



BEDFORD  
FREE SCHOOL

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

4<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**Re: Additional Measures during Covid-19 Pandemic – please read carefully**

Dear Parent / Carer

I hope you had a good half-term break. I realise it seems a long time ago now.

I'm sorry that I am writing this later than I would have wished. I'm writing following the news of a second national 'lockdown' to thank you for your efforts so far and to explain again the approach we are taking during this time. I have waited until guidance related to the new national restrictions and its implications for education settings was published by the government before writing, and this arrived this evening.

First: thank you. We really appreciate you working with us while having your own challenges at home. Together, I believe we can really get through this with as normal and safe an experience as possible for your children.

You will be aware that on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November there begins another 'national lockdown'. I am sure you are aware that schools have been asked to remain open to support the national effort – pupils are at far less significant risk when infected and the damage to their education through absence from school can be significant despite all of the efforts of the school and the incredible support we've seen from parents.

At the same time, clearly there is a more significant risk of transmission of the virus. I know that we have done everything we can to keep our schools as safe as possible, including:

- operating year group 'bubbles'
- having staggered arrivals and departures
- implementing extensive hygiene and cleaning regimes including pupils washing their hands upon arrival at school, at break and lunch
- operating split breaks and lunches
- minimising potential contact between pupils by keeping pupils in the same classrooms for different lessons where possible and by reducing the number of transitions pupils need to make
- having strict limits on the number of adults in a classroom
- having an area at the front of the class where adults can teach from and pupils do not enter
- reorganising classrooms, the canteen and other spaces so that pupils always face forward
- asking parents to wear a face covering when visiting school

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- limiting external visitors
- providing appropriate PPE to minimise risk
- taking action to trace contacts with the few cases that we have had
- making adjustments to the site to encourage social distancing and discourage infection
- ensuring staff and pupils showing symptoms are prevented from attending school or sent home and then remain away for the requisite periods
- insisted upon appropriate ventilation and created and implemented the many other measures outlined in the individual school risk assessments that you will have seen whilst also following national guidelines

It is absolutely essential that everyone continues to stick to these arrangements.

### **Clinically extremely vulnerable children**

More evidence has emerged that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from coronavirus (COVID-19), even for children with existing health conditions. Most children originally identified as clinically extremely vulnerable no longer need to follow original shielding advice. Parents of clinically extremely vulnerable children should speak to their child's GP or specialist clinician if they have not already done so, to understand whether their child should still be classed as clinically extremely vulnerable.

Only those children whose doctors have confirmed they are still clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend education whilst the new national restrictions are in place. The government have stated that parents of clinically extremely vulnerable children will be receiving a letter shortly confirming this advice. If your child is clinically extremely vulnerable please speak to your child's GP or specialist clinician as soon as possible and then contact your child's pastoral leader to discuss further arrangements.

Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend education.

### **Face Coverings:**

An additional email from the Department for Education this evening has outlined that face coverings are now mandatory in communal areas in secondary schools.

**It is compulsory, from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November that pupils at BFS wear a face covering in communal areas where social distancing can't be maintained. We strongly recommend pupils wear one immediately, beginning Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November.**

Therefore, it will be mandatory for pupils to wear a face covering whilst moving around the building, when in the canteen when not eating and outside in the playground at break and lunch times. It does not include classrooms.

A very small number of individuals are exempt from wearing a face covering. If you believe this is relevant to your child please contact Mrs Foley via email ([efoley@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk](mailto:efoley@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk)) by the end of Thursday and we will discuss this with you.

Reusable face coverings should be unbranded and in plain simple colours. Pupils must also bring with them a suitable plastic bag (Ziploc bag) to store their face covering when not in use.

Pupils must be instructed not to touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing it and they must dispose of temporary face coverings in the waste bins (not recycling

bins) provided. Reusable face coverings should be placed in a plastic bag so pupils can take them home with them. Pupils must wash their hands or use hand sanitiser again after removing a face covering.

This video demonstrates how pupils can safely apply a facemask:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMSqc9SpbJc>

We will be strongly enforcing the use of face coverings from Monday but, as I say, I ask that pupils do it from now (ie Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November).

We also strongly recommend that adults who drop off or pick up children also wear face coverings.

We have always said that we will follow the guidance as closely as we can, and this is now the guidance so we are following it.

I know that you will be aware that keeping schools going during a second national lockdown is a very significant ask and will require my colleagues to continue to work at our limits, going the extra mile. For example, we have to continue to set work online and cover for colleagues who may be isolating (or at very significant additional risk), and we have to set work for pupils who are isolating or unable to come to school.

In the meantime, I've thanked you for your efforts but I also want to thank you for looking after each other and your children in the most trying of times – we really are one community and we must continue to support each other and work together. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Blake', written in a cursive style.

Tim Blake  
**Principal**

**The updated guidance related to the use of face coverings in schools can be found here:** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020>

“Guidance on the use of face coverings in early years settings, schools and further education colleges:

In schools where pupils in year 7 and above are educated and further education colleges, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. Face coverings should also be worn by pupils in year 7 and above when travelling on dedicated school transport to secondary schools or on public transport to college.

Some individuals are [exempt from wearing face coverings](#) and we expect adults and pupils to be sensitive to those needs.”

**Government guidance on the general use of face coverings can also 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>