



As part of school safety measures to limit the spread of COVID-19, mask use for Grade 4 to 12 students, and all school staff, is mandatory as of September 16, 2021. While risk cannot be eliminated at school, mask use when combined with other strategies such as hand hygiene practices, frequent cleaning, and physical distancing, can contribute to lowering the risk of exposure and transmission.

The Grande Prairie Public School Division is required to follow government direction and does not have the authority to not comply with government expectations. Exemptions will be made for students and staff who are unable to wear a mask due to medical or other needs.

Mask Use in GPPSD Schools

Grades 4 through grade 12 students and all staff members must wear a non-medical face mask that covers their mouth and nose while attending an indoor location within the school unless the student or staff member:

- is seated at a desk or table within a classroom where the desks, tables and chairs are arranged in a manner to prevent persons who are seated from facing each other and to allow the greatest possible distance between seated persons (may be less than 2m);
- is consuming food or drink in a designated area;
- is engaged in physical exercise;
- is separated from every other person by a physical barrier;
- is unable to wear a non-medical face mask due to a medical concern or limitation and has worked with school administration for an exemption.

ECS through grade 3 students while at school do not have to wear a non-medical face mask, however we are asking those who are able to wear a mask, to do so.

Grade 3 students in a combined grade 3/4 classroom will be required to wear a non-medical face mask.

ECS through grade 12 students in our division, are required to wear a mask at all times when they ride the school bus and at transfer points.

Staff members in a designated area at the front of the class with at least two meters of physical distance from the closest student or those providing care or assistance where a non-medical face mask would hinder that caregiving or assistance do not have to wear a mask.

Visitors in our division are required to wear masks.

Face masks shall be considered an article of clothing for a student. As such, they are subject to the same conditions as other articles of clothing in each school's dress code.



Best Practices for Individual Mask Use

Posters illustrating proper mask use will be displayed in classrooms and teachers will review the *Guidance for Wearing of Non-Medical Face Masks for the General Public* with their students during the start of school.

Reusable masks that are not damp or dirty that will be re-worn prior to washing should be stored in a clean, breathable bag or container. Students should carry a backup mask.

The Government of Alberta recommends that non-medical face masks should be made of multiple layers of fabric, fit securely against the face, allow for clear breathing, and can be laundered. Ripped or torn masks, and those that are soiled or visibly wet should not be worn. Schools will have disposable masks available in the office if a student forgets theirs.

The Exemption Process

Individuals with health related or complex needs may request an exemption from wearing non-medical face mask by completing the exemption form and speaking to an administrator in the school.

Exemptions are best discussed in person with the school principal or vice principal to understand the identified needs of the student or staff member and to help ensure they receive the required support.

Exemptions to mask requirements for all staff in all school settings and students in grades 4-12 may include:

- Persons who are unable to place, use or remove a non-medical face mask without assistance;
- Persons unable to wear a non-medical face mask due to a mental or physical concern or limitation;
- Persons consuming food or drink in designated areas;
- Persons providing care or assistance to a person with a disability where a non-medical face mask would hinder that caregiving or assistance and
- Persons engaging in services that require the temporary removal of the non-medical face mask.

If your child has a mask exemption from 20/21 please contact the school to discuss the exemption carrying forward.