# supporting students in specialisT schools to not touch staff face coverings

All students will benefit from specific support to not touch face coverings worn by others. Face coverings are a new feature for most, if not all students. As adults, we cannot assume that students will immediately understand the rules for face coverings. Our task is to teach students the rules for face coverings and reinforce their behaviour for following the rules.

## all students benefit from being explicitly taught rules

New rules for wearing face coverings should be approached in the same way for any new or modified school rule. All students need to be taught the rule, not simply informed about it. Some suggestions include:

* Incorporate rules for face coverings into teaching the other expected behaviours in your school.
* Face covering rules must be associated with a school value, for example “being safe”, so that students understand the reason for the rule.
* Consider how to associate face covering rules with other rules such as “keeping hands to ourselves”.
* What resources are used to teach the expected behaviours for face coverings? Teaching behaviour should be approached in the same way as teaching an academic task.

Schools implementing tier 1 of schoolwide positive behaviour support (SWPBS) with fidelity will have processes for whole-school teaching and reinforcing expected behaviours. These existing processes should be used to incorporate teaching behaviours for face coverings.

## some students might require additional instruction

All students learn differently, and some students might require more supports for learning expected behaviours. Classroom teachers know how their students learn best, so teachers should consider if any additional resources may be required to improve learning expected behaviours for face coverings. Some suggestions include:

* Verbally and gesturing re-direction: “Hands down, that is being safe”
* Providing pivot-praise to other students in close proximity who are practising “safe hands”
* Provide students with a covering to handle so that they become familiar with the object itself
* Demonstrate putting a covering on and off for students so they can see how coverings are applied
* Incorporate face coverings into the curriculum. For example, use stories which feature characters wearing coverings, use coverings as objects of identification
* Create teaching materials: matching pictures of coverings; identifying staff with coverings on

## some students may need individual learning intervention

There may be a small number of students who need individual intervention for learning behaviours associated with face coverings. This will require tailoring teaching to the specific communication needs of the student, matching the teaching to the function of the student’s behaviour, reinforcing the student demonstrating the expected behaviour(s), and taking steps to make face coverings a predictable part of coming to school. Some suggestions include:

* Think about the common scenarios where a student is touching an adult’s face covering. Why do you think the student is doing this? Could it be because:
  1. The student wishes to touch or have the covering? If so, how can the student be provided with an alternative covering?
  2. The student receives attention when they reach for a covering on a person’s face? If so, how can the student be provided with attention without the needing to reach for a covering?
  3. When the student reaches for a face covering, they are directed to do something else, effectively helping them to avoid a task at hand? How can adults make sure a student remains engaged in the task when they respond to the behaviour?
* If there is suspicion that a student cannot identify an adult wearing a face covering, consider how the student can be supported to identify particular adults, for example:
  1. Using photographs of adults not wearing and then wearing face coverings
  2. Attach a photograph of the adult not wearing a covering to the adult themselves
  3. Consider using a face shield so that the wearer’s face is visible to the student
* If social stories are used for teaching a particular student, use these for teaching behaviours for face coverings
* Try and wear the same type of covering each day so that students become familiar with the size, shape, colour.
* Environmental supports: “(Student visual) is working with (staff visual) today”

## other things to consider

For teaching expected behaviours to be successful, there must be ways of monitoring that all staff in the school are teaching the same expected behaviours. This can be achieved by:

* Having approved lesson plans for teaching expected behaviours
* Specifying days and times when this teaching is to occur
* Use a coaching approach to supporting staff to develop the skills and confidence to teach these expected behaviours
* Adopt peer observation to provide feedback on teaching expected behaviour

Students use new behaviours more effectively when they are reinforced for demonstrating the behaviour. How does your school acknowledge and reinforce students doing the right thing, in this case not touching face coverings? What is the most effective way of acknowledging and reinforcing individual students?