

Martha's Vineyard Public Schools

Face Coverings/Masks Policy

The Martha's Vineyard Public Schools are committed to providing a safe environment as schools reopen during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to public health experts, one of the best ways to stop the spread of coronavirus and to keep members of our school community safe is the use of face masks or face coverings. Therefore, in accordance with guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), the following requirements are in place until further notice.

A face covering that covers the nose and mouth must be worn by all individuals in school buildings and on school transportation, even when social distancing is observed. Exempted from this policy are students in Grade 1 and below for which masks are strongly encouraged, and when individuals are outside the school building. Masks with valves or vents may not be worn. Bandanas and neck gaiters/buffs are not acceptable face coverings for school. Masks must cover the nose, have ear loops, or are properly secured around the back of the head, fit snugly around the chin and sides of the face, and be at least 2 layers thick.

Schools will provide reminders to wear masks and how to remove them safely. Schools will have a supply of masks for staff and students if needed. Schools will provide education on safely disposing of soiled or unusable masks, and identifying spaces that are appropriate for mask breaks. Masks covering the nose and mouth are to be worn by students (required for grade 2 students and up, and strongly encouraged for pre-k, kindergarten, and grade 1), staff, visitors, vendors, and everyone else who is on school campus.

A face covering is required, regardless of age or grade, for anyone who is in the medical waiting room, is a close contact of a person with COVID who is diagnosed during the school day, and during school transportation/riding the bus.

Individuals may be excused from the requirement for the following list of reasons, per CDC guidance:

The individual:

- has trouble breathing
- is unconscious
- is incapacitated
- cannot remove the mask or face covering without assistance

In addition, mask or face coverings will not be required for anyone who has a medical, behavioral, or other challenge making it unsafe to wear a face mask or face covering. A written note from a physician is required for a requested exemption. A request for an exemption must also be approved by the principal in consultation with the school nurse. Parents may not excuse their child from the face mask requirement by signing a waiver.

Face masks/facial coverings may be removed

- During mask breaks
- While eating or drinking
- During physical education class following the health and safety guidelines
- If a staff member is alone in their classroom or office with the door closed
- When individuals are outside the school building

Face Shields

A face shield is primarily used for eye protection for the person wearing it. Therefore, CDC does not currently recommend use of face shields as a substitute for masks.

A face shield is not recommended to replace a face covering or mask. Wearing a mask may not be feasible in every situation for some people. For example, people who are deaf or hard of hearing—or those who care for or interact with a person who is hearing impaired. Only when a person has an exemption for wearing a face covering or mask shall a face shield be worn instead of a mask. Here are some considerations for individuals who wear a face shield.

- Face shield wearers should wash their hands before and after donning and doffing the face shield. Face shield wearers should avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth when donning and doffing
- Reusable face shields should be cleaned and disinfected after each use according to manufacturer instructions or by following [CDC face shield cleaning instructions](#)
- Disposable face shields should only be worn for a single use and disposed of according to manufacturer instructions.

A student's mask or face covering is to be provided by the student's family. Staff members are responsible for providing their own face coverings. However, the district will supply a disposable face covering for individuals who arrive at a building or on school transportation without an acceptable face covering.

If students are in violation of this policy, the building principal will consult with the parents/guardians to determine whether an exemption is appropriate.

Violations of this policy by staff will be handled in the same manner as other violations of School Committee policy. Visitors in violation of this policy will be denied entry to the school/district facility.

This policy will remain in place until rescinded by the local School Committees.

SOURCE: MASC – August 2020, CDC