

All Schools Staff Noticeboard

Last update: 30 Jun 2025

Latest Bulletins

GMB Union Rejects Local Government And Schools Pay Offer

Posted on: 30 June 2025

GMB Committees representing members in Local Government and Schools met on Friday 27 June to consider the outcome of the National NJC pay ballot of members in response to the 2025/26 pay offer.

GMB members have voted to reject the 3.2% pay offer from the Local Government Association (LGA) for 2025/26. 77% of members voted to reject the offer from the employers. GMB will now be seeking a meeting with the Local Government Association to demand a better offer.

The offer is one of the worst in the public sector and is effectively a pay cut because of inflation. The offer was presented to the unions as a full and final offer without even holding meeting!

GMB will work with the Unison and Unite (the recognised NJC unions) to seek a meeting with the Local Government Association, consider the response of the Employers and then report back to members as soon as possible.

SSSNB Consultation: Share Your Views With The DfE

Posted on: 20 June 2025

Dear Members,



The Department for Education (DfE) is running a public consultation to gather opinions about the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB). The consultation aims to gather evidence and views on:

1. How to define 'school support staff' – to confirm which staff are within the SSSNB's remit
2. Current pay and conditions arrangements
3. Whether to include agency workers in the scope of the SSSNB in future legislation

It is important that school support staff feed into the consultation, so your voices are heard by the DfE.

The **consultation closes on 18th July** and can be completed via this link: [Setting up the School Support Staff Negotiating Body \(SSSNB\) – Department for Education – Citizen Space](#)

The DfE is hosting a Q&A drop-in session to answer questions and provide guidance to help with completing the consultation on Thursday 26th July. The meeting invite is below.

Session 2 details: **Thursday 26 June, 4:00pm – 5:00pm**

[Use this link to join the meeting](#): Meeting ID: 361 548 782 702 6 / Passcode: mR775Xj9

Dial in by phone: [+44 20 3321 5238,,3200061#](#)

Phone conference ID: 320 006 1#

Response To Digital Technology And AI Survey Letter



Posted on: 23 May 2025

Dear Members,

We have received a letter from Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education, in response to our letter to her concerning the findings of our Digital Technology and AI Survey.

Please read the letter here:

[sos-ai-response-letter-16-05-25.pdf](#)



Posted on: 12 May 2025

The GMB pay ballot covering all workers across local government, school & academies that follow National Joint Council (NJC Green Book) pay, terms and conditions across England, Wales and Northern Ireland is now open.

GMB members will have their say on pay and we now need you to take part in this important ballot and let us know if you are prepared to **accept** or **reject** the pay offer.

The closing date for the ballot is **20 June**.

GMB joint Local Government and Schools Committee representatives have discussed the full and final pay offer and are recommending a vote to reject the offer

A vote to reject is also your vote in favour of a move to a formal industrial action ballot.

From school support staff to refuse workers, from town hall workers to social workers, hundreds of occupations are covered by this pay offer. (Approximately 1 million workers plus are covered).

2025/26 Local Government & Schools Pay offer is for one year and is as follows:

- With effect from **1 April 2025, an increase of 3.2%** (pro rata for part-time employees) to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all **NJC pay points 2 to 43** inclusive and on all pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer (in accordance with Green Book Part 2 Para 5.42)
- With effect from **1 April 2025, an increase of 3.2% on all allowances** (as listed in the 2024 NJC pay agreement circular dated 22 October 2024)
- With effect from **1 April 2026, the deletion of pay point 2** from the NJC pay spine

The employers also responded to other elements of the pay claim as follows:

Union Claim	Employer Response
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A clear plan to reach a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour	Rejected.
One extra day of annual leave for all staff	Rejected.
A reduction in the working week by two hours, with no loss of pay	Rejected.
The ability for school staff to take [at least] one day of their annual leave during term time, with no loss of pay	Rejected.

GMB is now asking you to vote on the pay offer.

GMB Joint Local Government & Schools Committee

The National Joint Committees have considered the full and final offer in detail and recommend that members vote to **reject** the offer, as it is inadequate and the employers refused to negotiate and simply asked the Local Government Association to present this full and final offer to the unions.

A vote to reject is also your vote in favour of a move to a formal ballot for industrial action. For a formal ballot for industrial action to take place, GMB will need at least half of our members to vote for a rejection.

What happens next is up to you. We need all our members to have their say on pay. Make sure you get your ballot and vote. If you have not received your ballot, please contact your local GMB branch/office, details at [GMB Regions](#) | [GMB](#).

Throughout this ballot we need you to help build bargaining power in your workplace so please do one or all of the following:

1. Once you have voted please encourage your work colleagues to cast their vote.
2. Become a GMB rep if you haven't got one in your workplace: gmb.org.uk/become-workplace-representative
3. Recruit a GMB member – colleagues not in a union? Sign them up here: gmb.org.uk/join

Please see this Frequently Asked Questions document for more information about the pay offer and ballot:



Digital Technology And AI In Education Survey Findings



Posted on: 28 April 2025

Dear Members,

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the Digital and Technology Standards and Artificial Intelligence in Education survey. We have analysed the responses to the survey in a report and written to the Secretary of State for Education to share your views and experiences with technology and AI with the Department for Education. You can read the letter here: [ai-and-technology-letter-sos-education-website.pdf](#)

Some key findings are:

- There is a lack of training of the Digital and Technology Standards – only 27% of respondents had heard of the Digital and Technology Standards before, and only 16% had received training on the standards.
- AI technologies are being used in schools – 17% of respondents said they or a colleague had used AI tools in school, and 16% told us they were aware of pupils using AI.
- GMB members are aware of both challenges and opportunities presented by technology and GenAI in education settings, but, overall, more members had concerns than didn't.
- Concerns included job security, plagiarism and cheating, loss of critical thinking and basic skills, misinformation, data security and a loss of human interaction in education.

