

Reference guide for return to school (Primary)

Following the First Minister's announcement (19 February 2021) that early years and primary 1–3 pupils would return to school full time from 22 February, with the rest of the pupils returning from 15 March, the NASUWT has prepared this reference guide for members, summarising our key advice on what you should do to prepare for your return to the workplace.

You should not be expected to attend school before 15 March, unless you are already engaged in face-to-face teaching, to 'prepare' for the reopening.

A. Prior to returning to work

- Look carefully at the updated Welsh Government Operational Guidance for schools: <https://gov.wales/operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-15-march-html>.
- Ensure that you have received a revised copy of your whole-school risk assessment and that the control measures in place have been updated to relate to the new guidance.
- If you are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and have a letter from the Chief Medical Officer, you should not be returning to the workplace. Contact your headteacher immediately if you have been asked to return.
- If you are in one or more of the other higher risk groups – clinically vulnerable, BAME, or disabled – then you are strongly advised to request an updated individual risk assessment as a matter of urgency to determine how you can safely return to work, or if you should continue working from home.
- If you are pregnant, you require an updated individual risk assessment as a minimum, but you should also refer to the UK-wide Government Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-forpregnant-employees/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees>. In particular, if you are over 28 weeks, you will need to ask your employer how they are complying with the following advice: *'All employers should consider both how to redeploy these staff and how to maximise the potential for homeworking, wherever possible.'*
- Ask about access to COVID tests and confirm that you will be provided with supplies of lateral flow COVID-19 tests to you and to pupils for home testing and advised of the procedures to follow.
- If you work with additional learning needs (ALN) pupils, enquire about eligibility for COVID-19 vaccination.

B. When you return to work

- If you are not confident that all of the COVID control measures have been put in place, raise this with your line manager in the first instance. The NASUWT incident reporting form can be used as a helpful tool: <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/health-safety/coronavirus-guidance/fullreopening-of-schools/complying-with-covid-19-risk-assessments.html>.
- Check that arrangements have been put in place to enable you to maintain physical distancing from pupils and other adults.
- Check that arrangements have been put in place to enable pupils to maintain physical distancing from each other. If you are informed that this is not possible, ask for a detailed explanation as to why it is not possible.
- Check that arrangements are in place to ensure the wearing of face masks/coverings in communal areas.
- If you teach a composite class that includes pupils older than Y3, check that the school has put in place appropriate provision to support remote learning for these pupils that does not generate excessive and unnecessary workload burdens.
- Consider whether there is appropriate ventilation in any rooms where you are expected to work.

C. Member support

If you encounter any situation where the required safety measures from the Government Guidance or your own individual risk assessment are not being implemented, you should immediately raise your concern with your line manager and allow opportunity for them to promptly address and rectify the situation.

If having done so, and the situation is not rectified satisfactorily and you still believe you are at risk, then please contact rc-wales-cymru@mail.nasuwt.org.uk immediately.

If there is an NASUWT Workplace Representative in your school, and the issue identified is considered to be a collective matter, then your representative should raise your concern with the headteacher or line manager and your Local Association Secretary.

We recognise that some members may still experience high levels of anxiety about returning to the classroom, even where a school has all of the control measures in place. This is a completely normal reaction to what is a very unusual and often stressful situation. It is widely recognised that the physical and mental health of the profession has been badly affected by the pandemic.

The NASUWT's longstanding advice to any member in this position is to seek advice from your GP for support if you feel you are unable to return to work. Your health and wellbeing has to be your top priority.



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