

28th August 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you for the second time this week as I am very much aware that you require clarity regarding the issue of face coverings in school. I will also use this opportunity to share an update from TfL regarding improvements that they will be making to their services in anticipation of the return of children to schools.

On the evening of Tuesday 25th August 2020, the DfE announced that *“while the government is not recommending face coverings as necessary, schools will have the discretion to require face coverings in communal areas if they believe that is right in their particular circumstances”*.

Further to this statement the DfE has now published guidance for face coverings in education. This guidance can be found [here](#). The key points are as follows:

- For schools and colleges in most circumstances (i.e. not subject to local restrictions/lockdowns) the government is still not recommending face coverings as necessary in education settings.
- However, schools and colleges have the discretion to require face coverings for pupils and staff in communal areas where social distancing cannot be safely managed, if they believe that it is right in their particular circumstances.
- The use of face coverings in the classroom should still be avoided because they “can have a negative impact on learning and teaching”.
- For schools and colleges in areas where local restrictions apply, face coverings should be worn by adults and students when moving around, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain.
- As in the general approach, it will still “not usually be necessary” to wear face coverings in the classroom.
- Further guidance on face coverings for areas where local restrictions apply will be issued and will come into effect on 1 September.
- Staff and students will be expected to buy or make their own face coverings. Schools and colleges will be expected to have a “small contingency supply” available to supplement this.
- The [exemptions](#) to wearing face coverings which apply more broadly will also apply in education settings.

As of 28th August 2020, Hillingdon has not been designated as an area of national government intervention and the school has taken a number of precautions to minimise risk. I would also note that under the current seasonal conditions there are very few areas of the school that are not well ventilated and that year group bubbles will not be mixing during the school day. Therefore, in line with the above government guidance, the wearing of face coverings will not be mandatory at this point.

However, we do understand that some students and staff will feel more comfortable wearing a face mask in corridors and communal areas and will be allowed to do so. Students and staff may wear disposable or reusable masks but not other forms of face coverings. Masks must be plain, with no motifs. Masks must be worn appropriately and sensibly. Any student intentionally misusing a mask will be sanctioned in line with the school behaviour policy. Further guidance regarding the effective use of face masks will be given to students during their induction in September.

Face coverings will not be necessary in the classroom even where social distancing is not possible. In classrooms the protective systems of control will be in place and students will be within their consistent year-group bubbles. Face coverings can have a negative impact on communication and teaching so students will be asked to remove face masks (and sanitize their hands) as they enter the classroom.

Message from Transport for London (TfL)

I am writing to update you on our transport plans for the return of schools in September.

We are asking schools and parents to encourage children to travel to school by walking, cycling or scooting wherever possible. We are also planning to make important changes to the bus network for those who cannot do so.

From 1 September we're planning to:

- *Add over 230 extra buses to the network to bolster some of the busiest low-frequency routes for schoolchildren to travel on, including adding more vehicles to our existing school bus services*
- *In addition, designate some existing regular buses as School Services, which would be prioritised for school travel and would operate at full seated capacity, as is permitted by Government guidelines for school bus services. Signs would clearly indicate that these are School Services and they are planned to operate on:*
 - *Around half of all buses during school travel times on certain high-frequency routes*
 - *All the extra buses we're adding to lower-frequency routes*
 - *All buses on our existing school services*

Our School Services would help free up non-school services for other customers. However, journeys for our other customers may take longer during school travel times (generally 07:30 to 09:30 and 14:30 to 16:30) due to these planned changes. We encourage our other customers using the bus network to plan your journey in advance, travel at quiet times and outside of school travel times if you can, and allow more time to complete your journey.

School children travelling without adults should travel on the designated school services where these are provided, to help provide space for other customers on regular services. Customers who are not school children but who need to travel at school travel times are strongly encouraged to use the regular services. Regular services will continue to have lower capacity limits to support social distancing, in line with Government guidelines.

Customers aged 11 and over are required to wear a face covering when using public transport services (including our school services) or stations, or taxi and private hire services, unless they are exempt on health or equality grounds. We advise anyone exempt from wearing a face covering to carry an exemption card. For more details please see <https://tfl.gov.uk/campaign/face-coverings>. We're also asking people to carry hand sanitiser and wash their hands before and after they travel.

The planned service changes are proposed to remain in place until at least the end of October, although could be subject to change.

We continually review how our network is operating and every September, as children start at new schools or travel from their new homes back to their old schools, we adjust services as far as possible to ensure they reflect new and changing travel patterns. This September comes, of course, with unique challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic. We ask everyone in London to bear with us while these significant planned changes bed down and as we do everything we can to ensure children get to school safely and on time.

You can help us by communicating these changes to your networks as widely as possible. Please regularly check tfl.gov.uk/reopeningeducation for the latest information on our services and safer travel guidance - including a list of routes affected by these proposals.

Please note that there will be no changes to fares and ticketing for children in September. You may be aware that the Government has asked us to temporarily suspend free travel for 11-17 year olds as part of our funding agreement with them. We are discussing the implementation of this with the Government and London's boroughs and full details, including the effective date of changes, will be widely communicated once finalised.

End of Message

As mentioned in a previous update, we would like to gather up-to-date information about student travel plans so that we can adopt a coordinated approach to ensuring that students and members of the public can travel safely during the key movement times during the day. With this in mind I ask that all families complete our short travel survey. The link to the survey can be found [here](#).

We very much appreciate that the information that we have shared with you over the past week has been extensive. However, we do hope that the documentation has provided you with a clear understanding of the measures that we have put in place to ensure that all students and staff can return to school safely. Mrs Bashford-Hynes has summarised the key information required into a parental handbook, which I hope that you will retain and refer to at different points throughout the academic year. The handbook is attached along with this letter. She will also be sharing videos with your child to highlight key information about entrances and routes to and from their classrooms.

I do hope that you all have a restful bank holiday weekend. We are very much looking forward to welcoming the children back to school next week.

Yours sincerely

Gary Mullings
Headteacher