You can read the full report here: [digital-and-technology-standards-and-ai-in-education-survey-summary-report.pdf](#).

NJC 2025/26 Pay Offer



Posted on: 23 April 2025

The National Employers (NJC) have made a full and final pay offer for 2025/26.

The recognised Unions (GMB, Unison & Unite) submitted a pay claim for:

An increase of at least £3,000 across all NJC spinal column points

In addition:

- A clear plan to reach a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour
- One extra day of annual leave for all staff
- A reduction in the working week by two hours, with no loss of pay
- The ability for school staff to take [at least] one day of their annual leave during term time, with no loss of pay

We have now received an offer for:

- With effect from 1 April 2025, an increase of 3.20% to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive and on all pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer (in accordance with Green Book Part 2 Para 5.42)
- With effect from 1 April 2025 an increase of 3.20% on all allowances (as listed in the 2024 NJC pay agreement circular dated 22 October 2024)
- With effect from 1 April 2026, the deletion of pay point 2 from the NJC pay spine

The employers rejected the other elements of the pay claim. Their position is:

A clear plan to reach a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour

- 'The Employers reject this element of the claim. In order to achieve this objective would require increasing the bottom pay point by 22.35 per cent over the period 2025-27. That, plus the subsequent knock-on effect of increases to all subsequent pay points would be



prohibitively expensive for councils at any time, not least during the current difficult financial circumstances.'

One extra day of annual leave for all staff

- 'The Employers reject this element of the claim. All NJC employees currently receive a minimum of 23 days' leave (with a further three days after five years' service), plus two extra statutory days, plus public holidays. Many councils have a more generous basic leave entitlement.'

A reduction in the working week by two hours, with no loss of pay

- 'The Employers reject this element of the claim in relation to a proposed 35-hour week (34 in London). Such a reduction would be out of line with norms in local government and would result in an increase in costs that would adversely affect local authority services.'

The ability for school staff to take [at least] one day of their annual leave during term time, with no loss of pay

- 'The Employers reject this element of the claim. With the impending reinstatement of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB), that will have responsibility for considering changes to pay and conditions for this group, we believe school employers in particular would have concerns about the NJC reaching a national agreement that gave all their non-teaching NJC employees the right to take "[at least] one day" off in term time. The cost of having not only to pay for that day but also for cover, would be significant at a time when schools are struggling financially and there is significant uncertainty about the SSSNB's remit and timetable.'

Your joint Local Government and Schools Committees will meet to discuss the final offer before we move to a full consultation of members.

More details will follow shortly.

NJC Joint TU Pay Claim 2025/26



Posted on: 31 January 2025

Dear Members,

We want to thank everyone who participated in the recent survey regarding your aspirations for pay this year.

The survey results were discussed at a joint meeting of the GMB National Local Government and Schools Committees on 16th January 2025. I am pleased to inform you that your feedback has been carefully considered, and it was unanimously agreed that GMB would ask for the following points to be included in this year's pay claim:

- A £3000 flat rate increase on all pay points. This would ensure that all Local Government and Schools workers receive at least an uplift of RPI plus 2%. (the RPI rate is forecast at 3.5% April 2025)
- School support staff – to be allowed to take 1 day of their current annual leave during term time.
- A reduction in the working week by two hours for Local Government workers

The NJC Executive made up of representatives from GMB, Unison and Unite, met on 24th January 2025 to discuss each union's proposed pay claim. Following thorough discussions and negotiations, a headline claim has been agreed for the joint union pay claim. The claim is:

NJC TRADE UNION SIDE PAY CLAIM 2025

An increase of at least £3,000 on all spinal column points.

In addition:

- A clear plan to reach a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour
- One extra day of annual leave for all staff
- A reduction in the working week by two hours, with no loss of pay



- The ability for school staff to take [at least] one day of their annual leave during term time, with no loss of pay

You can read the full pay claim here: [njc-pay-claim-2025-26.pdf](#)

This claim has now been submitted to the Local Government Association. Employers will be briefed on the joint union pay claim and we expect pay negotiations to commence in April. Further updates will follow in due course.

GMB NJC Pay Claim 2025/26 – Update



Posted on: 17 January 2025

Dear Members,

Following the NJC pay survey of GMB members, a joint meeting was convened of the

National Local Government and National Schools Committees on Thursday 16 January to discuss the GMB pay claim for NJC 2025/26. After much debate and consideration, the following GMB NJC pay claim for 2025/26 on behalf of GMB members was agreed.

- A £3000 flat rate increase on all pay points. This would ensure that all Local Government and Schools workers receive at least an uplift of RPI plus 2%. (the RPI rate is forecast at 3.5% April 2025)
- School support staff – to be allowed to take 1 day of their current annual leave during term time as a contractual right.
- A reduction in the working week by two hours for Local Government workers.

We would like to thank the joint National Local Government and Schools Committee for their input and work on this.

