

05 November 2020

Dear Parents / Carers,

Further to the letter I sent out yesterday, I wanted to update you on the rules we are bringing in regarding face coverings.

I know that some local schools have mandated the wearing of face masks already this term. Up until this point, I had not made this compulsory because we do not have one large school block and the amount of time that students were in school corridors was relatively short. Instead, we introduced a one-way system and asked students to enter classrooms through external doors where possible. This mitigated the risk of children being in close contact with students in another year group.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Saturday that a four-week lockdown is to start from today we have decided that all students and staff will be expected to wear face coverings whilst indoors. This includes during lessons. Safeguarding the health and safety of all the students, staff and families in the Hamble community is our chief concern and this decision has been made to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 as much as possible. As a consequence, all students will be expected to wear a face covering from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November until further notice.

We will also be cancelling most, if not all clubs and activities after school for the rest of term. The only exception to this will be Year 11 intervention, which runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week.

This is not what any of us really want but it is sadly necessary over the short and medium term to make the school environment as safe as possible. I know that there will be a lot of questions regarding this so I have tried to address the most common concerns below which I hope will help.

**Q: What face coverings are acceptable? Can my child wear a scarf or bandana—style covering?**

A: We are using the term 'face covering' rather than 'face mask' because a 'face mask' is a term used for the kind of masks that healthcare workers use. However, we are expecting students to wear plain, face coverings which are in the style of a shop-bought disposable or reusable mask. They should be plain, but do not need to be navy blue.

[www.thehambleschool.co.uk](http://www.thehambleschool.co.uk)

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**Q: When does my child need to wear a face covering?**

A: Your child should wear a face covering when they are inside a school building or in a queue for food at lunch and break time. They should also wear a face covering when they use the toilets during break and lunchtime.

**Q: Are there any exceptions to this rule?**

A: We are aware that some children may have exemptions to wearing a face mask. This could be because of physical or mental illness, impairment or disability; it could also be because wearing a face covering could lead to anxiety and distress. I would ask you to contact your child's Head of Year as soon as possible to let them know if your child cannot wear a face covering and we will make sure that they have an exemption. We will be asking these students to wear a name badge on a lanyard (similar to the ones that member of staff wear in school) so that we can identify these students and not put them in the position where they are asked throughout the day why they do not have a face covering on.

**Q: I don't want my child to wear a face covering. Does he/she have to?**

A: The school is following guidance from the Department for Education in this matter. Wearing a mask will be compulsory, unless your child is exempt as explained in the above question. We will continue to work sympathetically with families where we can so please contact your child's Head of Year so that we can work through this together.

**Q: Will children wear face masks in all lessons?**

A: There are some lessons in which wearing a face mask is not practical. For example, students will not wear them during PE lessons, when singing or playing a musical instrument in Music, and performing in Drama. Students will also be able to remove their face covering to answer questions in class or to practice their pronunciation in Modern Foreign Language lessons. The expectation will be that they will wear the face coverings for the majority of the time.

**Q: Will staff be wearing face coverings?**

A: Staff will wear face coverings when walking inside the school buildings, unless they have an exemption. Teachers will not have to wear face coverings when they are explaining lesson content to a class or speaking directly to a student but they will be expected to keep a distance from the students when doing so. When students are completing work, the teacher will wear a face covering whilst this is happening and will wear a face covering when walking around the room to give assistance or check on work.

**Q: Will wearing face coverings mean that no more students will be sent home to self-isolate?**

A: No. The DfE and Public Health England are clear that anyone who is within 'close contact' of someone with COVID-19 will still be required to self-isolate for 14 days. However, the guidance is that this will reduce the risk of them actually catching COVID-19 themselves.

**Q: Does my child have to wear the face covering during break and lunch?**

A: No, except when they go inside to use the toilet, or when they are in a queue to buy food in their designated area.

**Q: Will this just be for the four-week lockdown period?**

A: At this point, we do not know. We will continue to follow guidance from Public Health England and the Department for Education. We will keep you updated about this.

**Q: What happens if my child forgets their face covering?**

A: We will be selling spare face coverings at Main Reception. These cost 50p each.

I hope this helps explain what we are doing and the reasons behind our thinking. As always, I appreciate your ongoing support and understanding during what is a stressful and anxious time for many of us.

Kind regards



**ALARIC GOVAN**

Headteacher

*If, at any time, you should require special arrangements to be made when visiting the school and/or in order to participate fully in supporting your child at school (e.g. an accessible venue for meetings, if you are a wheelchair user, assistance with translation of documents or enlarged copies of communications etc.), please do not hesitate to let us know.*