

Covid Update for November

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope that, despite the awful weather you have managed to have a relatively pleasant half term.

We did very well to last as long as we did before we started to get positive cases in school last half term. It wasn't until the final week that we had students and staff testing positive when we had to close to Year 11 and Year 9 which have both had outbreaks.

As I write this, the transmission rate in the North West is set to surpass the current worst case scenario that was put forward by the government and it is clear from the cases that we tracked and traced last term that as soon as two or three have positive tests within a Year group bubble the inevitability is that the whole year group ends up having to isolate.

As always, our priority is to keep as many of our students in school as possible and to do this whilst keeping everyone as safe as possible.

Therefore we are changing our face mask policy upon return:

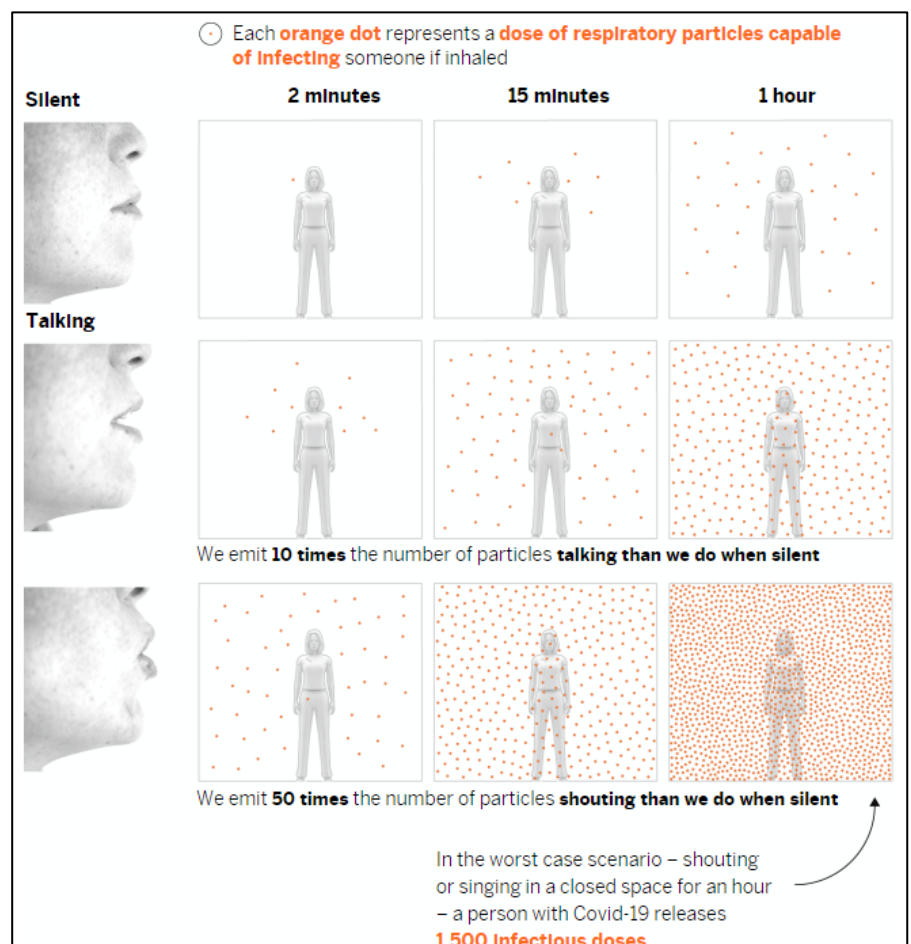
Students are to wear face masks at all times except when eating.