GMB are meeting with the National Joint Council for Local Government Services Executive Trade Unions (GMB, Unison and Unite) next week to agree the headline claims and arrangements before submitting the joint claim to the National Employers at the end of January 2025.



SoS For Education Responds To GMB Letter About Funding Crisis



Posted on: 13 November 2024

Dear Members,

You may recall on 9th October we published a letter we received from Angela Rayner SoS for Housing, Communities and Local Government in response to a letter from GMB concerning the funding crisis and were awaiting a response from SoS for Education.

We have now received a response from Bridget Phillipson regarding school support staff pay and high needs funding. There is also a commitment to look at the merits of collecting information on school support staff vacancies, which is welcomed. Please read the letter here:

[bridget-phillipson-response-09-11-24.pdf](#)

Kind regards,

Stacey Booth and Sharon Wilde, National Officers for Schools and Local Government

NJC 2024/25 London Pay Scales



Posted on: 29 October 2024

Dear Members

The circular for London pay scales the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 has been issued. You can read it via this link:

[london-payscales-01apr24.pdf](#)

NJC 2024/25 Pay Scales



Posted on: 23 October 2024

Dear Members,

Please follow this link to read the NJC pay agreement for 2024, which contains the new pay scales:

[lgs-pay-01apr24.pdf](#)

NJC 2024/25 Ballot Results



Posted on: 22 October 2024

Dear Member,

The National Pay Award for School Support Staff for 2024/25 has now been settled.

Unison and Unite ballots have now concluded and the majority of the 3 recognised NJC unions have accepted the offer.

The Local Government Association has been notified and official communication will be sent out as soon as possible.

We will be in negotiation with your employer to ensure you receive your pay as soon as possible.

We will also be preparing for next year's pay claim and look forward to hearing from you directly when visiting schools and in consultative surveys.

School Support Staff Negotiating Body – Letter From Bridget Phillipson



Posted on: 18 October 2024

Dear Members,



Please see follow this link to read a letter from Secretary of State for Education Bridget Phillipson in relation to the introduction to the employment rights bill and the reinstatement of the SSSNB: [sssnb-letter-to-gmb-17-october-2024.pdf](#)

Contained within the letter is a link to the Next Steps to Making Work Pay report.

The reinstatement of the SSSNB is due in part to your hard work and lobbying and we will continue to keep you updated with any more information we receive.

Curriculum And Assessment Review – Regional Events Update



Posted on: 11 October 2024

Dear Members,

The Curriculum and Assessment Review is hosting two online webinars and nine events across England during October and November. [Online registration](#) for the events and webinars is currently open.

The purpose of the events is to gather the views of experts, teachers, parents, school and college leaders and pupils, to inform the review.

Attendees will have the opportunity to hear directly from the chair of the Review, ask questions, discuss key topics and themes with other attendees, and feedback thoughts directly to the panel.

Please attend these events where possible to share your views with the review.

These are the confirmed venues, dates and times:

South West – Future Skills Centre, Exeter College, Exeter – Monday 21st October – 1pm – 4pm
East of England – Cambourne Village College, Cambridge – Wednesday 23rd October – 1pm – 4pm
East Midlands – Malcolm Arnold Academy, Northampton – Thursday 24th October – 1pm – 4pm
London – Westminster Kingsway College, London – Monday 4th November – 4pm – 7pm



Online Webinar – Tuesday 5th November – 4pm start

West Midlands – Ormiston George Salter Academy, West Bromwich – Monday 11th November – 1pm – 4pm

South East – Folkestone Academy, Folkestone – Tuesday 19th November – 1pm – 4pm

Yorkshire and Humber – Doncaster College, Doncaster – Thursday 21st November – 4pm – 7pm

North East – Wyvern Academy, Darlington – Tuesday 26th November – 1pm – 4pm

North West – The Oldham Academy North, Oldham – Wednesday 27th November – 4pm – 7pm

Online Webinar – Thursday 28th November – 1pm start

Kind regards,

Stacey Booth

National Officer

GMB Writes To Secretaries Of State About Funding Crisis



Posted on: 9 October 2024

Dear Members,

GMB has written to Angela Rayner, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education, highlighting the funding crisis in Local Government and Schools.

The main ask is “...for an increase in ringfenced financial assistance to support both local government and schools’ employers for the purpose of paying the wages of these public service employees for



2025/26..."

You can read the letter here: [20240830-gmb-public-sector-pay-to-dfe.pdf](#)

We have received a response from Angela Rayner, which you can read here: [mhclg-response-20221.pdf](#)

We are yet to hear from Bridget Phillipson. When we receive a response we will share it with you.

Kind regards,

Stacey Booth and Sharon Wilde, National Officers for Schools and Local Government

Curriculum And Assessment Review



Posted on: 7 October 2024

This bulletin concerns members in England only

Dear Members,

The Government are undertaking a review of the Curriculum in England and want to hear your views, please take some time to read this bulletin about the review and take part, it is important for your voices to be heard:

[gmb-member-bulletin-curriculum-and-assessment-review-07-10-24.pdf](#).

Please do also share the bulletin and link to the review with your wider networks, including family and friends, as the Government want to hear from a wide range of stakeholders. This information is detailed in the bulletin.

You can read the letter from Bridget Phillipson, the Secretary of State for Education, calling for the review here: [letter-from-secretary-of-state-to-becky-francis.pdf](#).

