



Department of Education

HM Government of Gibraltar

POLICY ON THE WEARING OF MASKS IN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

EFFECTIVE NOVEMBER 23RD 2020 ONWARDS

The Department of Education has reviewed its policy in regard to mask-wearing in schools and educational settings. The guidelines below clarify the new rules that will govern mask wearing in HMGoG schools and educational settings as from Wednesday 19th November.

All the details below put into implementation the guidance provided to the Department of Education by the Director of Public Health Gibraltar on Tuesday 3rd November 2020.

The Department of Education has developed this policy in full consultation with Public Health Gibraltar and NASUWT Gibraltar.

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1.0: AIMS

It is a primary aim of the Department of Education to safeguard the wellbeing of all individuals within each of our educational settings. This policy is designed to implement measures that we deem to be reasonable in order to safeguard children, young people and staff within our educational settings during this coronavirus pandemic. This mask-wearing policy is designed to ensure learning and teaching can continue to take place within our educational settings, whilst also ensuring that we adopt reasonable measures to minimise the potential for the spread of the coronavirus.

It is our intention that every member of each school community feels valued and respected, and that each person is treated fairly and well. We are a caring community, whose values are built on mutual trust and respect for all. Our aim is to continue fostering learning communities in which all members of the school can work together in a supportive way. We aim to promote learning environments in which everyone feels happy, safe and secure.

This policy outlines a number of rules, but our mask-wearing policy is not primarily concerned with rule enforcement. It is a means of promoting safe and sensible learning environments which consistently reflect the rationale behind current civil contingency legislation that exists in our wider community. Our aim is that all individuals within our educational settings can work together with the common purpose of helping everyone to learn. This policy supports our learning communities in aiming to allow everyone to work together in an effective and considerate way.

The Department of Education expects every member of the school community to behave in a considerate and respectful way towards others. Educational settings will treat all children and young people fairly and apply this mask-wearing policy in a consistent way.

This policy aims to help children learn in a safe and secure environment, and to become positive, responsible and increasingly independent members of the learning community and indeed the community as a whole.

Our learning communities recognise and promote good behaviour, as we believe that this will develop an ethos of kindness and cooperation. This policy is designed to encourage good behaviour as well as to promote a responsible mindset that we feel reflects the ethos of good citizenship.

2.0: STAFF RESPONSIBILITY

The management of mask wearing in all HMGoG schools and educational settings is the responsibility of all staff within our learning communities.

2.1: THE ROLE OF THE HEAD TEACHER/PRINCIPAL

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher/Principal to implement the mask-wearing policy consistently throughout their school, and to report to the Director of Education, when requested, on the effectiveness of the policy. It is also the responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all children and young people in their school/educational setting.

The Headteacher/Principal supports all staff by implementing the policy, by setting the standards expected, and by supporting staff in their implementation of the policy.

The Headteacher/Principal has the responsibility for ensuring incidents of non-compliance of the mask-wearing policy are appropriately followed up.

2.2: THE ROLE OF CLASS TEACHERS

It is the responsibility of class teachers to implement the mask-wearing policy consistently throughout their classroom / learning zone, and ensure that the rules regarding mask wearing in schools and educational settings are enforced in their classroom / learning zone. It is also the responsibility of the class teacher to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all children and young people in their classroom / learning zone.

Class teachers should have high expectations of the children and young people with regard to behaviour and compliance with the mask-wearing policy.

The class teacher must be a role model for the children and young people and enforce the mask-wearing policy fairly and consistently.

The class teacher should ensure that any incidents of non-compliance of the mask-wearing rules are appropriately followed up according to the school/educational setting's behaviour policy.

2.3: THE ROLE OF ALL OTHER STAFF

All staff should provide a positive model of behaviour and ensure high expectations of mask wearing are made explicit to the children. They should inform class teachers or identified middle managers, as appropriate, of any inappropriate behaviour.

2.4: THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND CARERS

The Department of Education is always keen to work in full partnership with parents and carers, forming a team around each child / young person which allows the child / young person to feel fully supported and which enables them to flourish as a learner. Parents are expected to support the implementation of all school / educational settings' policies. We expect parents and carers to reinforce the school/educational settings' high expectations regarding mask-wearing as set out below. We

expect parents and carers to support the actions of the school in regard to the implementation of this mask-wearing policy. Any queries/concerns regarding the implementation of this policy should be made directly to the school, according to the school / educational setting's communication protocols.

