



# SUPPORTING SUPPORT STAFF

GMB is concerned at the proposal for the wider reopening of schools and has repeatedly questioned the Government, along with other education unions, for the scientific evidence on which the decision has been made and the lack of specific evidence on the risk to staff, parents and the wider community of schools.

The following link details the Governments guidance on how Schools should reopen. There are many issues of concern within this, most notably the admission that young children cannot be expected to socially distance and the assertion that there is no requirement for PPE and GMB London has challenged these.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

---

Any return to work must be as safe as reasonably practical. You know your workplace and your role better than anyone and therefore it is important you have your say on any risk assessment that is completed for your role. Your Employer should consult with you on this risk assessment but if they do not, it is your right to ask to see it and put forward any concerns you may have.

This Coronavirus pandemic has already changed so much about our day to day lives and it will continue to do so. When you return to work you need to make sure you know how your role has changed or is different. We know the Government has set 1<sup>st</sup> June as the date for the wider reopening of schools but this is not something that can be rushed and your safety cannot be put at risk. GMB has put together a list of things you may wish to consider for how your role within school could now be affected and you may wish to discuss these with your employer, in advance of returning to work.

## **Catering Staff**

- Will 2m work spaces be marked out?
- How will staggered lunch times impact on your working hours?
- What catering will be provided? Will it be packed lunches or hot meals? How might this impact on your role and working hours?
- Are there any changes within your working environment, such as new hygiene or cleaning requirements you need to be aware of? If you have a medical condition which places you at greater risk from COVID-19, or live with someone who is vulnerable, have you spoken to your Employer about how this will be accommodated?

## **Classroom Based Staff**

- Are there specific pupils who may pose a risk because of challenging behaviours? If so, this needs to be risk assessed and PPE provided if there is any risk of spitting, coughing etc.



# SUPPORTING SUPPORT STAFF

- Will the small groups of children be led by Teachers?
- Will there be any one to one work and if so what will be the arrangements for this?
- What will be the social distancing arrangements for parents dropping off or collecting their children?
- Will staggered start and finish times impact on your working hours?
- What extra cleaning and hygiene measures are in place for shared spaces such as toilets and staff room?
- How will protocols for dealing with medical emergencies and first aid be affected?
- If you have a medical condition which places you at greater risk from COVID-19, or live with someone who is vulnerable, have you spoken to your Employer about how this will be accommodated?

## Cleaning Staff

- Are you aware of the Cleaning Guidelines for COVID-19 in a non- healthcare setting i.e. a school which can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>
- How will the new cleaning requirements impact on your working hours? Will you be expected to work longer or different times? How will these new guidelines affect your usual work within the school?
- Have you been provided with a supply of gloves, aprons and bags for disposing of the PPE and waste?
- Is there new equipment or cleaning products for you to use? Can you do this safely?
- If you have a medical condition which places you at greater risk from COVID-19, or live with someone who is vulnerable, have you spoken to your Employer about how this will be accommodated?

## Office Staff

- What extra cleaning and hygiene measures are in place for your workspace?
- Are there new cleaning protocols for shared equipment?
- Can you socially distance and are there signs to discourage people entering your office?
- Will you be dealing with parents or external visitors coming on to the site? What protective measures are in place for this e.g. social distancing, Perspex screens etc.
- If you are responsible for first aid or medical emergencies, what PPE will you have and are you aware of how COVID-19 impacts on any such practices?
- If you have a medical condition which places you at greater risk from COVID-19, or live with someone who is vulnerable, have you spoken to your Employer about how this will be accommodated



# SUPPORTING SUPPORT STAFF

## Site Manager

- How will the new staggered start and finish times impact on your role?
- Will you be expected to have contact with external visitors and contractors to site?
- Is there provision for the safe storage of waste under the new cleaning protocols?
- Will there be changes to the working hours of cleaning staff which may impact on you?

## SMSAs

- Will staggered lunch times affect your hours of work?
- How will social distancing be monitored and enforced in the playground? Will there be extra staff available to help with this?
- Have the first aid or medical emergency protocols changed because of COVID-19? If you have a medical condition which places you at greater risk from COVID-19, or live with someone who is vulnerable, have you spoken to your Employer about how this will be accommodated?

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q. What roles should be risk assessed?**

A. Every role within the school should have be risk assessed, along with all tasks and movements around the school environment. Additional risk assessments should be carried out for pupils, especially addressing any challenging behaviours as if there is any risk of spitting or coughing, PPE will be required.

### **Q. What happens if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus in school?**

A. Where the child, young person or staff member tests positive, the rest of their class or group within their childcare or education setting should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. As part of the national test and trace programme, if other cases are detected within the cohort or in the wider setting, Public Health England's local health protection teams will conduct a rapid investigation and will advise schools and other settings on the most appropriate action to take. In some cases, a larger number of other children, young people may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole class, site or year group. Where settings are observing guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, closure of the whole setting will not generally be necessary.

### **Q. Will school support staff be eligible for coronavirus testing?**

A. All staff and students who are attending an education or childcare setting will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario.



# SUPPORTING SUPPORT STAFF

**Q. I'm a teaching assistant and I have been asked to carry out cleaning duties – what do I do?**

A. Cleaning during the time of a pandemic is an important role and it is vital any cleaning, to be effective, is done with the proper cleaning materials and PPE. Therefore, GMB would not expect classroom based staff to be asked to undertake cleaning of toilets or classrooms. Good hygiene practice is essential so wiping down of equipment and resources is a reasonable expectation.

**Q. I live in a household with a vulnerable person. What should I do if I am told to return to school?**

For employees who live with but don't 'care' for relatives in the vulnerable groups the updated NJC guidance is clear that all options for working at home should be considered (including redeployment if practicable). The employer has a duty of care to the employee, so if the employee cannot work at home and the employer insists that they should attend the workplace, the onus is on the employer to do everything possible to mitigate risk of the employee 'taking the virus home' to their vulnerable relative. In the first instance you should discuss this with your Head Teacher and if need be raise with your GMB Workplace Representative/ Regional Officer.

**You can also send any questions or concerns to the GMB London Schools Team on  
[schoolsteamlondon@gmb.org.uk](mailto:schoolsteamlondon@gmb.org.uk)**