Kind Regards,

Stacey Booth

National Officer



Posted on: 11 September 2024

This bulletin concerns members working in England only

Dear Members,

GMB School Support Staff members play an essential part in delivering education to children across the UK. You know better than anyone the pressures and demands on your job and that is why we do our best to stay in touch and listen to what you have to say. Whether that is through meetings in schools, member surveys, or through the regional and national GMB schools committees, your voice informs what GMB campaigns on and advocates at the highest levels.

One example of taking your voice to the heart of the decision-making process was a recent meeting that I and GMB General Secretary, Gary Smith, attended with Bridget Phillipson MP, the new Labour Secretary of State for Education.

The meeting was a huge change from what we experienced over the last 14 years, and we are positive about the prospects for a decent working relationship with government. We share in the aspirations of this government to drive up standards for children, but we were clear that in order to achieve those aspirations, government must deliver on a number of key areas, including equality of pay, Term Time only contracts and SEND reform. That's what our members tell us is important and that's what we've stressed to the government.

Over the coming weeks and months we will be working hard on a number of key areas, in particular on the reinstatement of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB). We want this to be delivered in a way that works for our members, with the appropriate professional recognition you deserve and a platform to be able to negotiate fair pay, terms and conditions. I will come back to you with more on this soon.

Your engagement in the issues that matter for school support staff is incredibly important. Your voices must be the driving force of change in the education sector, as you know best what needs to change and why. If you want to get involved and help lead the debate over the future of your profession, please contact me at schools@gmb.org.uk.

For far too long, school support staff have been the hidden professionals of education. Let us use this opportunity to shine a light on the work you do and together deliver change on the things that matter to you.



Kind regards,

Stacey Booth

National Officer

LGBT+ Schools Policy – Letter To Secretary Of State



Posted on: 2 September 2024

Dear Members,

Please see GMB letter to the Secretary of State to ask for updates on two areas of education policy that affect GMB's significant membership in schools as well as our LGBT+ members and our members who are parents of LGBT+ children: [bridget-phillipson-letter-lgbt-schools-policy.pdf](#).

Minimum Service Levels (MSL) Update



Posted on: 12 August 2024

GMB has been campaigning against the introduction of minimum service levels in Education and other public services that was driven through by the previous government in 2023.

The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 ("The 2023 Act") was legislation that allowed employers to issue a work notice imposing minimum service levels in their workplaces during periods of strike action.

If MSL had been introduced in Education, ministers would have been able to set MSL however the ultimate decision would have been left to Headteachers a move that was heavily criticised by unions and education leaders.

We have received formal confirmation from this new government that preparations are underway to reverse this restrictive legislation. **Please see below statement from the department for Education:**



We are writing to update you on the Government's plans for the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 ("the 2023 Act"). As you know, the 2023 Act enables minimum service levels (MSL) to be applied to specified services by regulations within these sectors during strike action. This Government believes that the 2023 Act unduly restricts the right to strike and undermines good industrial relations. As you are aware, our 'Plan to Make Work Pay' pledged to repeal the Act to give you the freedom to organise, represent and negotiate on behalf of workers.

We have begun preparations to repeal the 2023 Act as part of the forthcoming Employment Rights Bill. Amendments made by the 2023 Act to the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 ("the 1992 Act") would accordingly be reversed and any minimum service regulations would lapse automatically once the Employment Rights Bill comes into force. We are committed to ensuring that this legislation will be introduced in Parliament within the first 100 days of this Government.

Although the ability of employers to give work notices will legally continue until the 2023 Act is formally repealed and amendments to the 1992 Act are accordingly reversed, in this interim period we will be strongly encouraging employers to seek alternative mechanisms for dispute resolution, including voluntary agreements, rather than imposing minimum service levels on its workforce. We have written to Secretaries of State, Mayors and Devolved Administrations to make our position crystal clear and asking them to make this message clear to all employers they engage with. We will also encourage employers in the strongest terms to engage in negotiation and discussion with trade unions.

We also want to clarify that, following the High Court ruling in August 2023 which upheld the judicial review challenge on the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses (Amendment) Regulations 2022, employment businesses are prohibited from providing agency workers to cover the duties normally performed by a worker of an organisation who is taking part in a strike or other industrial action. In light of the High Court ruling, it is not necessary to repeal these regulations; however, the Government will formally update Parliament on the position in due course.

The Government will be issuing a public announcement confirming the plan to repeal MSLs. We will be in touch in due course to confirm once the new Employment Rights Bill has received Royal Assent and the 2023 Act has formally been repealed. In the meantime, we seek your engagement while the Bill passes through Parliament and continued cooperation in supporting good industrial relations.

- Department for Education

GMB has issued the following statement:

REPEALING "GIMMICK" MINIMUM SERVICES ACT RESETS INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS – GMB

Responding to the Government's plans to repeal the Minimum Services Level Act, **Rachel Harrison, GMB National Secretary, said:**



"This is a reset to industrial relations – and a vital step towards building a fairer world of work.

"The Minimum Services Level Act was always about the previous Tory Government shifting blame from themselves onto striking workers.

"The legislation would have led to prolonged strikes, entrenching industrial disputes, all while failing to tackle the root of problems in our public services. It was a gimmick – which is why it was never used.

"It is a refreshing change to see Government Ministers wanting to listen to frontline workers in our NHS, schools and public services rather than strong arm them with ill-conceived laws."