Every HMGoG's school and educational setting collaborates actively with parents and carers, so that children and young people receive consistent messages about the expectations regarding mask wearing at school and within the community. We expect parents and carers to support their child's learning, and to cooperate with the school/educational setting.

3.0: PRIMARY SECTOR

In primary schools, children and staff* will not be required to wear masks. However, any child or staff member who would like to wear a mask can do so.

We do not recommend that Nursery and Reception-aged children wear masks. This recommendation is based on the safety and overall interest of these children and their capacity to appropriately use a mask with minimal assistance.

We do not recommend that pupils in St Martin's School and other children with special educational needs and/or disabilities wear masks if they are unable to use a mask with minimal assistance or if it is not in their best overall interest to wear one.

*There are two exceptions where mask-wearing is compulsory in this sector:

1) As is already specified above and in our Guidance on the Opening of Schools in September 2020 document (available on our website www.education.gov.gi), masks must be worn in learning zones where air conditioning units are required to be in use. If air conditioning units are in use whilst individuals are in a learning zone, all individuals in the learning zone (staff and students) are required to wear masks.

2) Lunchtime staff - see sections 3.1 and 5.0 below.

Whilst mask wearing is not required (other than the above two exceptions) within the rules for the Primary sector, masks can of course be worn by any member of staff or child who wishes to wear one. In fact, we encourage all staff to wear masks when moving about their buildings or when they are moving outside of their school group bubble.

3.1: LUNCHTIME STAFF

Lunchtime staff who come into school to supervise children during the lunch hour should wear a mask throughout their time in the school setting (see also section 5.0).

4.0: SECONDARY SECTOR

Masks are required to be worn by all staff and students when circulating around the school building or educational setting, this includes any podiums and entry staircases into the school grounds. It is compulsory for all individuals to wear a mask whilst they are in the corridors, stairwells, toilets and all circulation spaces within the school footprint.

In learning environments (such as ICT suites and the kitchens) where air conditioning units must be in operation, all individuals in the air conditioned zone must wear a mask throughout their time in this area.

4.1: STUDENTS - BAYSIDE AND WESTSIDE

4.1(a): Years 7 to 11

Students in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 must wear a mask when circulating around the building, this includes the podium and entry staircase into the school grounds. However, once they arrive at their classroom and sit at their desk or work station, masks can be removed for the duration of the period that they remain in this area. Masks do not need to be worn in any lessons*. Masks do not need to be worn in PE, Music, Drama and Dance lessons even when students are moving more freely throughout the learning zone.

*Unless, as previously stated, the learning zone is air conditioned, in which case masks must be worn throughout that lesson.

Masks do not need to be worn when students are in their outdoor playgrounds for their break time or lunch time, and are in their social group bubble. In such situations where masks are not being worn, social distancing measures must be complied with.

Masks do not need to be worn when students who stay at school for lunch sit down at their table in their lunch zone.

4.1(b): Years 12 and 13

All Year 12 and 13 students are required to wear a mask throughout their time inside the school footprint. Year 12 and 13 students must continue to wear a mask throughout lessons, no matter which learning zone of the building they are working in. Students will be required to wear a mask throughout all activities, including examinations. This applies for all subjects, including PE, Music, Drama and Dance.

Masks need to be worn when students are in all circulation areas of the school, this includes the podium and entry staircase into the school grounds.

Masks do not need to be worn when students who stay at school for lunch sit down at their table in their lunch zone.

4.2: STUDENTS - COLLEGE

Levels 1, 2 and 3 students

All students at the College are required to wear a mask throughout their time inside the College buildings (this includes the main building, its Annexe and any off-site learning zones). Students must continue to wear a mask throughout lessons, no matter which learning zone of the building(s) they are working in. Students will be required to wear a mask throughout all activities, including examinations.

Masks need to be worn when students are in all circulation areas of the College, this includes the podium and entry hall / staircase into the College grounds.

Masks do not need to be worn when students who stay at the College for lunch sit down at their table in their lunch zone.

