



SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

January 2022

Happy New year to you all.

Hopefully you have had time to rest and recoup ready for the start of term. We are aware that the government has now made an announcement and in light of that we have made some recommendations below. We know that cases are more prevalent in younger children. Data from the Office for national statistics show that school age children have been among the most likely to be infected, with more than **one in twenty** primary age children and **one in thirty-five** secondary age children testing positive for covid in December. As of Saturday 1st January 2022, the daily case rate of positive cases was 162,572 and the total number of positive cases for England was 13,100,458. This time last year the government closed schools and placed England into a lockdown when the positive case rate was lower than today. For the government to ignore this problem is irresponsible.

The Prime Minister's statement back in November 2021 with regard to the new Omicron variant did not mention schools. The reintroducing of face coverings in shops and public transport is something GMB support. What the Prime minister did not set out was plans for schools to help slow the spread of this highly transmissible variant. However, the DfE have asked for students in year 7 upwards to wear face coverings in communal areas, classrooms and libraries until the end of January. GMB believe this does not go far enough to protect the whole school community. With schools returning this week and the lack of access to lateral flow tests GMB believe this will have a big impact on staff and pupils in keeping them safe.

GMB are asking Head teachers to go one step further and ensure all school staff and pupils are safe by reviewing and updating their risk assessments and making them as robust as they were during the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021. The risk assessment should include

- Regular handwashing for pupils
- Social distancing in communal areas for staff and pupils
- Rooms to be ventilated at every possible opportunity
- Regular high level of cleaning of communal areas, bathrooms, handrails etc
- CEV, CV and pregnant staff to have their individual risk assessment in place so they are protected in their place of work. If they cannot be kept safe then we ask they are either given work in another role or work from home on full pay. If this is not feasible then medical suspension on full pay
- Staff who need their booster jab to be able to do so at the first opportunity and if this needs to be in working hours it not to be at a detriment to their pay

- Staff who have a reaction to the booster are not to have it affect their sickness attendance and for it to be recorded separately
- Air purifiers to be provided if possible
- The return of class or year group bubbles to minimise contamination
- Staggered start and finish times
- Minimising visitors to the school site
- Large gatherings to be held online for example assemblies and staff meetings/training
- That all staff and children in all education settings should wear face coverings in communal settings and the classroom
- That the Risk Assessment should review staff shortages and where necessary implement safe measures to protect staff and children in consultation with GMB reps and staff

We are asking these safety measures be put in place as soon as practicably possible to keep the spread of the new variant out of schools to keep the schools and wider school community safe. The GMB website has useful guidance on the school's noticeboard with useful links and guidance for covid safety measures in schools. Below is a link to the GMB letter template asking for a copy of the school risk assessment. It is a Head teacher's legal duty of care and responsibility to have a risk assessment in place to keep staff safe in the workplace and GMB workplace reps and staff have the legal right to be consulted on the risk assessment and propose safety measures where appropriate.

[schools_january2020_letter1.pdf \(gmb.org.uk\)](#)

GMB Southern region are keeping a close eye on the situation and if there are any changes or updates to school closures or the implementation of new guidance GMB will send out further correspondence and information as and when it is announced. In the meantime, if you need any advice, please contact one of us in the region for support. We will come straight back to you with support.

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GMB Southern Region Schools