

Date: 21 July 2020

Your Ref:

Our ref: 200721/Williamson G/PR/FC

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

NASUWT

The Teachers' Union

Hillscourt Education Centre
Rose Hill
Rednal
Birmingham
B45 8RS

General Secretary
Dr Patrick Roach

Telephone: 0121 453 6150 Facsimile: 0121 457 6208

E-mail: nasuwt@mail.nasuwt.org.uk Website: www.nasuwt.org.uk

Dear Gavin,

Covid-19 Test and Trace

As you know, the NASUWT is committed to seeing schools open to all pupils where it is safe for them to do so. Your current guidance identifies the importance of the system of Test and Trace as part of the strategy to combat the spread of Covid-19 and to prevent outbreaks in schools. However, the NASUWT believes that further guidance in this area will be needed prior to the start of the autumn term.

Your Guidance for full opening of schools identifies three essential actions that schools must take in response **to any Covid-19 infection, as follows:**

- **Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process**
- **Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community**
- **Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice**

We note that your Guidance confirms that 'staff and pupils must not come into the school if they have symptoms, and must be sent home to self-isolate if they develop them in school.' However, the Guidance does not require staff or pupils to be tested for Covid-19 nor does it place any expectation on schools to report suspected cases. We believe that the Guidance for schools needs to be clear on this point.

Whilst the Guidance confirms that persons should self-isolate where they have developed Covid-19 symptoms, it is unclear whether schools have the right to refuse to admit a pupil who has symptoms but who has not received a negative test for Covid-19. We believe that clarity on this point is needed.

The Guidance makes clear that schools must 'take swift action when they become aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for coronavirus'. However, whilst the Guidance makes clear that the local health protection team will contact the school in the event that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus has attended the school, it is less clear whether there is a positive expectation on schools to also notify the health protection team.

The Guidance states that 'schools should not request evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.' However, we would also suggest that it is important to make clear to schools that they may refuse to admit or welcome back pupils in circumstances where a period of self-isolation has not expired or where a negative test result has not been forthcoming.

I have raised with you previously our concerns about the importance of sharing information with schools where there has been an overall rise in confirmed cases in a locality. This information is of critical importance to schools as part of their arrangements to ensure the health and safety of children and staff, and in order that they can proactively meet the expectations set out in your Guidance 'to have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are effective, working as planned, updated appropriately considering any issues identified and changes in public health advice'. We would therefore welcome further clarity from your Department as to the nature, scope and frequency of information that schools can expect to receive in respect of Covid-19 cases in their areas when schools open fully this autumn.

I look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely

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

Dr Patrick Roach
General Secretary