

The use of Face Coverings at Sandwell College

Introduction

Cloth face coverings, cloth face masks, surgical masks, and plastic face shields or visors (collectively referred to as “masks”) can limit the spread of germs.

The purpose of wearing a mask is to contain coughs and sneezes, and to prevent the spread of germs to people and nearby surfaces, which helps to protect the risk of infection transmission. Masks can also help people to avoid touching their nose or mouth accidentally. While a face covering does not filter the air breathed, it can serve as a basic barrier against large droplets reaching the mouth or nose.

Even those who feel at low risk may be working or learning with others who have hidden medical issues or concerns. Sensitivity and respect should be displayed by all when discussing or challenging the use of face coverings.

College procedure

All those working or studying on-site including staff, students, contractors and visitors that can wear a face covering should do so, with the aim of reducing risk and providing increased reassurance to everyone including those who may be most vulnerable to serious illness.

Anyone entering a Sandwell College, Cadbury College and CSM campus will be issued with a face mask when entering the building if they have not already got one. The mask should be worn in all corridors, public spaces and common areas, as well as office spaces where multiple people are present if social distancing of 1 metre plus is not possible to maintain.

Masks are not required to be worn inside an office where only one person is present.

The terms “public spaces” and “common spaces” include, public rest areas, lifts, toilets, stairwells, and communal workspaces.

Masks are also encouraged outdoors if safe social distancing practices are not possible.

Classrooms

It is recognised that the use of face coverings in classrooms may impede communication and/or learning. Each teacher will be responsible for using their professional judgement when determining what is appropriate in their class(es). They may, should they choose to do so, require students to use a face covering. This decision will be informed by the nature and content of the lesson, the context in which learning is taking place (eg the ability to socially distance) and the preferences/needs of those involved.

Exemptions

The college recognises that some people may have a legitimate reason not to wear a face covering and cases involving exemption will be handled sensitively. Exemptions includes:

- not being able to put on, wear, or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- if putting on, wearing, or removing a face covering will cause severe distress
- where interacting with someone who uses lip reading to communicate, or who has social communication impairments
- children aged under 11 years

Exemption stickers will be issued to those staff and students who are not required to wear a face covering for one or more of the reasons noted above. These will be displayed on the reverse side of College ID badges and presented upon request.

Students who wish to request exemption should contact their tutor or staff in The Hub or Welfare teams. Staff who wish to do so should contact their line manager or HR department.

Other measures

It should be noted that masks are a supplement to, and not a substitute for, other preventive measures. They are intended to add an additional layer of protection on top of social distancing and other measure such as frequent handwashing, the use of hand sanitizer, working and/or conducting activities remotely, the avoidance of loitering and chatting in communal areas and staying at home when experiencing any symptoms of coronavirus.

Review

This guidance will be regularly reviewed in line with Government and Public Health guidance.

Current government guidance can be found here: [click here to access guidance](#)