



Dear Head Teacher

Changes to Covid rules - urgent message from unions

As you'll be aware, on 21 February the Prime Minister announced the ending of many Covid measures.

Scientists and NHS leaders urged caution and warned against the removal of legal self-isolation and free testing, which will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable. The government's own SAGE advisors also warned about the speed at which new variants could spread. The message was clear: we all want a return to normal, but we are not out of the woods yet.

The Prime Minister, however, again refused to learn the lessons of the last two years and ploughed ahead with his decision to remove nearly all remaining safety measures.

Throughout the last two years it has been left to schools, headteachers, school staff, parents and unions to step up in the absence of national leadership and once again we will face this task.

We would ask that schools:

- Continue to recommend twice-weekly testing for staff in all settings, and pupils in secondary schools. Tests remain free till 1 April. Staff and pupils in specialist SEND settings, Alternative Provision, and SEND units in mainstream schools are already advised by the government to continue regular twice-weekly testing ([see DfE SEND guidance](#)).

- Remind staff, and pupils via parents, of the need to isolate if they test positive or have Covid symptoms to prevent the spread of Covid and disruption to face-to-face education, in line with [DfE/UKHSA guidance](#).
- Reassure staff that when they are isolating, they will continue to receive full pay and that these absences will not count towards trigger points, in compliance with the national agreements for teachers, leaders and support staff. Also ensure any contractors operating in your school do the same.
- Allow staff who are contacts of a positive case within a household to work from home where they are able, in line with DfE advice (DfE email to schools, 21 Feb) and [UKHSA guidance](#).
- Update your school's risk assessment and individual risk assessments to consider and mitigate any new risks, particularly to vulnerable pupils and staff, including those who are pregnant.

At a national level, as trade unions we will continue to put pressure on the government to do much more to support schools. We will push for an extension to free testing and for a higher profile national government campaign to promote vaccine uptake which has been stalling in secondary-aged pupils.

Thank you for all that you are doing to protect staff and pupils throughout this difficult time.

Yours faithfully

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