

COVID-19

DfE Guidance on schools and colleges fully reopening in September 2020

On 2nd July 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) published its detailed guidance to support schools and colleges to fully reopen in September and for early years and childcare providers to do so from 20th July.

The NASUWT welcomes the fact that finally the Government has taken note of the Union's representations and produced COVID-19 guidance which reminds employers and schools of their statutory duties and legal obligations with regard to health and safety and makes clear the essential steps that they must take to safeguard the welfare of all staff and pupils.

Everyone wants to see the safe return of pupils to schools. However, the Government's ambition for the full reopening of schools in September, will cause heightened anxiety among teachers and parents across the country in the absence of a clear, national plan to secure public confidence that a safe return is assured. Without this, there will be continuing confusion and uncertainty.

A key step in building confidence will be for the Government to provide the scientific evidence on which its decisions to relax the protective measures in schools and to allow entire year-group cohorts to return have been made and to make clear what account is being taken of the latest evidence of virus transmission among 18 year-olds, which contributed to the local lockdown in Leicester.

The NASUWT is reviewing the DfE Guidance in detail and will be making representations to the Secretary of State for Education on:

- the discrepancies between the safety measures being applied to schools and other workplaces;
- the serious omissions, particularly in relation to equality impact;
- the need for continuing protections for teachers who are clinically or extremely clinically vulnerable and the importance of ensuring that the decisions on wider reopening do not further widen racial disparities in COVID-19 transmission and deaths;
- the need for additional funding and resources to support the implementation of the crucial health and safety measures, including the intensified cleaning and hygiene requirements;
- the introduction of a clear health and safety inspection and enforcement regime to give parents and teachers the reassurance they will need.

In the meantime, it is important for members to remember that:

- the DfE Guidance relates to the arrangements for September 2020 and there should be no change to the arrangements currently in place in schools for this term;
- there has been no relaxation of any of the COVID-19 requirements for schools for this term;

- members who are currently homeworking should continue to do so;
- there has been no change to the Government Guidance for those who are clinically or extremely clinically vulnerable, pregnant, for those who have a disability or for teachers who are BAME;
- employers and schools will begin to make plans for the September reopening this term. Members should engage fully in the development of these. However, this should be carried out remotely and members should not be required to attend meetings on site;
- there should be no expectation from employers that either teachers or headteachers will be available during the Summer holiday period to work on the arrangements for September. If the planning cannot be concluded by the end of term, then the timetable for the admission of pupils at the start of term will need to be deferred.

The NASUWT will be working with employers at local, regional and national level to represent and protect the interests of members.

The Union will keep members informed of developments.

Members are requested to please continue to monitor their emails and the NASUWT website for updates.

If you have any issues or concerns, email: advice@mail.nasuwt.org.uk

The links to all of the DfE Guidance are below:

Guidance for full opening of schools

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>)

Guidance for full opening of special schools and other specialist institutions

(<https://www.gov.uk/search/all?organisations%5B%5D=department-for-education&order=updated-newest&parent=department-for-education>)

Guidance for further education and skills providers

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision>)

Guidance for early years and childcare providers

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>)



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