

ADVICE FOR MEMBERS IN SCHOOLS & ACADEMIES

KEY MEASURES

The following are key to reducing transmission of Covid-19 in schools.

- **Good hygiene including frequent and thorough handwashing and cleaning**
- **Appropriate cleaning regimes – These should include regular cleaning of areas and equipment (for example, twice per day), with a particular focus on frequently touched surfaces (from DfE Guidance)**
- **Good ventilation**

FACE COVERINGS

Face coverings should be worn in all communal areas by staff, visitors, and pupils in Year 7 and above, unless exempt. This control measure was introduced on 29th November and is in place until 20th December, when it is due to be reviewed. Given the new Omicron variant, it is unlikely this measure will be removed imminently but GMB London will keep you up to date with any changes.

Face coverings are different from face masks. Face coverings do not protect the wearer. Face masks (PPE) are designed to protect the wearer and are provided by the school.

BUBBLES

Bubbles were introduced early in the Pandemic to reduce mixing between pupils and adults in schools. The use of bubbles ended with effect from 19th July 2021 and there is no indication from DfE that they will be reintroduced. DfE Guidance currently states any reintroduction of bubbles would “need to take account of the detrimental impact they can have on the delivery of education”.

NEW TESTING FOR CLOSE CONTACTS

As of 14th December, DfE now recommends daily rapid testing for contacts of Covid-19. Adults who are fully vaccinated and all children and young people aged between 5 and 18 years and 6 months identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 are strongly advised to take a LFD test every day for 7 days and continue to attend school as normal, unless they have a positive test result.

WORKING FROM HOME

DfE Guidance states that “School leaders are best placed to determine the workforce required to meet the needs of their pupils. School leaders will need to consider whether it is possible for specific staff undertaking certain roles to work from home without disrupting to face-to-face education.” If you were previously working from home, you may wish to consider requesting being allowed to do so again, if your role allows.

CLINICALLY EXTREMELY VULNERABLE

Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), and high or higher-risk individuals are **not being advised to shield again**. This is because of the COVID-19 vaccine programme but if you have any concerns, you should discuss them with your Head Teacher. You can also contact your Local Branch or schoolsteamlondon@gmb.org.uk for advice.

PREGNANCY

Employers are required to carry out a risk assessment for pregnant employees. These workplace risk assessments are usually carried out by the employer in conjunction with occupational health. Pregnant employees should only continue working if the risk assessment advises that it is safe to do so. The employer should remove or manage any risks and if this cannot be done, arrangements for suitable alternative work or working arrangements (including working from home) should be made and if this is not possible the alternative is suspension on your normal pay.

Working in a school involves considerable public contact which may carry a higher risk of exposure to the virus and a risk assessment needs to consider this. Your employer should ensure appropriate risk mitigation in line with recommendations arising from workplace risk assessment. Guidance states covid vaccination is recommended for pregnant women and those who are unvaccinated should take a more precautionary approach. This is because unvaccinated pregnant women have an increased risk of becoming severely ill and of pre-term birth if they contract COVID-19.

VENTILATION

Good ventilation reduces the amount of Coronavirus in the air and therefore reduces the risks from airborne transmission. Rooms should be aired before and after use and ventilation should be maintained when rooms are occupied. In poorly ventilated rooms, the more people in the room and the longer they are in it, the greater the risk of transmission. Activities such as singing, shouting and physical exercise generate higher levels of aerosols thereby increasing the risk, so it is important to think about this when looking at whether there is adequate ventilation. The use of CO2 monitors can provide a useful general indication that areas or rooms within a building may not be adequately ventilated and schools should now have these. Mechanical ventilation and air filtration systems can be used in poorly ventilated spaces.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

Risk assessments are key in protecting you at work and if they are not completed properly or shared then risks may not be identified and therefore not addressed. The schools risk assessments should be comprehensive and identify all risks, **before and after** control measures have been put in place. **Existing risk assessments should be reviewed and updated with any changes.** Risk assessments should also detail how good ventilation is going to be achieved and maintained.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your local Branch or schoolsteamlondon@gmb.org.uk.

#membersfirst