

COVID-19: Health and Safety Checklist

The COVID-19 pandemic has required schools to make significant changes to their working practices in order to remain safe and to secure and provide continuity of learning for pupils.¹ The demands facing teachers and school leaders are unprecedented and mean that employers must take all possible steps within their control to ensure that all staff are supported as effectively as possible.

The NASUWT has published an extensive suite of guidance and support materials on managing COVID-19 in schools. However, given the rapidly changing circumstances during the pandemic, it is important that members continue to stay updated on latest developments and advice via the NASUWT website.

The NASUWT's Frequently Asked Questions on the website www.nasuwt.org.uk/CoronavirusFAQs are available in the first instance where members have questions or concerns about practices in their workplaces.

Where concerns raised by members relate to whole-school or employer-wide policies and practices, it is important that members alert the NASUWT as soon as possible.

The NASUWT coronavirus checklist provides a list of questions that will enable members to continue to work safely and effectively during the pandemic.

Members can use the NASUWT coronavirus checklist to:

- (i) protect and safeguard their health and safety and ensure that their workload and working practices are manageable and sustainable;
- (ii) assess whether their employer's practices are appropriate and acceptable;
- (iii) raise any concerns with their line manager/headteacher/principal; and
- (iv) alert the NASUWT to specific issues affecting the maintenance of safe and sustainable working practices in their schools.

(continued overleaf)

¹ Reference throughout to schools also includes members in Sixth Form Colleges, Further Education Colleges, Early Years and Alternative Provision.

CORONAVIRUS HEALTH AND SAFETY CHECKLIST

- 1. Are you expected to undertake activities that are in breach of your employer's risk assessment or the relevant Government guidance, or has your employer failed to undertake a recent health and safety risk assessment?**

Employers are required by law to undertake a competent health and safety risk assessment, in consultation with all employees or their representatives. Your employer should have carried out a risk assessment, in consultation with staff, covering all activities that teachers are required to undertake, and this should be updated on a regular basis or when circumstances change. The employer's risk assessments should be accessible, kept up to date and communicated to all staff to ensure that they are clear about the procedures they are expected to follow. If no risk assessment has been provided to employees, members should request a copy from the line manager/headteacher/principal and notify the NASUWT immediately. Further guidance on restrictions is available on the NASUWT website at: www.nasuwt.org.uk/ComplyingCovidRiskAssessments

- 2. If you are clinically extremely vulnerable, clinically vulnerable, pregnant, or in any other higher risk group (e.g. BAME background, disabled or aged over 60), have you been provided with an individual risk assessment?**

The NASUWT advises that employers should ensure that staff who are at high risk of becoming seriously ill or dying from COVID-19 are provided with an individual risk assessment. Additional measures to protect vulnerable staff may include alternative deployment or working from home. Where members are clinically extremely vulnerable (i.e. on the NHS shielding list), the Union expects that they will not be required to be in the workplace and should stay at home/work from home.

- 3. Are you able to maintain two-metre social/physical distancing?**

Schools should ensure that two-metre social/physical distancing is maintained between adults at all times. Seating arrangements in staff workspaces, staff rooms and dining areas, etc. should also be arranged to provide two-metre distancing at all times. Where social/physical distancing is not possible, other protective measures should be used, including wearing a face mask/visor.

- 4. Does your employer permit staff to wear face masks or visors in classrooms, corridors and communal areas?**

Schools should not prohibit any member of staff from wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g. face masks, visors, gloves and aprons) where a member of staff chooses to do so.

- 5. Are you expected to undertake close-contact activities (e.g. pupil restraint, administering first aid, etc.) without appropriate PPE?**

Schools should ensure that appropriate PPE is available for use by staff when required, including access to a fluid-resistant mask (FFP2 or FFP3 standard) or visor, gloves and aprons. Schools should ensure that the requirements for COVID-safe working are explained fully to pupils. They should also ensure that disciplinary procedures, and how they may be used, are explained fully to the school community to ensure safe working practices at all times.

