

Written Ministerial Statement

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Department of Education

GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF FACE COVERINGS BY POST-PRIMARY PUPILS IN CORRIDORS AND COMMUNAL AREAS

Published at 11.00 am on Friday 25 March 2022.

Miss McIlveen (The Minister of Education): Members will be aware that I made a statement to the Assembly on 11 March 2022 in relation to my Department's guidance on the use of face coverings by post-primary pupils in classrooms. I stated that this guidance would be revised to reflect that from 21 March 2022, it would no longer be recommended that post-primary pupils should wear a face covering in classrooms.

I have now determined that it is appropriate for advance notice to be provided that this guidance will be further revised to reflect that from the start of the new school term, after the Easter break, it will no longer be recommended that post-primary pupils wear a face covering in corridors or confined communal areas. This will result in post-primary pupils no longer being recommended to wear a face covering on school premises.

As was the case with the change relating to the use of face coverings in classrooms, this further change takes place in the context of a broadly improving epidemiological landscape in schools. Nonetheless, COVID continues to circulate in our communities and in our schools and we should continue to reduce the risks of COVID in our schools through the range of other mitigating measures that remain in place to protect all pupils and staff. It is for this reason that if any individual wishes to continue to use a face covering anywhere at school, I would encourage them to do so.

At this point pupils will still be recommended to wear a face covering when using public or school transport. This position will be kept under review.

A guidance note will issue to schools on this issue later today and my Department's COVID guidance will be updated to reflect this position.