

Sunday 28 November 2021

Dear families

Face coverings at all Dixons academies

On Saturday 27 November, the Prime Minister announced new temporary measures following the emergence of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the UK. The new measures will be introduced as a precaution to slow down the spread of the variant while more information is gathered.

The Department for Education has since written to schools on Sunday 28 November with updated guidance regarding face coverings.

I am writing to inform you that from Monday 29 November, the wearing of face coverings will be compulsory in all communal areas for all staff and visitors to Dixons Marchbank, unless exempt.

In addition, in secondary schools this will also apply to all students in Years 7 and above.

Primary students

The Department for Education does not recommend the wearing of coverings for primary children because they may find it difficult to use them consistently and hygienically. However, if a parent chooses to send their child to the academy wearing one, this will be permitted, although we will have a conversation about the hygiene aspect if necessary (see below).

Secondary and Post 16 students

Secondary students must wear face coverings in all large shared communal areas: corridors, when inside during break /lunchtime (other than when eating), and on any public transport to and from the academy. Students may choose to wear a disposable paper covering (although there are environmental issues with these) or a cloth cover (washable and re-useable).

Face coverings must be plain coloured, and must not be scarves, balaclavas or bandanas: they must be suitable for a place of work.

The government has not made it compulsory at this stage to wear coverings in classrooms. However, If a student chooses to wear a face covering at all times, they must ensure that they keep it in place and are not putting it on and off because of the increased risk of infection. When not being worn, coverings must be kept in a small plastic bag, and this can be kept in a pocket. The covering must not be left on any desk or table at any time.

It is the responsibility of the student and their family to come to the academy with a face covering and to ensure good hygiene routines in relation to it (see below). Where a student forgets their covering, this will be dealt with in the same way as any other uniform contravention. Academies will have spare face coverings to issue to students.

Hygiene

Face coverings pose the same risk as tissues / cloth handkerchiefs, and not just for COVID-19. It is vital that students understand the importance of keeping their face cover away from others. Students must understand that incessant touching of the mask could lead to the passing on of more infection. Any touching of the mask should be followed by sanitising.

Cloth covers must be washed every day. Alternatively, if a student cannot manage this, they must be kept in a small plastic bag for 72 hours and rotated with clean covers. If students are wearing disposable coverings, they must understand the importance of disposing them in a plastic bag and in a lidded bin. Paper coverings do tend to be dropped on the floor: nobody must touch anybody else's mask without wearing disposable gloves and then thoroughly washing their hands.

Finally

Face coverings are just one further way of preventing the spread of COVID-19. Hand washing and the hygienic disposal of tissues continue to be of paramount importance. We ask that students continue to test twice weekly using lateral flow device tests (LFD) tests and staff to do the same.

Vaccinations

All eligible staff and students aged 12 and over can take up the vaccination offer including boosters. To book a vaccination, please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/>

Thank you for your continued support. We will continue to communicate as guidance changes.

Yours sincerely

Sir Nick Weller
CEO