



Ein Cyf/Our Ref: ATISN 15109

27 May 2021

Dear ,

### **ATISN 15109 – Face coverings in school classrooms**

Thank you for your request which I received on 29 April 2021. You asked for:

*“A full evaluation of potentially harmful effects of requiring children to wear face masks in classrooms for prolonged times.”*

### **Our response**

Although we do not hold a dedicated evaluation of the potentially harmful effects of requiring children to wear face masks in classrooms for prolonged times, we do hold information which considers the impact of face coverings more broadly which may be of interest to you.

These are listed below:

[TAC / TAG Papers: hierarchy of risk](#)

[Technical Advisory Cell: use of face coverings in the context of COVID-19, June 2020](#)

[Technical Advisory Group: advice on return to school, July 2020](#)

[Technical Advisory Group: advice on school transport, August 2020](#)

[Technical Advisory Group: updated advice on face coverings, August 2020](#)

[Technical Advisory Group: face coverings for children and young people in education settings, August 2020](#)

[Technical Advisory Group: evidence review on children and young people under 18 in preschool, school or college following the firebreak, November 2020](#)

*Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.*

*We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.*

[Technical Advisory Group: considerations for changing the operation of schools to allow more face-to-face learning, February 2021](#)

The Welsh Government's policy and guidance on face coverings in schools and education settings can be found here:

- [schools coronavirus guidance](#)
- [operational guidance for schools and settings](#)
- [staying safe and social distancing](#)

The Welsh Government recommends, but does not mandate the use of face coverings in schools and settings. This should be subject to a local risk assessment or evaluation in the school or setting and the Welsh Government does not hold records of these assessments.

In addition, you may wish to review the Welsh Government assessments of how our measures to manage COVID-19 affect the equality of opportunity, which include children's rights impact assessments, which are published at [Impact assessments: coronavirus | GOV.WALES](#). At the time of writing the impact assessment for the phased return to face to face teaching (22 February 2021) is published [here](#) and the equivalent impact assessments for the stages of phased return on 15 March and 12 April are awaiting publication and provided below. These consider the impact of interventions more generally, including face coverings.



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Children's rights impact assessments on the phased return to face to face teaching for the same periods are available here:



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## Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at: Information Rights Unit, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ or Email: [Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales](mailto:Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales)

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,  
Wycliffe House,  
Water Lane,  
Wilmslow,

Cheshire,  
SK9 5AF

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely