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Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

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Susan Daniels OBE
Chief Executive
The National Deaf Children's Society
By email: Susan.Daniels@ndcs.org.uk

15th October 2020

Dear Susan,

Thank you for your letter of 11 September and further email of 12 October, regarding the impact of face coverings on communication for hearing-impaired children. I apologise for the delay in responding and would be grateful if you could share my response with your co-signatories.

My department is incredibly conscious of this issue and am extremely keen to hear any examples of good practice in this area, so that we can work together to ensure the communication needs of children are met in these challenging times.

I appreciate that the wearing of opaque face coverings can cause difficulties for many children and young people who are deaf or hearing impaired to be able to lip read, or for those with other needs who rely on facial expressions to be able to communicate fully. So we plan to update our guidance to say that, should staff and/or pupils need to wear face coverings in and around their educational setting, they should consider wearing clear face coverings if needed to meet the needs of their pupils and students.

I am aware that my officials are meeting with Ian Noon from NDCS on Monday 19 October. My officials are keen to hear Mr Noon's concerns and to ascertain best practice examples with respect to clear face coverings to help support communication with deaf pupils in schools.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education