



27 October 2021

Dear Councillor,

We are writing as unions representing school leaders, teachers, and support staff, asking you to take urgent steps to help keep pupils safe in schools and avoid educational disruption within your area.

[The record surge](#) in Covid cases amongst school-aged children is now worryingly spreading into households and the wider community. Education staff are more likely to test positive for Covid than staff in other sectors, and 53,000 children were already suffering Long Covid symptoms according to the Office of National Statistics as of September. As a result, many local public health officials and NHS leaders are calling for additional measures in light of the huge pressures on the NHS and in a bid to avoid another winter lockdown.

It doesn't have to be like this. Many other countries in Europe that have kept in place mitigation measures in schools, whilst rolling out a vaccination programme, have not experienced the back-to-school surge in cases that we have seen in England.

Councils acting to protect children and their communities locally

A growing number of councils are now using the freedoms they have under the Department for Education guidance to bring in additional mitigations in schools and we are urging other councils to do the same.

Staffordshire County Council for example is encouraging all schools to introduce a range of measures including:

- stopping whole-school assemblies
- bringing back classroom bubbles and face coverings
- all close contacts of confirmed cases to get a PCR test
- reintroduction of staggered start and finish and lunch times

To take face coverings as an example, we know of at least fifteen local authorities which have advised their reintroduction in schools – from Cornwall to Calderdale and Trafford to Torbay.

Additional mitigations have also been recommended in areas including Cambridgeshire, City of Wolverhampton Council, Walsall, Cumbria County Council, Wakefield, Suffolk, Devon, Wiltshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham and in some London boroughs. For example in Cumbria, siblings of children diagnosed with Covid should be kept at home until their test comes back negative. In Scotland where case rates in children are much lower than England, they have retained masks and isolation of very close contacts.

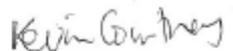
How you can help protect education & health

To help keep pupils and staff safely in schools we would therefore urge you to contact your council leadership and public health leaders calling on them to urgently recommend additional mitigation in all schools in your areas.

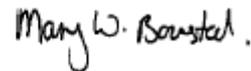
Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require further information at education@unison.co.uk If your council has already urged schools to implement additional mitigations, or is about to, please let us know.



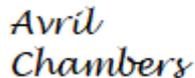
Jon Richards, UNISON
Assistant General
Secretary



Kevin Courtney, NEU
Joint General
Secretary



Dr Mary W. Boustead,
NEU Joint General
Secretary



Avril Chambers, GMB
National Officer



Jim Kennedy, Unite
National Officer



Patrick Roach,
NASUWT General
Secretary