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# NASUWT

## The Teachers' Union

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General Secretary  
**Dr Patrick Roach**

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

Dear Gavin

In previous correspondence and in meetings with you, the NASUWT has made clear what we believe are the tests which need to be applied to any proposals to extend the opening of schools.

The Prime Minister's statement on 10<sup>th</sup> May, announced some changes to the current COVID-19 restrictions but was, quite rightly, qualified by strong caveats about the speed of change and by the overwhelming concern to protect public health.

The Government has now released its 'Plan to Rebuild', which will be supplemented for the education service by advice from the DfE.

The Government guidance stresses that *'It is not a quick return to normality'*, goes on to say *'The overriding priority remains to save lives'* and states in reaching its conclusion that *'the worst possible outcome would be a return to the virus being out of control'*.

These are welcome statements and if these outcomes are to be realised, it is essential that the preparation and planning that schools undertake, for any extension of the current opening arrangements, must be driven by the protection of the health, safety and welfare of staff and pupils.

However, the challenge for the Government is how to ensure that Government guidance is followed and implemented and that there is an acceptance by schools of the priority which must be given to health, safety and welfare. Schools are used to operating with excessive freedoms and flexibilities, which has created a culture where they believe they are able to flout legislative provisions and where Government guidance is given little status or importance.

The Government may wish to trust schools to do the right thing but if they do not, if they fail to follow this guidance and accept and take seriously their legislative duties to provide a safe working environment, then this time the consequence will be that people will suffer serious illness and some will die.

The NASUWT, therefore, believes that the DfE must:

- be unequivocal in making clear to schools its expectations with regard to the health and welfare of staff and pupils;
- remind employers of their duties under the Health and Safety legislation and that these duties must be discharged fully;
- have a clear strategy of what action it will take if the guidance is not followed and staff and pupils are put at risk.

The NASUWT is clear that no teacher or child should be expected to go into a school that is not safe and until it is demonstrated that it is safe for them to do so.

I look forward to discussing this with you at our regular meeting this week.

Yours sincerely,

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

Dr Patrick Roach  
**General Secretary**