6. Are you expected to work in classrooms or other workspaces that have not been cleaned?

Effective cleaning routines throughout the day are a key mitigation in the fight against COVID-19. The NASUWT advises that schools should maintain a record of cleaning undertaken and notify staff, as appropriate, of the dates and times when rooms have been cleaned and by whom. Classrooms, workspaces and other facilities must be cleaned between uses by different pupil bubbles/groups and when facilities are used by different members of staff during the day.

7. Are you required to undertake general cleaning duties?

Whilst teachers might wish to wipe down their own personal work areas, it is the responsibility of the employer to ensure that general cleaning is undertaken by trained cleaners, in line with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations.

8. Do you have appropriate access to facilities to undertake regular handwashing and/or hand sanitising?

Your employer should ensure that there are sufficient handwashing facilities and/or sanitiser available for all staff throughout the building, including in classrooms.

9. Are you expected to work in classrooms or other workspaces that are poorly ventilated, with excessive draughts, or that are cold?

Schools are required to ensure that classrooms are ventilated appropriately, with a sufficient quantity of fresh or purified air. In addition, staff should not be expected to work in areas where they will be exposed to uncomfortable draughts. Schools are required to confirm how they will meet the statutory regulatory requirements regarding ventilation, whilst ensuring that classrooms do not fall below the minimum required temperatures in which staff and pupils can be expected to work.

10. Are you required to take home pupils' books or other materials for marking?

Marking of pupils' work should take place with strict adherence to COVID-19 hygiene measures, including regular handwashing. The NASUWT advises that schools' marking and assessment policies should not require staff to take home pupils' books.

11. Are you expected to attend on site face-to-face parents' meetings, open days or other parental consultation meetings?

The NASUWT advises that schools should ensure that visits to the school are minimised wherever possible and that any meetings with parents or visitors to the school are properly risk assessed. Schools are encouraged to plan online parents' meetings, open days and parental consultation events.

12. Are you expected to use your own personal electronic devices and email accounts to contact pupils and/or parents at home?

Schools should also ensure that the personal privacy of staff is assured at all times by providing staff with suitable equipment or systems to undertake communications remotely, where needed, with parents or pupils. Schools should also ensure that any requirements for reporting to parents do not breach privacy rights under data protection legislation, or compromise child safeguarding requirements.

13. Are you expected to participate in drop-ins, learning walks or lesson observations that are outwith your school's risk assessment?

Schools planning to undertake classroom observations should have consulted with employees as part of the preparation and updating of their risk assessments. Schools should not be conducting lesson observations, learning walks or drop-ins where these are not addressed explicitly in the school's risk assessment and control measures, or where such practices could breach the school's agreed risk assessment. Social/physical distancing and other control measures must be followed at all times whenever observations take place.

14. Does your school follow the national guidance and requirements on self-isolation?

Schools should insist that where staff or pupils display COVID-19 symptoms or test positive, they should self-isolate in accordance with the requirements of the national guidance. Where a person has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, either 48 hours prior to developing symptoms or 48 hours after the person developed symptoms, they should also be required to self-isolate.

15. Does your school permit staff to use the NHS Test and Trace App?

Schools should not request that staff ignore, switch off or otherwise disable notifications from the NHS App other than in permitted situations; for instance, where the phone is not with the teacher (i.e. it is in a locker).

16. Are you provided with the opportunity to take a lunch break during the day?

Teachers are entitled to a reasonable lunch break and other breaks away from the pupils. This is an important safeguard for staff physical and mental health and wellbeing. Where teachers remain with pupils at all times during the day, they are not having a break. It is not appropriate for an employer to make no provision for teachers to have a break away from the pupils.

Members should seek advice from the NASUWT if they have concerns about any whole-school or employer-wide practice that is impacting adversely on their workload and working conditions.



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