NJC And Schools Update



Posted on: 9 August 2024

Dear GMB Members

As you are aware, following the outcome of the NJC pay ballot for Local Government and Schools, the majority of GMB members who participated in the ballot decided to accept.

During the ballot process, many GMB members told us that, although they were disappointed with the pay offer, they are struggling to make ends meet due to the cost-of-living crisis and they did not want to experience delays in receiving the pay award for this year and just wanted the pay in their pockets now.

Unite and Unison also consulted their members on the offer which was rejected and have now decided to proceed to industrial action ballots.

Both unions will be conducting their ballots between the end of August and mid-October.

On the 29th of July the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, announced that this new government accepts the public sector pay review bodies recommendations in full. In response to this announcement the joint recognised unions, GMB, Unison and Unite responded in writing to the National Employers of the LGA.

Please see the **attached** link below to the joint letter.

[joint-union-letter-1-aug-2024.pdf](#)

On the 7th of August the National Employers responded to the joint trade union letter in writing.



Please see the **attached** response by clicking on the link below.

[emps-to-njc-tus-07aug24.pdf](#)

GMB will continue to campaign locally on issues that matter to you, our members, including funding arrangements, equal pay and campaigns around local industrial issues.

In September, GMB will launch school-specific local campaigns around issues that GMB members are telling us are important to them. Some of these include:

- **Make My Day** – GMB school support staff members overwhelmingly told us that they wanted an extra paid day off that they could take for personal or wellbeing purposes that they could take during term time. This was included in the joint trade union pay claim for 2024/25 but rejected by the National Employers.
- **SEND Campaign** – Supporting GMB members working in education settings.
- **(TTO) Term Time Only Working Project** – Aimed at addressing issues specific to term time-only working arrangements.

GMB NJC Ballot Update – GMB Members Accept The NJC Pay Offer 2024/25



Posted on: 9 July 2024

GMB are writing to advise that a majority of GMB members who voted in the recent NJC ballot voted to accept the NJC pay offer for 2024/25.

We understand that a significant number of GMB members were very disappointed in other elements of the joint trade union pay claim being rejected by the National Employers, including the additional days leave that School Support Staff would have been able to take in term time.

GMB will continue to work with the LGA on negotiating improvements to other conditions as promised in the pay offer.

GMB will also continue to work on national campaigns that matter to you. These include local government and schools funding campaigning and the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB)

Finally, we would like to thank all GMB members who participated in this years NJC pay ballot 2024/25.



Submission To Ofsted Big Listen Survey



Posted on: 3 June 2024

Dear GMB Members,

Thank you to those who took the time to complete the recent Ofsted Big Listen Survey, we received thousands of responses and submitted your views as a collective to Ofsted.

In each section Ofsted asked how important each set of questions were to you and each section overall came out as very important.

There were some very interesting written responses received anonymously. Thank you very much for those as it has enabled the feedback to Ofsted to be very comprehensive.

It was clear from an overwhelming number of written responses that you as support staff feel very disengaged from the Ofsted process. Many said you have worked in school for years and have never once been asked for your opinions. This was particularly common in the section on SEND. We know that support staff are working one to one with children who have high needs and you feel that you are not valued, with many saying;

"speak to staff who actually work with the child"

One comment received was ***"That in order to raise standards for children and learners with SEND you need adequate levels of support staff, more specialist units, and that the provision is the right one for the child and support movement to better suited provisions"***.

Another comment received was;

"Where the school has a facility for SEN children to learn, whether they have SALT, 1-1 support, more TA's are needed to support the children and be trained up so more staff can help with the SEN children"

We received many comments in relation to what Ofsted's priorities should be and there was a theme around ending one-word judgements, one comment received was.



"Removing the labels of Outstanding/good etc removing pressure and panic that school staff and leaders endure during the inspection, equal focus on children's personal, social, emotional developments and life skills, recognising that schools and staff do much more beyond the curriculum and traditional education".

Another theme was around taking into account staff and pupils well-being.

When asked about comments on Ofsted's current inspection many of you said;

"Inspectors should speak to non teaching staff to get a better overall impression of the general running of the school".

"The whole approach is designed to instill fear and stress"

"some inspectors appear to have an agenda"

The question about how Ofsted could best raise standards received comments such as;

"Give constructive feedback, not judgement, work with schools to help them achieve and be the best they can".

"Assert a position to influence progressive government investment in education and wants and needs and to acknowledge that underinvestment can be a factor in school performance".

We received thousands of comments in relation to Ofsted's openness, and how easy it is to provide feedback;

"This is the very first time I have had an opportunity to feedback"

"Inspectors need to spend more time with support workers to enable them to better understand how they support SEN students".

"Ofsted should talk to unions to improve measures in schools"

"Very draconian experience - puts staff under a huge amount of stress"

"The questionnaire to parents does not reflect the questions the parents think important or need to answer"

The section referring to safeguarding following the tragic death of headteacher Ruth Perry and the proposal from Ofsted that where Safeguarding arrangements are ineffective but the school is good in all other areas, they could withhold finalising a judgement for 3 months to allow the school to fix the issues, received a number of comments.