4.3: NON-COMPLIANCE

Any incident where a student is found not to be complying with the above mask-wearing rules will be followed up on. The strategy used to deal with any incidences of non compliance will be as per the details set out in each institution's behaviour policy.

4.4: STAFF - IN LESSONS

Once staff arrive at the classroom/learning zone for a lesson, masks can be removed if teachers feel that continuing to wear a mask throughout the lesson will hinder the efficacy of their teaching. If teachers can ensure their communication with students is not hindered, we advise that masks continue to be worn in classrooms/learning zones.

4.5: STAFF - IN OTHER INDOOR AREAS WHEN NOT TEACHING

When staff arrive at their desk or work station, masks can be removed for the duration of the period that they remain in this area.

4.6: LUNCHTIME STAFF

Lunchtime staff who come into school to supervise children during the lunch hour should wear a mask throughout their time in the school setting (see also section 5.0).

5.0: LUNCHTIME STAFF IN ALL HMGoG SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Lunchtime staff who come into the school/educational setting to supervise pupils during the lunch hour should wear a mask throughout their time in the school/educational setting. This applies to lunchtime staff in all HMGoG's educational settings, including all Primary and Secondary schools and St Martin's.

6.0: GUIDANCE ON MASKS, HOW TO WEAR THEM AND DISPOSE OF THEM

All individuals are encouraged to bring their own mask from home. Masks will be provided for anyone who forgets to, or is unable to, bring one from home.

Individuals should follow Public Health instructions on the use and care of masks. Staff, young people and their parents should make sure a fresh clean cloth mask is used EVERY DAY. If a mask is not visibly clean it will not be allowed to be worn, as it constitutes a hygiene hazard. An alternative disposable mask will be given to individuals in such cases.

Individuals should make sure they wear a mask correctly. The following guidelines should be followed:

A face covering should:

- cover your nose and mouth while allowing you to breathe comfortably;
- fit comfortably but securely against the side of the face;
- be secured to the head with ties or ear loops;
- be made of a material that you find to be comfortable and breathable, such as cotton;
- ideally include at least two layers of fabric (the World Health Organization recommends three depending on the fabric used);
- unless disposable, it should be able to be washed with other items of laundry according to fabric washing instructions and dried without causing the face covering to be damaged.

When wearing a face covering you should:

- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on;
- avoid wearing on your neck or forehead;
- avoid touching the part of the face covering in contact with your mouth and nose, as it could be contaminated with the virus;
- change the face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it;
- avoid taking it off and putting it back on a lot in quick succession.



When removing a face covering:

- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before removing;
- only handle the straps, ties or clips;
- do not give it to someone else to use;
- if single-use, dispose of it carefully in a residual waste bin and do not recycle;
- if reusable, wash it in line with manufacturer's instructions at the highest temperature appropriate for the fabric;
- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser once removed.

As an alternative to masks, individuals may wish to procure a PPE hood or headtop. Individuals wishing to wear these as alternatives to masks must purchase these of their own accord as these hoods/headtops will not be provided by schools and educational settings. Schools and educational settings will provide disposable masks to individuals who do not bring one, though individuals are encouraged to bring their own mask from home. Individuals can then make their own choice as to the way they protect themselves: mask or hood.

If an individual chooses to wear a PPE hood or headtop, there is therefore no need to seek permission from a doctor or obtain any other written consents.

Please note ski masks and other routine forms of clothing are never acceptable. These hoods must be designated as PPE and not be open to the outside.

7.0: EXCEPTIONS TO MASK WEARING IN ALL SECTORS

Children and young people who are not able to use their masks without assistance should not wear a mask due to safety concerns.

We do not recommend the use of masks by children or young people who cannot tolerate a mask due to cognitive, sensory or mental health issues.

Some individuals are exempt* from wearing a face mask and we expect adults and pupils to be sensitive to those needs.

**this refers to exemptions which have been granted, in writing, by the Director of Public Health*

8.0: UPDATING THIS POLICY

Should Public Health's advice in regard to mask wearing within schools change, we will update our plans accordingly and amend this policy document as appropriate. In such a case, we will ensure all staff, pupils and parents are informed of the amended stance and of the measures individuals will be expected to comply with.

REVIEW DATE: This policy will be reviewed on a monthly basis (next review date is Friday 18th December) and at each point when new Public Health Gibraltar advice is provided to the Department of Education.