



**ombudsman
do leanaí
for children**

FAQs: Facemasks in schools for children aged 9 years and up

OCO view:

We do not give public health advice in relation to Covid 19 but we have a role in monitoring how the public health guidelines are being implemented and communicated across schools. The Ombudsman has called for any such measures to be closely monitored so it is for the shortest time possible for children.

Do you support the wearing of facemasks for primary school children from 3rd class up?

We do not decide on public guidelines but we have been clear that there needs to be some flexibility for children. The guidelines in place recommend the wearing of facemasks but there are exemptions and there is room for parents and schools to work together on this.

What if my child is sent home because he/she doesn't have a mask?

Department of Education guidance states that **'it is not intended that any child will be excluded from a school in the first instance'**, and that **'schools should engage pragmatically and sensitively with parents'**. The OCO has said from the outset that there should be flexibility and that no child should be excluded from school because they don't have a mask. We would encourage you to talk to your school principal about this.

My school doesn't recognise my child's need.

Department of Education guidance says that schools should engage pragmatically and sensitively with parents and we would encourage you to talk to your school principal about this.

Is this a children's rights issue?

The OCO considers the rights of children in all of the work that we do. From a rights perspective, exceptional measures must be legitimate, necessary and proportionate. The Ombudsman has called for measures to be closely monitored so it is for the shortest time possible for children.

We are dealing with complaints and queries that come to us about individual children on a case by case basis. We are engaging with the Department of Education and with relevant bodies on this issue and others relating to the impact of Covid 19 on children.