



Return to school from 8th March 2021:

Advice on face coverings in classrooms

- It is a recommendation, not a requirement for masks to be worn in lessons. The use of face-coverings in school will undoubtedly impact on the accessibility to learning for deaf pupils, as well as their social and emotional well-being.
- There are exemptions that can apply to deaf students, their teachers and their peers (taken from *Schools Coronavirus Operational Guidance, Feb 2021, p12*) This applies to those who:
 - Rely on visual signals for communication, or communicate with or provide support to such individuals
 - Speak to or provide help to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate
- We have provided suggestions to consider below. We recommend that schools have an **individual discussion** with each deaf pupil to agree on the best methods to support their communication and interaction. Ideally, this should be reviewed at the start of the summer term.

Suggestions

- ✓ Consider using **clear face masks** where you have deaf pupils in your classroom. There is currently very limited evidence regarding the effectiveness or safety of transparent face coverings, but they may be effective in reducing the spread of coronavirus. More advice on [clear face coverings](#).
- ✓ Ensure the deaf pupil is sitting **as close as possible** (maintaining social distancing) to the speaker to maximise use of their listening aids. Listening will be much more difficult at distance from the speaker and if a student does not have access to speech-reading cues.
- ✓ Ensure **radio aids** are being used and utilised at all times.
- ✓ Ensure your radio aid **microphone** is working effectively and measures are taken to minimise any feedback or background noise.
- ✓ **Speak clearly** and naturally.
- ✓ **Pace** your lesson with natural pauses and breaks to support processing.
- ✓ **Repeat and rephrase** contributions from other pupils.
- ✓ **Check understanding** of deaf students regularly, including before they start a new task.
- ✓ Full **transcripts** to be made available to deaf pupils, as well as copies of powerpoint presentations with notes reflecting key concepts / key words to understand and learn
- ✓ Offer **pre and post teaching** sessions to deaf pupils with access to transcripts, speech-reading in a well ventilated and spacious room to allow for social distancing to remove face coverings.
- ✓ Provide a **well-ventilated and spacious room** for deaf pupils and their peers to use without the use of face coverings for break and lunch times to allow for access to speech-reading and socialisation. This space could also be offered for group work/tasks in lesson time.
- ✓ Teachers to allow deaf pupils to have access to the use of **technology** in the classroom to use live transcribing apps (i.e. Otter AI).