"I think safeguarding should be a separate issue as it is so important. I also think that the wording "inadequate" is a soul destroying term that erodes confidence and good will amongst staff"

"I feel the new approach would be better"

"It's a step in the right direction as being bad in one area currently nullifies even outstanding in anything else. A backwards way of doing things and punishing an entire school and community for a failing in a specific department or a perceived failing on Ofsted's end rather than working towards improving it to match the other standards"

You were asked for your comments on the new Ofsted Pause policy, introduced in January 2024, some received were;

"I agree with a pause, staff within the school should be made aware of it's use and be offered the chance to work together to improve - offer support to the situation. An informed team can support better than one that is not".

"I agree with this policy as it gives schools time to prepare for an inspection"

When asked if you had any comments on Ofsted's current inspection practices there were many, a selection are below;

"Inspections should happen without notice"

"Offer advice / positive support rather than criticism"

"Ofsted should also speak to staff who work with children with SEND to gain an understanding of the difficulties faced in mainstream schools on a daily basis"

Finally, Ofsted asked for comments on their openness and how easy it is to feedback to help them to improve, a selection of comments are below;

"A publication of outcomes from the survey would give staff the knowledge that change is something Ofsted can do, and we are more a team looking to improve to the best degree all schools. It is not about punishing schools but helping them change for improvement".

"When Ofsted are in they should speak to all staff not just teaching or senior leadership"

"Listen to staff without prejudice and understand we all want what is best for the children, which is better funding, more staff and access to resources. Understand that educational staff are now also acting as family support workers, social workers, speech and language therapists, child councillors, SEND practitioners all without additional pay or support or time".



The above comments were a very small selection from thousands received. Hopefully your views will be taken on board by Ofsted and a comprehensive report is produced and the feedback helps to inform change. Thank you again to all members who took part in this survey.

NJC 2024/25 Pay Ballot Update



Posted on: 24 May 2024

Dear Members,

The Joint Local Government and Schools Committee met today to discuss the NJC Pay Offer 2024/25 and agree the GMB position on the offer from the National Employers.

The National Joint Committees have considered the full and final offer in detail and agreed that they were disappointed with the offer, lack of meaningful negotiation and the length of time it has taken for the employers to respond to the unions pay claim. The Committee also expressed concern this offer is made without central funding from Government which means the financial responsibility will fall to local councils, employers, and schools' budgets.

The Joint Committee delegates have informed us, that GMB members are telling them that they do not want to prolong the ballot process. The Employer has put forward a full and final offer which demonstrates that the employer is not prepared to further negotiate.

The National Joint Committee have agreed not to make any recommendation on this year's offer, and they believe that the members should now decide.

The ballot timeline has been agreed and will open on **Monday 3 June 2024** and close on **Friday 5 July 2024** at midday.

NJC Pay Offer 2024/25 Update



Posted on: 20 May 2024

The National Employers (NJC) have made a full and final pay offer for 2024/25.

The recognised Unions (GMB, Unison & Unite) submitted a pay claim for:



An increase of at least £3,000 or 10% (whichever is greater) on all spinal column points.

In addition:

- Reviews of the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps in local government
- A 2-hour reduction in the working week with no detriment
- An additional day of annual leave for personal or well-being purposes (with term time only staff also receiving a full day rather than a pro rata amount, that they can use at any time, including term time)
- A phased approach to reaching a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour in a maximum of two years, sooner if possible

The offer that has now been received is for:

- With effect from 1 April 2024, an increase of £1,290 (pro rata for part-time employees) to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive.
- With effect from 1 April 2024, an increase of 2.50 per cent on all pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer (in accordance with Green Book Part 2 Para 5.41)
- With effect from 1 April 2024 an increase of 2.50 per cent on all allowances (as listed in the 2023 NJC pay agreement circular dated 1 November 2023)

In response to the other elements of the pay claim, the employer's position is:

- Reviews of the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps in local government."
- The LGA monitors councils statutory reporting of the Gender Pay Gap, providing annual updates through the LG Inform platform. This year, the LGA will be undertaking a programme of work which will include examining how councils report any pay gaps across their workforce, particularly in relation to employees with certain protected characteristics. The National Employers propose the NJC Joint Secretaries discuss options for working together to capture pay gap information that will be of most benefit to the sector.



Employers rejected the following elements of the pay claim:

- A two-hour reduction in the working week, with no detriment.
- An additional day of annual leave for personal or well-being purposes (with termtime only staff also receiving a full day rather than a pro rata amount, that they can use at any time, including term time)
- A phased approach to reaching a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour in a maximum of two years, sooner if possible.

Your joint Local Government and Schools Committees will meet to discuss the final offer received before we move to a full consultation of members.

More details will follow shortly.

Statement To Members At Ark Schools



Posted on: 22 March 2024

Dear Members,

Please follow this link to read GMB’s statement in response to Paul Marshall’s, co-founder and Trustee of Ark Schools, social media activity.

[joint-union-statement-to-members-at-ark-schools-21-march-2024-\(1\)-\(1\).pdf](#)

NJC PAY CLAIM 2024/25 UPDATE



Posted on: 29 February 2024



**WE'RE
WORTH
MORE**

29th February 2024

NJC PAY CLAIM 2024/25 UPDATE

Dear GMB Members,

We want to thank everyone who participated in the recent survey regarding your aspirations were for pay this year.

