

Date: 17 November 2020

Your Ref:

Our ref: 201117/Williamson G/PR/FC

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson, MP
Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
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NASUWT

The Teachers' Union

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General Secretary
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Dear Gavin,

The NASUWT is becoming increasingly concerned that there is an increasing lack of transparency in the reporting and release of figures around the numbers of staff testing positive for Coronavirus in schools.

The NASUWT simply fails to understand why, as reported in an email dated 6 November from Adrian Gough, the DfE has asked Local Authorities not to share data on confirmed cases in schools. Openness and transparency are crucial if the profession is to have confidence that schools are, as the Government repeatedly asserts, safe.

NASUWT members are already concerned that there are insufficient safeguards in schools. When combined with misleading statements issued around the prevalence rate in education staff compared to other professions, attempts to withhold information will only stoke fears that the Government is trying to hide the true extent of transmission in schools and the impact this is having on the profession. This is further compounded by the fact that data released by some local authorities does indeed appear to contradict the Government's position around transmission in schools.

The fact that at a meeting on 16 November DfE officials appeared unable to state what the process is for reporting positive cases in staff is also deeply troubling and indicates the Department currently is adrift on this matter.

As a matter of urgency, we ask the Government to improve transparency in this issue, including by clarifying the process that schools are following for reporting confirmed cases in staff and issuing guidance to all employers making it clear that they must provide any data relating to confirmed positive cases when requested from trade unions, including the equality impact of Coronavirus transmission in schools. We also ask that the DfE issue weekly updates on the number of confirmed cases in staff and pupils in schools, along with the prevalence rate in these groups compared to the wider population.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Patrick Roach
General Secretary