



Dec 2nd 2021

Dear parents,

Following the unexpected announcement on Tuesday night that pupils in 3rd – 6th classes will be required to wear masks over the coming weeks, the Board of Management of Scoil Naomh Feichin met last night to discuss this recent directive and how it could be implemented in our school.

The board is disappointed that there was such an inadequate lead in time for families and schools to prepare for this new practice. The fact that it took the government 5 days to arrive at a decision, following a strong recommendation from NPHE, but school communities had only 16 hours to prepare was grossly unfair.

In addition, it was expected and hoped that the new rules would be more in the form of a “*recommendation*” or “*advisory*” more than a “*requirement*”. However, this is not the case and schools have been instructed to enforce this new requirement, as soon as possible.

Following a review of the government communication to the school, the board has endorsed the government directive and requests that parents of pupils in 3rd- 6th classes provide their child with a mask to wear at school every day from Monday, Dec 6th.

Even though we have witnessed a strong level of compliance already in our school over the last two days, with roughly 90% of pupils wearing masks during class time, our focus will be on encouragement rather than enforcement.

We are advised by medical experts that, as mask-wearing reduces the risk of transmission, this new measure is going to be an effective and worthwhile temporary addition to the suite of measures already in place in our schools.

We’re aware that there will be a small group of children in these classes who may not be able to wear a mask during indoor class time for medical, sensory or other legitimate reasons and parents should make the school principal aware of this. It will not be necessary to provide the school with a medical certificate. We are also acutely aware that some children with additional needs will be unable to adhere to this requirement.

During the school day pupils will be able to remove their masks –

- (a) During recreation time – 2 x 20 minutes daily
- (b) When taking a drink of water
- (c) When eating their snack and lunch before both outdoor breaks
- (d) When engaging in PE and sports activities
- (e) At regular breaks during class time – *fresh air breaks*

The Board of Management understands that this additional public health measure may be difficult to fully implement but we would encourage all parents to play their part in supporting the health and well-being of all members of our community.

The school staff will deal with any questions from the children in a sensitive and child-friendly manner and will assist any child who is experiencing anxiety.

Needless to say, we all accept that this is not an ideal situation but we are hopeful that it will be a short-term measure and we look forward to the pupils in these classes being able to dispense with masks early in the new year.

Until then, we look forward to your continued support and cooperation and we will provide you with any further information when it becomes available.

Yours sincerely,

Bryan Collins
Principal / Secretary Board of Management
Scoil Naomh Feichín