



Schools & Academies in England

Member Update – 13th May 2020

GMB DEMANDS TO SEE THE GOVERNMENT EVIDENCE THAT HAS LED TO THEIR DECISION TO OPEN SCHOOLS MORE WIDELY.

GMB, the union for school support staff, is demanding Government publish the evidence for the phased reopening of schools on 1st June.

GMB demands safe work systems are in place across schools before the wider reopening. Only then staff can get on with their roles without having to worry about their safety.

GMB's priority is the safety and welfare of its members and GMB will work to protect the wellbeing of all school staff and children.

GMB members need to feel satisfied that risks of exposure to Covid-19 can be controlled and minimized. 96% of GMB members are concerned that lives would be put at risk by reopening schools on 1st June and less than 1% believe social distancing is achievable in a school.

GMB will continue to challenge the June 1st reopening date, GMB will be providing all School Support Staff members with a template letter to send to their Head Teacher in advance of any reopening.

Following on from the joint education union's statement last Friday. A further joint trade union statement was agreed on 13th May. GMB along with the other education unions have published a joint statement on the safe reopening of schools which is as follows:

Full text of today's joint union statement:

"We all want schools to re-open, but that should only happen when it is safe to do so. The government is showing a lack of understanding about the dangers of the spread of coronavirus within schools, and outwards from schools to parents, sibling and relatives, and to the wider community.



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“Uniquely, it appears, school staff will not be protected by social distancing rules. 15 children in a class, combined with their very young age, means that classrooms of 4 and 5-year olds could become sources of Covid-19 transmission and spread. While we know that children generally have mild symptoms, we do not know enough about whether they can transmit the disease to adults. We do not think that the government should be posing this level of risk to our society.

“We call on the government to step back from the 1st June and work with us to create the conditions for a safe return to schools based on the principles and tests we have set out.”

The principles and tests include (see full statement from Friday 8 May, linked to below):

- Safety and welfare of pupils and staff as the paramount principle
- No increase in pupil numbers until full rollout of a national test and trace scheme
- A national Covid-19 education taskforce with government, unions and education stakeholders to agree statutory guidance for safe reopening of schools
- Consideration of the specific needs of vulnerable students and families facing economic disadvantage
- Additional resources for enhanced school cleaning, PPE and risk assessments
- Local autonomy to close schools where testing indicates clusters of new covid-19 cases

Today’s statement follows [a longer statement to the Secretary of State](#) on Friday (8 May), which set out in full detail the principles and tests necessary for the safe reopening of schools. Along with GMB, it has been signed by AEP, NAHT, NASUWT, NEU, NSEAD, Prospect, UNISON and Unite.

GMB have been at the forefront in challenging the government to prioritise safety over a rushed lifting of the lockdown.

The Joint Unions represent millions of workers across education, and have written this statement to express our joint concerns and have set out a list of key tests that we believe must be met before schools can safely open for a wider group of pupils.

The reopening of schools will require agreement by employers and trade unions on a range of procedures to make sure schools are safe for everyone. These will include robust risk assessments in advance of schools and the conduct of these



assessments will be supported through the provision of clear national advice and guidance.

Ultimately the reopening of our schools will depend greatly on ensuring that families and carers are fully confident that allowing their children to return to school is safe. We fully understand that the majority of our members don't yet feel confident.

GMB understands what a worrying time this is for you as school staff and understand your concerns for pupils.

[GMB's Press Statement](#)



We need your help to help strengthen our call, so please do the following:

1 SHARE!

The joint statement [issued today](#), along with the joint statement [issued on Friday](#) from the GMB and other education unions with colleagues.

2 BECOME A GMB REP!

We are still recruiting new representatives throughout the lockdown so if you haven't got one in your workplace get involved.

3 RECRUIT!

Colleagues not in a union?
Invite them to sign up!