke, Director of Public Health in North Tyneside, told us that her recommendation was *“that face coverings should be required in communal areas of schools across secondary schools for both pupils and staff as a means to preventing the transmission of Coronavirus in secondary schools.”*

Having carefully considered this latest guidance and the layout of our school premises, including areas where it will be particularly challenging for staff and students to maintain social distancing, we have today taken the following decisions:

- Students and staff are to wear face coverings in corridors and stairwells as they go to tutorial, move between lessons and as they move to and from break. Once students

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have arrived at their lesson or break area, face coverings can be removed. Students should put their face coverings on as soon as they enter school buildings.

- This approach means students will only be required to wear face coverings for a short period of time each day.
- Those students and staff who are medically exempt from wearing face coverings are not required to wear them.
- Students do not need to wear face coverings in lessons as the control measures in our risk assessment reduce the risk of transmission. However, if students would prefer to keep face coverings on during lessons, this is permissible and at their discretion.

This use of face coverings will be required for each of the Year Group Induction Sessions in the first week.

This decision has not been taken lightly, bearing in mind that our local area is not currently identified as one where transmission of the virus is high. We do feel, however, that the use of face coverings during key times within the school day, will provide staff, students and parents with additional confidence with full-reopening of the school from September.

It is important that face coverings are worn correctly in order to avoid inadvertently increasing the risk of transmission. This requires cleaning of hands before and after touching face coverings, whether removing or putting them on, and safe storage within individual, sealable plastic bags between use. Single use face coverings must be disposed of responsibly, using the general waste bins provided.

Please ensure your child is provided with a face covering and appropriate bag for safe storage (if reusable) when they return to school in September.

Advice and guidance regarding face coverings, including how to make a face covering, can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

We feel this is a proportionate decision based upon current guidance and advice from our Local Public Health Team. This approach will be reviewed as we move through the term.

Thank you,



Steve Campbell  
Principal