

Date: 25 November 2021

Our Ref: 211125/Somerville S A/PR/LB

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

By email: [CabSecES@gov.scot](mailto:CabSecES@gov.scot)

Dear Shirley-Anne,

## **VENTILATION IN SCHOOLS**

Following the issue of the latest iteration of **Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools** on Monday 22 November, the NASUWT is disappointed that the updates therein do little to address concerns we have repeatedly raised at a series of meetings with COSLA, PHS and the Scottish Government about appropriate ventilation in schools.

The Union is clear that teachers should be entitled to:

- regular access to CO2 monitoring;
- a clear strategic plan agreed, in consultation with trade union representatives, for assessing and regularly reassessing ventilation, and prioritising areas where concerns have been raised, areas which impact on teachers who are vulnerable/disabled/BME and areas where high-risk activities are taking place;
- the transparent sharing of results of ventilation assessments;
- mechanisms to ensure remedial work is undertaken as a priority;
- clear guidance on the use of CO2 monitors and the processes to be followed in the event of inappropriate levels being indicated.

The views of members, as gathered since the return from the October break, make clear that these legitimate expectations are not being met and indeed our members' experiences paint a very different picture to that claimed by Scottish Government and COSLA representatives.

At the most recent COSLA/Workforce Implementation Group meeting (11 November 2021) it was suggested that 100% of teaching areas in Scottish schools would have access to fixed or mobile CO2 monitoring by the following day (12 November).

Casework feedback to us since then suggests that this aspiration has not been achieved and, in any case, the fact that large numbers of local authorities are using mobile monitors to take occasional readings from different teaching areas is wholly inadequate in establishing an effective preventative strategy for the spread of COVID-19. We have also had reports of monitors being installed inappropriately and widely differing interpretations of trigger points where any action is required.

It was useful at the COSLAWIG meeting on 11 November 2021, that there was agreement that Health & Safety Executive advice indicating that **action should be taken once a monitor registers 800 parts per million (ppm)** should be followed; while this information has been shared with our activists, feedback illustrates that far too many local authorities maintain that no action is required until a reading of 1500ppm. We have also received reports of some schools and local authorities using 'average' readings which span periods of time when no one is present in teaching areas, which leads to unacceptably misleading outcomes.

The continuing failure of Scottish Government to provide clear guidance setting out the steps to be undertaken when poor air quality is established in a teaching area is simply unacceptable. The current guidance offers little more than the suggestion that teachers 'open a window' and provides no suggestions as to what solutions may be available should that single action fail to remedy the air quality.

Equally, where windows have been opened to improve air quality and temperatures drop, the only suggestion provided has been to wear more layers of clothing. Such advice ignores the requirements of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations) 1992 and the Approved Code of Practice on Working Regulations 2013, which outline what are acceptable temperatures and what steps should be taken to achieve comfortable temperatures. The absence of information on these regulations within the current Scottish Government guidance is a significant oversight.

The Scottish Government needs to urgently review its '**Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools**' to take account of these concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Roach', written in a cursive style.

Dr Patrick Roach  
**General Secretary**