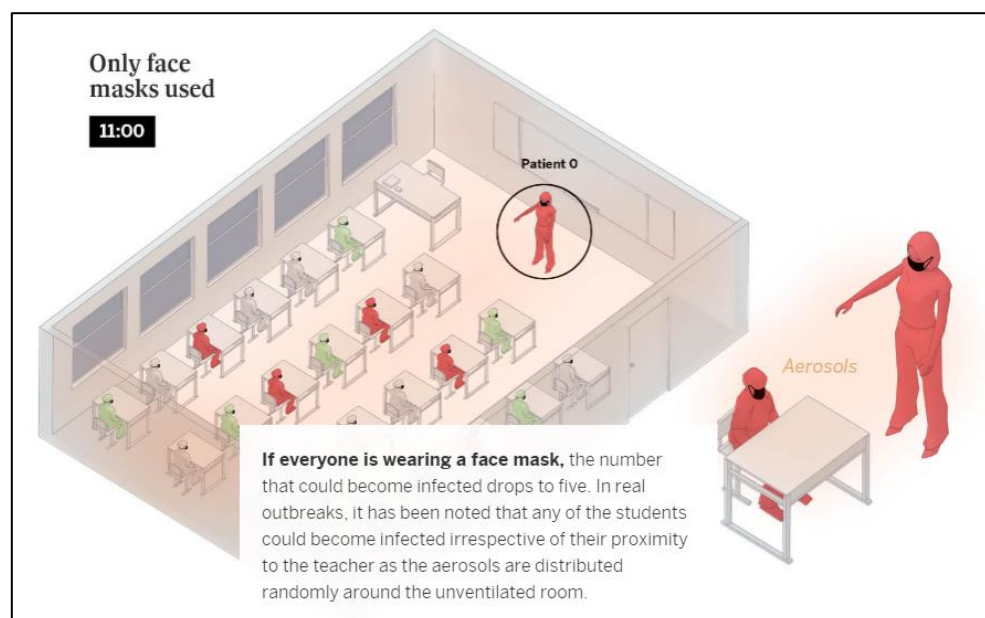
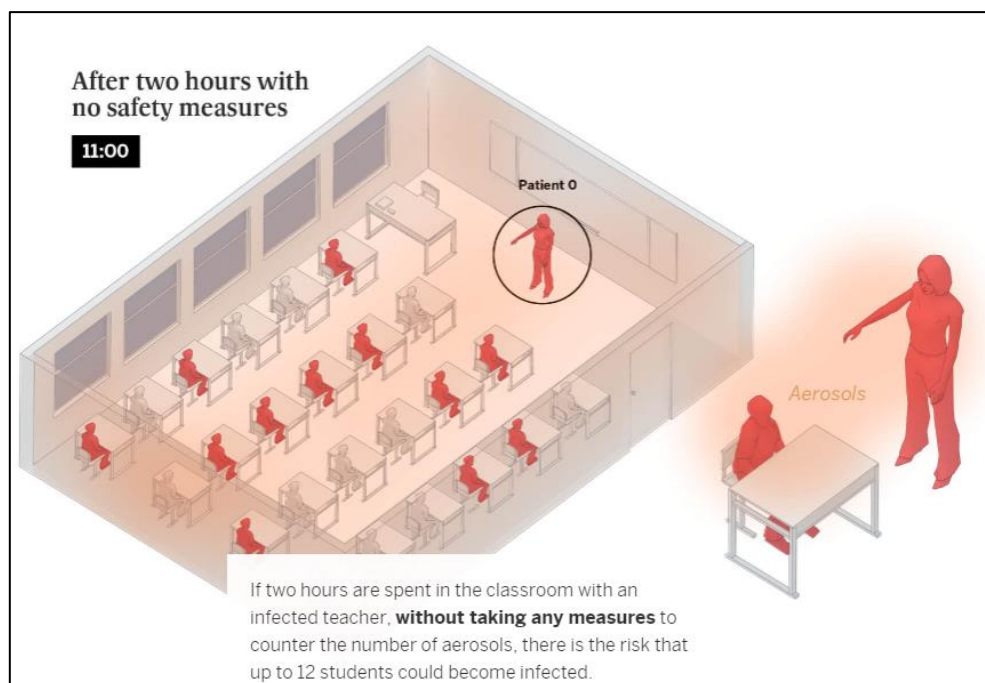
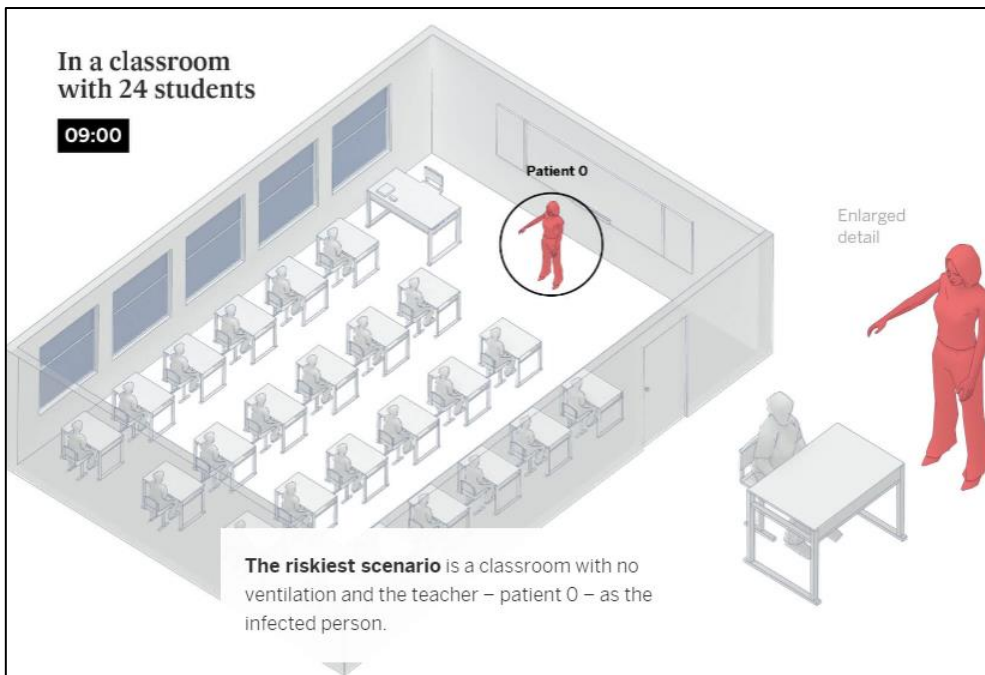
There are good reasons for taking this decision now (which I think will become national policy anyway at some point before Christmas, as it already has in Scotland).

