



Dear

We are writing as unions representing school leaders, teachers, and support staff, asking you to take urgent steps to help keep pupils safe in schools within your locality.

As you will be aware, Government data shows that Covid-19 cases among school-aged children surged to a record high in recent weeks.

This has already resulted in over 204,000 pupils being absent from school on 30 September for Covid-related reasons. We now have more pupils absent either with, or suspected of having, Covid than at any point in the pandemic. Staff absence is also impacting on education with some children having to be sent home because there aren't enough staff to teach them, putting staff and leaders under enormous strain. According to ONS statistics published on 7 October, 53,000 children have persistent long covid symptoms for 4 weeks or more and 29,000 have been affected for 12 weeks or more.

It does not have to be like this. Many other countries in Europe that have kept in place proportionate mitigation measures in schools, whilst rolling out a vaccination programme, have not experienced the back-to-school surge in cases that we have seen in England.

We are therefore pleased to see that a growing number of councils are now using the freedoms they have under the Department for Education guidance, - reflecting their responsibilities for public health, and under health and safety legislation - to bring in additional mitigations in schools.

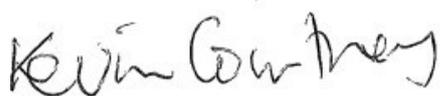
Staffordshire County Council for example is 'urging' all its schools to stop whole-school assemblies and bring back classroom bubbles, face coverings, pupil contact-tracing and staggered start, finish and lunch times because it is "time to be proactive" about rising cases.

Other additional mitigations have been recommended in areas including City of Wolverhampton Council, Cambridgeshire, Cumbria County Council and in some London boroughs. For example, siblings of children diagnosed with Covid should be kept at home until their test comes back negative, and the reintroduction of face coverings.

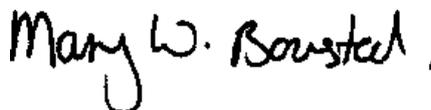
To help keep pupils and staff safely in schools we would therefore urge you to issue advice which strongly encourages **all** schools in your areas to introduce such additional measures immediately, discuss that advice with our local representatives, and involve them in monitoring matters if you do not already do so.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require further information. We would also greatly appreciate it if you could let us know what measures you will urge your schools to implement.

Your sincerely



Joint NEU General Secretary



Joint NEU General Secretary



GMB National Officer



Unite National Officer



UNISON Head of Education



NASUWT General Secretary