

### **Specific concerns in relation to children**

29. Children have negligible risk of serious morbidity or mortality from Covid-19<sup>xlv</sup>. They play a minimal role in transmission<sup>xlvi</sup>, supported by the data showing that teaching is a low-risk occupation<sup>xlvii</sup>. **In children, potential benefits of face coverings are expected to be minimal. It is therefore vital to ensure there are no harmful effects.**
30. There are **no published studies investigating the effectiveness of face coverings in children** in reducing transmission, morbidity, or mortality. **Children are likely to wear masks incorrectly and touch their faces, which will increase the risks to their respiratory health.** The increased risk of **facial dermatitis and acne** is specifically relevant for teenagers, as it may **negatively affect their body image and consequently their mental health.**
31. Inhaling sufficient oxygen is vital for optimal health, particularly for children whose brain development and function (allowing optimal learning) relies on adequate oxygen supply. **The long-term effects of face coverings on brain development, educational attainment, or any other aspects of children’s physical and mental health, have never been studied.**
32. The Education Act 1996 (Part 1, Chapter 2)<sup>xlvi</sup> asserts that **schools have a statutory duty of care towards pupils, in relation to their mental and physical well-being, and a duty to promote and provide for education and development of children.** Yet, this recently published Government document acknowledges that **face coverings “can have a negative impact on learning and teaching”<sup>xlix</sup>.** A group of **70 Flemish doctors stated that “mandatory face masks in schools are a major threat” to children’s development** and reported an increasing number of children presenting with **anxiety, sleep problems and behavioural disorders<sup>l</sup>.**
33. The only published **impact assessment on mask wearing in children** is a German registry, reporting results from **parents, who entered data on a total of 25,930 children.** The average wearing time of the mask was 270 minutes per day. **Impairments to children, caused by wearing face masks, were reported by 68% of the parents.** These included **irritability (60%), headache (53%), difficulty concentrating (50%), less happiness (49%), reluctance to go to school/kindergarten (44%), malaise (42%) impaired learning (38%) and drowsiness or fatigue (37%)<sup>li</sup>.**
34. Experts have raised concerns, not only regarding **potential harms to children’s physical and mental health, but also to their academic, social, and emotional development.**

xlv <https://www.bmj.com/content/370/bmj.m3249>

xlvi <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32596514/>

xlvii <https://www.gov.scot/news/coronavirus-covid-19-in-schools/>

xlvi <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents>

xlix <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/>

<sup>l</sup> <https://www.brusselstimes.com/news/belgium-all-news/health/130480/face-mask-obligation-in-school-major-threat-tochildrens-development-doctors-say/>

<sup>li</sup> <https://www.researchsquare.com/article/rs-124394/v1>

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