



Addendum to the COVID 19 Policy (August 2021) re wearing face masks/coverings in primary schools.

The National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) has recommended the wearing of face masks/coverings by children in 3rd class and above in primary schools. This measure is a response to the very high case numbers in older primary school-age children and was considered by the NPHE as proportionate to the current level of risk posed by COVID-19. It has advised that this measure is being introduced on a temporary basis and is subject to review in mid-February 2022.

According to “The guidance on the use of face coverings in primary schools” published by the Department of Education on 30th November 2021, Athea National School adheres to this guidance and put them into practice from Wednesday the **1st of December 2021**.

Athea National School implements as follows:

1. Wearing of face masks/coverings.

Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

Pupils from third class and up are required to wear a face mask/covering. The exemptions to this are set out below.

Face masks/coverings

- Face masks/coverings act as a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face mask/covering coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Face masks/coverings are therefore intended to prevent transmission of the virus from the wearer (who may not know that they are infected) to those with whom they come into close contact.

- Face masks/coverings must not contain any slogans/logos/images that may cause upset or be deemed offensive to any member of the school community.

Visors

- Face masks/coverings are more effective than visors. In the limited circumstances where a face mask/covering cannot be worn clear visors must be considered.

Exemptions

A medical certificate to certify that a person falls into a category listed below must be provided to the school on behalf of, any person (pupil) who claims that they are covered by the exemptions below:

- any pupil with difficulty breathing or other relevant medical conditions
- any pupil who is unable to remove the cloth face-covering or visor without assistance
- any pupil who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the cloth face covering or visor, for example pupils with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

Our schools will identify those children whose complex needs are such that the wearing of face covering may not be possible for them, and to discuss this with parents as required. In such circumstances a school will not require medical certification to provide an exemption to the wearing of face coverings. In other circumstances where a medical certificate is not provided that person (staff or pupil) will be refused entry to the school.

2. Directions for effective use of face masks/coverings.

Information will be provided by schools on the proper use, removal, and washing of face coverings. Advice on how to use face coverings properly can be found in each classroom and on our school website (please see attached poster, appendix 1). All pupils should be reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face covering. Face masks/coverings should be stored in an individually labelled container or bag. Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled. Face masks/coverings should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe.

3. Pupils using school transport.

Pupils from 3rd class and up on the primary transport scheme are required to wear face masks/coverings subject to the exemptions above.

4. Mixed classes in single rooms.

There is no mixed class including 2nd and 3rd class pupils in our school. In case of mixed classes, e.g. 2nd and 3rd class in a single classroom, school will make aware the class teacher/pupils and parents that only children in 3rd class and above, are required to wear face masks. As per

previous advice, however, parents of other children who would prefer that their children wear a face mask are not precluded from doing this.

5. Provision of face masks.

Parents will be advised that they obtain face masks for their children which fit properly and are comfortable for the child to wear. In the event that a child forgets, loses or damages their masks during the course of the school day, then the school will provide a sufficient supply to replace the mask for the child in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day or where required on an ongoing basis.

The procedure where a child presents without a face mask/covering.

Where issues arise, school will engage pragmatically and sensitively with parents to explore any particular difficulties arising for an individual child. It is generally accepted by the school community that rules put in place to protect the health and safety of the school community should be followed. Every effort should be made to clearly communicate the public health reasons behind the wearing of a face mask/covering. Face masks/coverings protect both the wearer and others around them. Cloth face masks/coverings are more effective than visors. In the limited circumstances where a cloth face mask/covering cannot be worn, clear visors may be considered. Parents will be encouraged to work with school in a spirit of partnership and co-operation to ensure the safety of the whole school community. In implementing the public health measure, it is not intended that any child will be excluded by the school in the first instance. A solution-focused engagement between the school and the child's parents/guardians should take place with a view to resolving issues that may arise.

Where significant issues have not been resolved locally, contact should be made with the Department's COVID-19 support by email Covid19_alert@education.gov.ie or telephone 057 9324461 and an Inspector will provide further support.

Wearing face masks/coverings – good practice guide for pupils at Athea National School.

1) Pupils and breaks from wearing face masks/coverings.

It is recognised that wearing a face mask/covering for long durations can be challenging for young children. The school will arrange regular breaks and facilitate children taking a break outdoors where possible.

2) Pupils and wearing face masks/coverings while outdoors.

It is not necessary for pupils to wear face masks/coverings outdoors.

- 3) Pupils and wearing a face mask/covering while sitting at their desks for lunch or taking a drink during class.

Pupils do not have to wear a face mask/covering while eating their lunch at their desks or taking a drink during class.

- 4) Wearing face masks/coverings while engaged in school activities.

It is not necessary for pupils to wear a face mask/covering while engaged in **P.E.**

P.E. should be outdoors if the weather permits. Indoor spaces should be ventilated well.

It is not necessary for pupils to wear a face masks/covering while **playing sport.**

It is not necessary for pupils to wear a face mask/covering while **singing.**

Pupils should remain in their pods and be socially distant while singing. The space should be ventilated well.

It is not necessary for pupils to wear a face mask/covering while **playing a musical instrument.** Pupils should remain in their pods and be socially distant while engaged in this activity. The space should be ventilated well.

The addendum to the Covid-19 policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Athea National School on It will be reviewed on a cyclical basic or as the need arises.

Signed:

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date:


Signed: *Margaret Watters*

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 1st/12/2021

Appendix 1.

How to use face coverings: A guide for parents and children 3rd to 6th class



Children in 3rd to 6th class are required to wear masks in primary school

You should arrive at school with your own face covering

Always clean your hands before and after wearing a face covering

Check your fit

- Make sure mask fabric covering is comfortable for you to wear
- Make sure it is easy to fit and covers your nose and mouth
- Ensure the face covering fits under your chin
- Tighten the loops so it's snug around your face, without gaps
- Don't touch or fidget with the face covering while it's on

You should not

- Wear your face covering below the nose
- Leave your chin exposed
- Wear it loosely with gaps on the sides
- Push it under your chin to rest on your nose

Always follow these steps

- Wash your hands before and after handling your face covering
- Change your face covering if it is dirty, wet or damaged
- Carry unused face coverings in a sealable clean waterproof bag, like a ziplock
- Carry a second bag to put used face coverings in
- Wash cloth face coverings on the highest temperature for cloth

Safe removal and disposing of mask

- Use the ties or ear loops to take the face coverings off
- Do not touch the front when you take it off
- Don't forget to clean your hands and keep social distance
- Always dispose of single-use masks properly in a bin

