

Template Letters re. Face Covering Rule in Secondary Schools.

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Template 1 (Straightforward case of child with SEN, in receipt of GP letter)

Dear (Principal),

We/I write to thank you sincerely for all your assistance to (name of child) since (he/she) returned to school in September. We/I appreciate that you have a very difficult task in the present circumstances.

We/I enclose herewith letter from (GP's name) confirming that it is not in (child's name) best interest that he/she wears a face covering or visor in or around the school premises, or during class.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Template 2 In the case of a child who is not in receipt of a letter from the GP, the parent may wish to write to the school principal, objecting to the mask rule, and requesting that their child be exempted. There are several suggested paragraphs in this letter that the parent may find helpful. The parent could pick and choose from the selection in order to personalise a letter for their child. It could be just as short as the letter above, or quite a long document. The points raised might also be helpful for parents wishing to articulate their concerns to the Board of Management.

Dear (Principal),

We/I would like to thank you for all the work you and your staff have done in order to welcome the students back to class in September.

I am aware that the National Public Health Emergency Team recommended that face coverings be used by secondary school students, but I am very concerned that the Dept. of Education has accepted this recommendation without first conducting a risk/benefit analysis of such a radical change to school rules. It is very worrying that the advantages and disadvantages of mandatory face coverings in schools do not appear to have been made clear to parents and students. I feel it is in the best interests of students that they be well informed, and have a choice as to whether they wear face coverings or not.

Or

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I am aware that the National Public Health Emergency Team recommended that face coverings be used by secondary school students, but I am very concerned that the Dept. of Education has accepted this recommendation without first conducting a risk/benefit analysis of such a move.

I am writing to notify you that, in the absence of such an analysis, I must insist that this rule is no longer imposed on (child's name). I do this on the basis that I have formed the strong opinion that it is detrimental to his/her health, well-being, and educational progress.

Or

I am writing to ask who will take responsibility in the event that (child's name) suffers any type of injury, psychological or physical, or any type of educational disadvantage, now or in the future, as a result of the imposition of this new rule.

Parents may wish to add something like the following points:

I/We are sure you will agree that, next to the home, school is where children are socialised, where they learn to be people, find out about other families, and what is going on around them in the community. It is where they have discussions, arguments, engage in artistic endeavour, and play games. School is where children learn how to exercise influence and how to make a convincing argument. Interacting is how children learn who they are as individuals, how they become individuals in fact. Covering the lower face impairs communication and understanding. Emotions become less recognizable, and student to student, as well as student to teacher relationships, are stymied.

Parents may wish to make these points and back up with this extract from WHO directive

Apart from the difficulties outlined above, I am very concerned that prior to including the mandate, parents were not informed of the documented side effects of mask-wearing, such as headaches, 'mask-mouth', acne, rash, impediment to speech etc, such as outlined in the WHO document quoted below.

Potential harms/disadvantages The likely disadvantages of the use of mask by healthy people in the general public include: • potential increased risk of self-contamination due to the manipulation of a face mask and subsequently touching eyes with contaminated hands;(48, 49) • potential self-contamination that can occur if nonmedical masks are not changed when wet or soiled. This can create favourable conditions for microorganism to amplify; • potential headache and/or breathing difficulties, depending on type of mask used; • potential development of facial skin lesions, irritant dermatitis or worsening acne, when used frequently for long hours;(50) • difficulty with communicating clearly; • potential discomfort;(41, 51) • a false sense of security, leading to potentially lower adherence to other critical preventive measures such as physical distancing and hand hygiene; • poor

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compliance with mask wearing, in particular by young children; • waste management issues; improper mask disposal leading to increased litter in public places, risk of contamination to street cleaners and environment hazard; • difficulty communicating for deaf persons who rely on lip reading; • disadvantages for or difficulty wearing them, especially for children, developmentally challenged persons, those with mental illness, elderly persons with cognitive impairment, those with asthma or chronic respiratory or breathing problems, those who have had facial trauma or recent oral maxillofacial surgery, and those living in hot and humid environments. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/332293> (pages 7 & 8)

The following extract from the same document sets out the likely advantages of the use of masks by healthy people in the general public. I do not think that the advantages outweigh the physical and psychological disadvantages set out above.

The likely advantages of the use of masks by healthy people in the general public include: • reduced potential exposure risk from infected persons before they develop symptoms; • reduced potential stigmatization of individuals wearing masks to prevent infecting others (source control) or of people caring for COVID-19 patients in non-clinical settings;(70) • making people feel they can play a role in contributing to stopping spread of the virus; Advice on the use of masks in the context of COVID-19: Interim guidance -8- • reminding people to be compliant with other measures (e.g., hand hygiene, not touching nose and mouth). However, this can also have the reverse effect (see below); • potential social and economic benefits. Amidst the global shortage of surgical masks and PPE, encouraging the public to create their own fabric masks may promote individual enterprise and community integration. Moreover, the production of non-medical masks may offer a source of income for those able to manufacture masks within their communities. Fabric masks can also be a form of cultural expression, encouraging public acceptance of protection measures in general. The safe re-use of fabric masks will also reduce costs and waste and contribute to sustainability. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/332293> (pages 7 & 8)

Or parents may not wish to use quote above, and use the following, or use the above and the following:

I/We are reluctant to go against school policy, but I/we have read as much literature as I/we can find on the subject of the use of face coverings to prevent the spread of respiratory illness, and unfortunately, as stated in the regularly updated analysis of studies on face masks by [Swiss Policy Research](#) the evidence for face masks is weak.

Parents may wish to make some or all of these points:

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The function of education is to foster an ability to think independently, and to feel free to question any and all edicts. However, a very worrying aspect of the introduction of mandatory face covering in certain settings is the social coercion which is evident on social media, and which puts pressure on teenagers to conform. Reinforcing this coercion in the school environment is not helpful to a child's development.

The mandatory use of face coverings is a very serious problem for children with SEN, insofar as the child who is not in a position to wear a face covering is very visibly singled out within the school community, with consequences for the concept of inclusion. These consequences have not been quantified and justified by the school nor by the Dept. of Education.

The idea that a child might be made to feel personally isolated, or made to function while their facial expressions are obscured, is contrary to what children have been doing since time immemorial, and is a form of social engineering which has unknown consequences.

The rigid institutional control which is now in place in (name of school) has created a sterile environment which is bound to have a detrimental effect on (child's name)'s development and well-being.

Parents may wish to make this point related to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

I/we feel that compulsory face coverings, as a condition of accessing education, is a breach of a child's rights under the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) Article 2 (Non-discrimination), Article 3 (Best Interests of the Child), Article 17 (Access to Appropriate Information), Article 19 (Protection from Abuse and Neglect), Article 23 (Developmental Rights for Children with Disabilities), Article 28 (Right to Education) and Article 31 (Leisure, Recreation, and Cultural Activities).

Parents may wish to make this point: mandated masks precedes mandated vaccines

The fact that the wearing of a face mask is now a condition of accessing education leads me to conclude that it may also become a reality that, if a vaccine becomes available, it will be a condition of accessing education that a child proves he/she has been vaccinated.

Parents may wish to withdraw consent at the end of the letter rather than at the beginning:

I/We request that our concerns and objections are made known to the Board of Management as a matter of urgency, and I/we look forward to your response.

Yours...