The survey results were discussed at a joint meeting of the GMB National Local Government and Schools Committees on 26th February 2024. I am pleased to inform you that your feedback has been carefully considered, and it was unanimously agreed that GMB would ask for the following points to be included in this year's pay claim:

- An increase of £3,000 or 10%, whichever is the greater, fully funded by the government.
- A clear plan to reach £15 per hour minimum rate by next year's pay implementation date 2025.
- An additional day's annual leave for personal / wellbeing purposes. For Term Time Only staff this equates to an additional day of leave during term time.
- End the current unfair term time only contract model and work with the NJC trade union side to develop a replacement that gives support staff the value and recognition they deserve.

The NJC Executive made up of representatives from GMB, Unison and Unite, met on 27th February 2024 to discuss each unions proposed pay claim. Following thorough discussions and negotiations, a headline claim that has been agreed for the joint union pay claim. This claim has now been submitted to the Local Government Association.

Employers will now be briefed on the joint union pay claim and we expect pay negotiations to commence in April. Further updates will follow in due course.



NJC PAY CLAIM: 2024/25

- An increase of at least £3,000 or 10% whichever is the greater.

In addition:

- Reviews of the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps in local government.
- A 2-hour reduction in the working week with no detriment
- An additional day of annual leave for personal or well-being purposes (with term time only staff also receiving a full day rather than a pro rata amount, that they can use at any time, including term time)
- A phased approach to reaching a minimum pay rate of £15 an hour in a maximum of two years, sooner if possible.

Would you like information on becoming a GMB Representative in your workplace? Email PublicServices@gmb.org.uk

Not a GMB member? Join today at www.gmb.org.uk/join

Please click the links below to read the joint Trade Union letter and joint Trade Union detailed NJC Pay Claim 24/25

[joint-tu-letter-final-29th-february.pdf](#)

[njc-pay-claim-2024-25.pdf](#)



GMB Responds To Government Consultation Seeking To Remove School Support Staff Rights To Strike



Posted on: 30 January 2024

GMB Responds to Government Consultation seeking to remove School Support Staff Rights to Strike

England, Scotland and Wales

30th January 2024

GMB is committed to fighting against the Conservative Government's attacks on workers' rights to strike. They have already brought in legislation which restricts ambulance service workers rights to strike in England and they are looking to extend this to the wider NHS, and across education services in England, Wales and Scotland.

GMB is fundamentally opposed to the introduction of Minimum Service Levels in schools, academies and other education settings on days of industrial action. Government should be focussed on addressing the issues causing union members to vote for industrial action – low pay, schools funding, staffing levels, stress and mental health, excessive workloads. But instead of working with unions to invest in education services and support the loyal and hardworking workforce, they are choosing to remove your basic rights.

You can read a copy of GMBs submission here:

[gmb-submission-minimum-service-levels-in-schools-academies-and-fe-jan-2024.pdf](#)

Not a GMB member? Join today – www.gmb.org.uk/join

Want information on being a GMB Representative in your workplace? Email PublicServices@gmb.org.uk

Minimum Service Levels In Schools, Academies And Further Education During Industrial Action



Posted on: 13 December 2023

Government Attacks School Support Staff Workers Rights to Strike



Minimum Service Levels in Schools during Industrial Action

England, Wales & Scotland

The Government are now consulting on introducing Minimum Service Levels (MSLs) during industrial action in schools in England, Scotland and Wales.

If MSLs are introduced, it potentially removes your right to strike and potentially gives your employer the power to force you into work on a strike day even if you voted in favour of taking strike action. It also gives employers the power to take formal action against staff if they refuse.

The First Ministers of Wales and Scotland have already joined Metro Mayors and Council leaders in England in pledging to do all they can to prevent minimum services levels being imposed. We also welcome the Labour Party's commitment to repeal the measures.

GMB strongly oppose the introduction of MSL's as it is an attack on workers' rights to strike and we will be submitting evidence into the consultation.

Help us to help you and let GMB know what do you think? Please take a few minutes to complete this short survey and tell us your thoughts.

You can complete the survey using this link or the QR code in the second link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/n14...>
[qr-code-msl-survey-final.jpg](#)

If you would like GMB to arrange a meeting in your school to discuss this or any other issue(s) **please contact your region.**

Minimum Staffing Requirement For Schools Legislation



Posted on: 23 October 2023

The Government has recently announced that it intends to use Minimum Staffing Requirement Legislation during any strike action taken in schools.

GMB the Union for school support staff does not believe that trying to remove school workers' right to strike is the way forward, and instead they should be concentrating on increasing schools funding so they can afford fair, funded pay increases for support staff without job losses, and then there would be



no need for legislation on minimum staffing! A government that is collapsing quicker than schools built with RAAC needs to talk with GMB about the staff morale and retention crisis rather than announce even more draconian anti Trade Union legislation.

GMB will be meeting with Government Ministers soon to discuss this issue and will update you accordingly. In the interim if you would like GMB to arrange a meeting in your school to discuss this or any other issue(s) [please contact your region](#).

2023/2024 PAY UPDATE



Posted on: 22 June 2023

GMB School Members voted overwhelmingly to reject the employers **UNFUNDED** pay offer of £1,925 for those working a full time 52 week contract.

However, School Support Staff on a Term Time only contract would only receive a fraction of this amount!

GMB notified the national employer of our result and urged them to come back to the negotiating table with a fairer offer that would be fully funded, unfortunately they declined this invitation and informed us that the current offer was their final offer.

We are left with no alternative. GMB will be issuing members with ballot papers on the subject of taking industrial action in the upcoming Autumn Term.

