



Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub, Children Services

Date: 25 January 2022

Our Ref: STG/

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Dear Parent / Carer,

RE: Walsall guidance on face coverings and additional measures in educational settings

The Government has announced Plan B restrictions will be lifted, effective from Thursday 27 January 2022. This includes removing the requirement to wear face coverings in communal areas for all school staff and pupils in secondary schools and further education.

Directors of Public Health continue to have the authority to recommend additional measures to manage local outbreaks¹.

In Walsall, although we have seen the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 reduce slowly over the past seven days, the rates remain extremely high, including those aged 5-16 years old. We continue to have some of the highest levels we have seen in the borough at any stage during the pandemic.

I have contacted Walsall head teachers and principals to recommend education settings in Walsall continue the use of face coverings over the nose and mouth on and after 27 January 2022, where they have (a) positive case(s), for:

- **All staff and visitors (nursery schools, primary, secondary, SEN, college and university) in communal areas, unless exempt;**
- **All secondary and further education pupils in communal areas, unless exempt; and**
- **Children and young people aged 11 and over who use school or public transport, unless exempt.**

Face coverings are not required to be worn:

- **in classrooms;**
- **by children in primary schools. Health advice is that under 11's are exempt from wearing face coverings; or**
- **by staff, visitors or pupils aged 11 and over when an education settings has no confirmed cases of COVID-19**

¹ [Contingency Framework: Education Settings \(January 2022\)](#)



This is a temporary measure whilst case rates remain high. I will continue to keep the situation under review and will inform education settings as soon as our local guidance changes.

A range of evidence indicates that face coverings are effective in contributing to reducing the spread of COVID-19 in public and community settings.

I would like to thank you all for the efforts you continue to make during this difficult time by wearing face coverings, distancing and maintaining good hand hygiene. I hope that you understand the need for additional caution and my advice to continue to follow COVID-secure measures at this time.

I also want to remind parents and carers if anyone has any symptoms of COVID-19 or feels unwell they should not send their child to school. They must self-isolate and book to take a free PCR test as soon as possible. Anyone who tests positive must self-isolate.

If you or your child has to self-isolate due to COVID, then you may be eligible for self-isolation payments. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payment>

Everyone aged 12 and over can now get a 1st and 2nd dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. A booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine is available for everyone aged 16 and over.

The Saddlers Vaccination Centre, Bradford Mail, Walsall, WS2 9NW remains the only place where 12 – 15 year olds can be vaccinated outside of the school based vaccination programme.

Anyone aged over 16 can attend one of the other vaccination sites, such as local GPs, pharmacies, community venues and large vaccination centres. Many of the sites are drop-ins so no appointment is needed. Find out where you and your child can get vaccinated <https://blackcountryandwestbirmccg.nhs.uk/your-health-services/health-advice/covid-19-vaccination>

It is also important for pupils in secondary school and further education to **continue with twice weekly symptom-free testing** using a lateral flow device. Testing remains voluntary but is strongly encouraged.

The COVID-19 case rate in the borough and the impact on Walsall education settings continues to be monitored very closely.

Your child's education setting will continue to keep you updated using their normal communication channels.

Thank you for your continued support.

Stephen Gunther

Director of Public Health