

14 May 2021



Dear Parent/Carer

You may well have seen that on Tuesday evening the Prime Minister made an announcement about the ongoing easing of Covid-related restrictions. This included the news that students, from Monday 17 May, will no longer be required to wear face masks in the classroom or in communal areas in school. The Department for Education document related to this can be found here:

[Face coverings in education guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/534212/face-coverings-in-education-guidance.pdf).

It is still recommended that staff and visitors continue to wear face masks in areas where social distancing cannot be guaranteed – specifically this means corridors and other indoor areas in the school. For Sandwich Technology School, this effectively means that students will not be required to wear masks at all in school, but teachers will continue to wear them in corridors. The rules can be summarised as follows:

- students will still be required to wear their face masks on public transport to and from school;
- staff and visitors will be required to wear masks in corridors and other indoor communal areas in the school buildings;
- students and staff are not required to wear masks in the classroom;
- for students who are exempt from wearing masks, nothing changes.

I cannot help but view this as good news. It is lovely to see that things really are gradually beginning to return to normal across our nation, but it is also good news for the education of our students. Since our return on March the 8th teachers have found it very difficult teaching with masks on, hearing what the students are saying with their masks on, and have generally found that the masks have acted as a barrier in the classroom. Of course, we have done our best and followed the rules, but I genuinely believe that now it is safe to no longer wear masks in the classroom, this will enhance the quality of teaching and learning happening within schools. For this reason, we are going to ask **all** students to remove their masks during lessons from Monday. However, if students wish to continue to wear masks in the corridors, for their own peace of mind, they may do so.

Last time I wrote to all parents I appealed to you for your help as a small (but too large!) number of students were struggling to settle back into school life and conform to our everyday rules again. This is gradually getting better. However, I am concerned that one rule in particular appears to have been forgotten by, again, too many students. Sandwich Technology School prides itself on being a mobile-phone-free school, as made very clear in the Home School Agreement, which is signed by parents and students upon joining our school. Since we introduced this, the number of bullying incidents has fallen, exam results have improved and the quality of student interaction has improved. We know that many students and parents are supportive of our stance on this and can see the benefits for student wellbeing. In fact, Gavin Williamson, the Secretary of State for Education, is currently encouraging all schools to do the same. The rule is very simple, students should ensure that their phone is switched off and kept out of sight and in their bag from the moment they walk through our school gates in the morning, until the moment they leave at the end of the day. If we see, hear or have evidence that a phone has been used during the school day we will confiscate it – no exceptions. However – if the students follow this very simple rule we will have no need to confiscate their phones and there will be no problem. The vast majority of students do respect and follow this expectation consistently. But we need your help, please, to ensure that staff and students are not wasting time arguing about phones. You can help by:

- making sure your child understands and follows the rule;
- not contacting your child on their phone during the school day – if you need to get an urgent message to them, please telephone the school;

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- not allowing your child to contact you during the school day – if they need to get an urgent message to you, they should go to Student Reception and we will help them;
- supporting the school if we do ever need to confiscate your child's mobile phone. If school and home stand united on this, then the student will be less likely to make the same mistake twice. Please don't be one of those parents who makes excuses for their child – they know the rules and they need to follow them.

The weather is beginning to warm up, the Covid situation is easing, Years 11 and 13, who are working hard towards their GCSEs and A Levels, can see the finish line and school is getting back to normal. Next time I write to you it will be to explain the plans we have to really use the last term of this year to hit the 'reset' button and to ensure that everyone is truly able to focus, without distraction, on learning.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

With best wishes

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracey Savage', written in a cursive style.

Tracey Savage
Headteacher