**Template letter #2: Where face masks/coverings are being work in the communal areas in secondary schools**

I am the parent of a deaf child who is a pupil at this school. I am writing about the use of face masks/coverings in communal areas.

I wish to complain that I do not believe there has been sufficient consideration by the school of the impact that this will have on my child, particularly in terms of their ability to understand staff and their peers.

A starting point will be to carry out an assessment of the difficulties that a face mask/covering introduces for my child’s understanding of speech and/or ability to communicate in communal areas.

This should also include a consideration of the reasonable adjustments that may be necessary. Under the*[edit as appropriate depending on where you live]*

*[England / Scotland / Wales]* Equality Act 2010

*[Northern Ireland]* Disability Discrimination Act 1996 and the Northern Ireland Act 1998

, education settings have a direct responsibility to take the necessary reasonable adjustments to ensure equal access to learning and continuity of support for deaf learners. It will also be important to consider the impact of face coverings on my child’s wellbeing.

These steps might include:

* Making it clear to staff and pupils of the exemptions that apply to any requirement to wear a face mask or covering. One key exemption is that a face mask or covering can be removed if needed to communicate with someone who relies on lip-reading. Social distancing and hand hygiene will obviously be key if this exemption is being used.
* Making clear face masks/coverings available to staff and pupils. It should be noted that clear face masks/coverings are not a panacea as they may still muffle speech. However, where face masks/coverings are being worn, they are likely to be preferable to opaque face masks/coverings.
* Reiterating the importance of good deaf awareness among all staff and pupils, highlighting [simple communication tips](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/media/6851/reasonable-adjustments-in-schools-and-colleges-infographic.png) that may help – such as writing things down, typing messages on a phone, using dictation/translation apps and so on.

I would welcome a discussion on what will be appropriate for my child. As part of this, I would like to request that my child also has an opportunity to input.

It will also be important that advice from a Teacher of the Deaf from the local specialist education service for deaf children is sought and acted upon as part of any such assessment.

Whilst I understand the public health considerations, I believe it is important that teachers take all necessary steps to ensure that my child is included in the life of the school, and is not left feeling isolated.

I would be grateful for a response to this letter within seven working days.