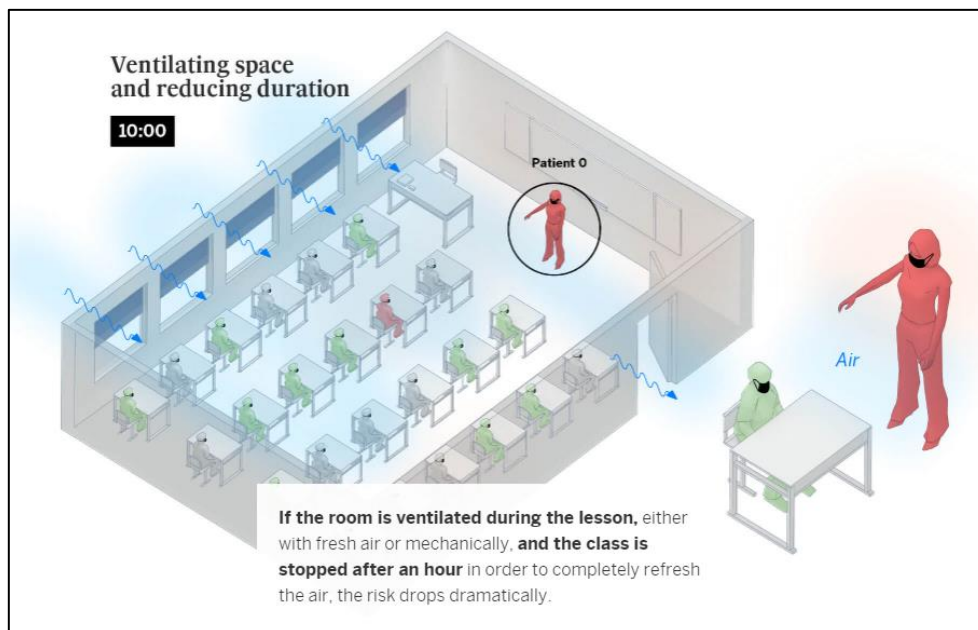
Although we are keeping windows open in school, which is vital for reducing aerosol transmission, we can make the classroom considerably safer with the wearing of masks.

