



The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Wednesday 26 May 2021

Dear Secretary of State

We are writing as representatives of the vast majority of school and college staff to call for the immediate publication of the data held by the Government and Public Health England (PHE) on the total number of variant cases linked to schools and colleges. This data is needed for reasons of transparency and to ensure the right safety measures are in place.

Education unions have repeatedly requested this data since early May. It should have been released in advance of the change in guidance on face coverings, which came into effect on 17 May.

On 12 May, the DfE and PHE gave a written undertaking that data on variants and schools would be released in the weekly surveillance report published each Thursday. But two weeks later, no data has been made available. More worryingly, the Department is now saying that it cannot even commit to a date when this vital information will be published.

There are growing concerns around the variant B.1.617.2 and reports from areas such as Bolton that cases are growing fastest amongst school age children, with cases in Bolton higher now than at any point during the pandemic.

This has been an extremely difficult year for pupils, staff and school/college leaders who rely on the Government to be transparent. Any suspicion that data is being deliberately withheld is of deep concern.

Urgent answers are now needed to the following questions:

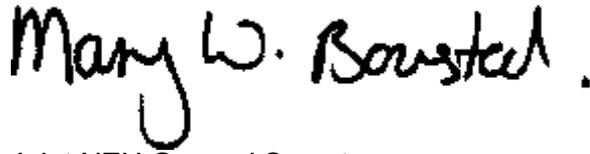
- When did PHE first share data with ministers on variant B.1.617.2 spread in schools/colleges?
- Did the Government instruct PHE not to release this? If so, why?
- Will the Government now commit to sharing the data immediately? If not, why not?

We look forward to your early response.

Yours sincerely



Joint NEU General Secretary



Joint NEU General Secretary



Avril Chambers



NAHT General Secretary

GMB National Officer



UNISON Head of Education



NSEAD General Secretary



ASCL General Secretary



NASUWT General Secretary



Unite National Officer