

## WEARING FACE COVERINGS IN CLASSROOMS

### What are the new rules?

Under the new guidance for opening schools from 8 March, the government has updated its COVID-19 guidance to include students wearing face coverings in classrooms where social distancing is not possible. At Millthorpe, as in the vast majority of schools, social distancing between students is not possible within classrooms, so our students will need to wear face coverings during lessons.

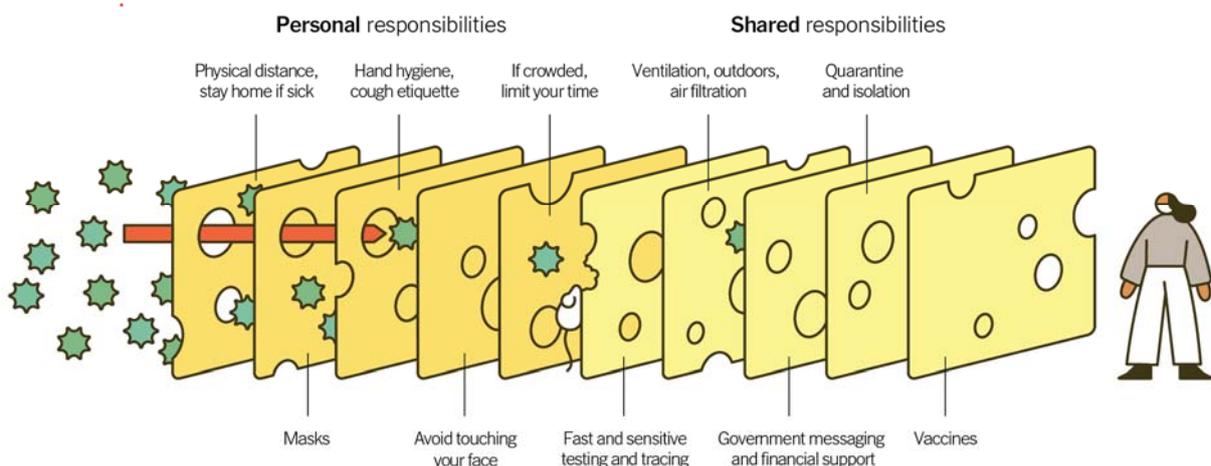
### Why has this measure been added?

There are a whole series of control measures that the government has advised us to put in place to control the spread of the virus. We have checked these with our health & safety advisors too. In Millthorpe we already have hand washing and sanitising, staggered starts, breaks and lunches, one-way systems and fixed groups/seating plans to limit students interacting with other year groups, 2m distancing where possible, monitoring of contacts to facilitate isolation in case of infection, increased ventilation and "catch it, bin it, kill it" reminders as well as mask wearing in corridors and communal areas. Students will now also be able to test twice a week to help identify asymptomatic cases.

None of these measures on its own is sufficient, and as the return to school will create more mixing the government has temporarily added masks in classrooms as an additional measure to reduce transmission. The diagram below illustrates it. We will also encourage students to move outside between classes so they can remove masks, and masks may also be removed in the dining room at break and lunchtime while students are eating or drinking.

### Multiple Layers Improve Success

The Swiss Cheese Respiratory Pandemic Defense recognizes that no single intervention is perfect at preventing the spread of the coronavirus. Each intervention (layer) has holes.



Source: Adapted from Ian M. Mackay (virologydownunder.com) and James T. Reason. Illustration by Rose Wong

### Where does the advice come from?

The government's advice to schools on face covering can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/965446/Face\\_coverings\\_in\\_education\\_-\\_March\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/965446/Face_coverings_in_education_-_March_2021.pdf)

The World Health Organisation advice is as follows:

"WHO and UNICEF advise that 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."

From [the WHO website](#)

The advice brings schools broadly in line with the rules for other indoor spaces such as shops, public transport, doctors' surgeries etc.

<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>

### **How long will this measure be in place?**

The government has said it will review this measure at Easter after three weeks back at school.

### **What if my child is exempt?**

If your child is exempt and does not wear a mask in other settings such as shops and buses, they do not need to wear one in school. The government says exemption applies to:

- people who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- where putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress

If this definition applies to your child, please email the school so that we can register their exemption. Full details of the government guidance on exemption can be found here:

<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#exemptions>