Firstly, having had staff who have tested positive, the risk of transmission when a teacher is positive is much greater for transmission. Teachers talk more and talk at volume which dramatically increases the chance of transmission to students. The risk of COVID transmission from a positive teacher is significantly reduced if the students are wearing face masks.

You can see this being modelled in the graphics below:







If you would like to see the original source of this research you can follow the link below¹.

To further support this staff will wear a mask or visor at all times they are in the classroom unless they are behind the Perspex screens that have been in place in a number of classrooms. We will also expect students to wear face coverings outside as they cannot be expected to maintain a 2 metre social distance. This will significantly reduce the possibility that we would have to ask a year group to isolate if there was a positive case in a year group.

The exceptions to the mask-wearing rule are:

- Masks will not need to be worn in PE lessons taking place outside.
- Pre-existing exemptions (these students already have a badge which identifies them to staff).

Are there any recommended masks that you should get for your child?

You may find the following advice from the Which Consumer Guide helpful:

- <https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/face-masks/article/how-to-buy-the-best-face-mask-or-covering-axi5Y1g35Cat>

What is important is that your child has their face mask washed daily or have a different face mask for each day. It should be stored safely in a plastic bag to avoid being contaminated or contaminating others.

Advice on how to use a face mask and how to clean it is available here:

- <https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/face-masks/article/face-mask-using-guide-how-to-wear-store-and-wash-your-face-covering-properly-aQkvZ8U4ytu7>

Students' face masks and hand sanitiser are now as important a part of their school uniform as a blazer or a tie and they should have these with them every day.



¹ <https://english.elpais.com/society/2020-10-28/a-room-a-bar-and-a-class-how-the-coronavirus-is-spread-through-the-air.html>

Keeping us safe until Christmas:

We stayed Covid-free as long as we did by remaining cautious in each decision that was taken. This worked because it was supported well by parents. If we are to continue to keep our school community safe it is vitally important that you all support the existing measures that are in place:

- If you have travelled to an area which has had its quarantine conditions changed over the half term (e.g. Cyprus) you **MUST** by law follow the 14 day quarantine requirement.
- If anyone in your household has coronavirus symptoms, **DO NOT** send your child into school. Please don't wait for a test; please don't wait until a positive result is issued. **From the moment anyone in your household experiences coronavirus symptoms DO NOT send your child into school.**
 - If you find yourself in this situation, the person with symptoms should seek a test. If a test result is negative, and there are no other household members with symptoms, your child can then come back into school. If the test is positive, your whole household needs to continue to isolate until 14 days after the symptoms first appeared.
- If anyone in your household does not have symptoms, but has taken a test and is awaiting a result, please **DO NOT** send your child into school. If a test result is negative, and there are no other household members with symptoms, your child can then come back into school. If the test is positive, your whole household needs to continue to isolate until 14 days after the symptoms first appeared even if they do not have symptoms themselves.

Messages for specific Year groups:

Year 11:

- The date that Year 11 return to school after their period of isolation is **Wednesday 4th November**.

Year 9:

- Year 9 will begin their modified school day from Monday. Period 5 is 2.00pm – 3.00pm meaning that they will finish school ten minutes earlier than they did last half term.

Year 8:

- Due to the conditions of the school roof above the West Wing part of the play area is cordoned off for health and safety reasons. Therefore, the Year 8 entrance into and out of the building has moved to the entrance next to the Fitness Suite and along the PE corridor.

Thank you for your ongoing messages of support:

I would like to thank parents who have kept us updated with news of positive tests within their households over half term which has enabled us to update our tracking system. **If your child has developed symptoms or received a positive test result over half term and you have not yet contacted school, please let us know as soon as possible.**

We can only ever be as good as the support which you, as parents, give to the school. Thank you on behalf of the staff and the governors for all that you are doing to keep your children informed and in compliance with the safety measures that we have in place.

Kind regards,



Mr Steven Haycocks

HEADTEACHER

Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path. (Psalm 119, vs 105)

Non sibi sed aliis