**Template letter #1: where face masks/coverings are being worn by teachers in classrooms (Scotland)**

I am the parent of a deaf child who is a pupil at this school. I am aware that my child is being taught by teachers wearing face masks/coverings in the classroom.

I am writing to complain that I do not believe there has been sufficient consideration of the impact that this will have on my child, particularly in terms of their ability to access learning and their mental health and emotional wellbeing. I would like to request that steps be taken to ensure that my child is not disadvantaged.

I note that the Government has said that face coverings should be worn at all times by staff and young people in secondary schools in classrooms, in communal areas and when moving about the school.

I would like to draw your attention to [Scottish Government guidance](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reducing-the-risks-in-schools/) which states that specific consideration must be given to the use of face coverings with deaf children:

*“The impact of wearing a face covering for very young learners and/or learners with additional support needs, including any level of hearing loss, should be carefully considered. Communication for many of these learners (including hearing impaired young people) relies in part on being able to see someone’s face clearly… Scottish Government*[*guidance on helping others*](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/face-coverings/)*sets out supportive approaches when interacting with hearing impaired people. The National Deaf Children’s Society has also*[*suggested some ways in which communication with hearing impaired learners can be supported*](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/blog/face-masks-and-communication-coronavirus-info-for-families-of-deaf-children/)*, in circumstances where face coverings are a barrier to communication.”*

You will be aware that exemptions apply, allowing face coverings to be removed when communicating with people who lipread.

If it still felt that it necessary to allow face masks/coverings to be worn, I would like to request that clear face masks or coverings are worn. Clear face masks/coverings are not a panacea as they may still muffle speech, but I believe they are preferable to opaque face masks/coverings.

I would also like to request that an assessment is carried out of the impact that wearing face masks will have on my child. This should include a functional listening assessment, as well as an assessment of the communication and learning barriers that a mask introduces for my child.

This should also include a consideration of the reasonable adjustments that may be necessary. Under the

Equality Act 2010, 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. Whilst I understand the public health considerations, I believe it is important that teachers take all necessary steps to ensure that my child is able to access the curriculum.

The National Deaf Children’s Society [position paper](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/media/6209/face-covering-in-education-position-paper.pdf) on face masks in education sets out some possible reasonable adjustments. 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.

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