In the interim, GMB have written to the Governments Education Secretary to express our fears regarding over stretched school budgets and demand that they provide all schools with the necessary funding for an appropriate pay rise for support staff with immediate effect. We are currently awaiting a response.

We will update you with their response if and when we receive it!

ACAS Talks Outcome – Joint Unions Update 19 May 2023



Posted on: 19 May 2023

The joint unions' ACAS talks with REAch2 concluded on Monday – a detailed joint statement has now been sent out all staff.



In summary the key changes secured through the talks included:

- A commitment to no compulsory redundancies (CR) before 31 August 2024 – so a full school year of protection against CR for those at risk
- ‘Full’ pay protection for 18 months from 1st January 2024 – 30th June 2025. Followed by a further 6 months of further pay protection under the existing REAch2 pay protection policy (which protects 1 Scale above the salary for the new role – more information and examples will be provided in the trust’s revised documentation). Under the Trust’s original proposal a significant number of staff would have been facing big reductions in pay with only very limited amount of pay protection. So we now have ‘full’ protection for a period
- Commitment to jointly review the proposed job descriptions, job evaluation scores and salaries for the new roles
- An increase in the minimum number of hours in school offices – although this is still not enough in our view the trust have committed to review further during the remainder of the consultation
- Detailed consultation with schools and unions on the Trust’s proposed financial changes.

What happens next

On the basis of changes secured the formal failure to agree/pause will be lifted so that the consultation can resume and staff can get clarity on their position. This means there will be further opportunity for staff and unions to provide additional feedback during the consultation. Also, if need be, we can retrigger ‘failure to agree’ again if issues arise.

We want to thank staff for their patience during this process and for all the feedback you have provided via our survey and local meetings. This feedback was invaluable to the ACAS process and the improvements secured to date. We will be meeting the Trust on a regular basis for the remainder of the consultation period and in our next bulletin we will set out how staff can input further into our discussions with the Trust.

If you would like GMB to arrange a meeting in your school to discuss this or any other issue(s) please [contact your region](#)



If you have colleagues not in GMB please share the link with them and please encourage them to Join the GMB on this link: [Join GMB](#)

JOINT STATEMENT



Posted on: 17 May 2023



On Monday 15th May 2023 the JCNC trade union representatives and REACH2 met for a second time under the auspices of ACAS. The meeting was constructive, and progress was made.

More details of what has been achieved will be forthcoming by the end of the week.

Joint GMB, UNISON And Unite Statement On The Outcome Of Their Complaint Against The NEU



Posted on: 28 April 2023

Late last year, having failed to reach an agreement informally, the GMB, UNISON and Unite submitted a formal complaint to the TUC about the NEU's organising activities and recruitment of school support staff.

The complaint alleged that the NEU had actively sought to recruit school support staff and had intervened in pay negotiations (known as the NJC) between the three recognised unions and the local government employers, which cover school support staff.



This undermined a previous agreement between all four unions around two fundamental TUC principles: which essentially require unions not to recruit nor organise in areas already covered by other recognised TUC unions.

Following a TUC disputes panel hearing the TUC issued its judgement the end of March 2023, which has now been presented to the TUC General Council. This upheld all the complaints against the NEU.

The judgement reaffirmed that the NJC unions (GMB, UNISON and Unite) have exclusive bargaining rights for school support staff. It also explicitly stated that in future the NEU should take no action that could be regarded as organising activity among these workers.

In recognition that the NEU's activities had led to the recruitment of support staff, the TUC awarded financial compensation of £153,952 to be paid by the NEU in proportion to the NJC unions' school membership. The TUC also requires the NEU to put a statement on its website acknowledging the TUC's judgement. **This must say that the NEU cannot collectively bargain for support staff, will not seek recognition for them, nor undertake any campaign or organising activity that infringes on the NJC unions' bargaining arrangements.** Finally, the TUC asked the NJC joint unions to agree with the NEU a way for their members' views to be consulted on – however the NEU remains not party to any NJC negotiations.

The three unions would have preferred not to have had to bring the formal complaint in the first place but are satisfied with the outcome. Our hope is now that all unions can return to their previous good relationships and get back to joint campaigns for better investment in education and the school workforce.

GMB ADVICE TO MEMBERS REGARDING NEU TEACHERS STRIKES



Posted on: 26 April 2023

GMB respects the rights of other trade unions to take industrial action and supports the Teachers unions' in their strike action.

GMB members have not been balloted around Teachers Pay and by law cannot be called upon to take part in industrial action on Teachers strike days. **Members should work normally without undermining teachers who are on strike.**

What does "work normally" mean?

It means you should work in accordance with your contract of employment and only carry out your



usual duties/responsibilities for that day It means you should not take on any additional responsibilities that arise directly as a result of the teachers' industrial action.

This includes any staff employed as either HLTAs or Cover Supervisors.

Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) should only do 'Specified Work' with the support and/or supervision of a Qualified Teacher.

Cover Supervisors supervise students who are working to a lesson prepared by a Qualified Teacher, usually a classroom teacher.

If you are in either of these roles you should not be expected to take whole classes on the day of a strike if the teacher that normally supervises, supports or prepares your work is on strike.

What about picket lines?

The Code of Practice on Picketing says, "Everyone has the right to decide for themselves whether they will cross a picket line." If you decide not to cross a picket line because you feel at risk, you should contact your manager to explain that you are not on strike but you were too intimidated to cross the picket line.

What if the School is closed?

If your school is closed you should notify your employer that you are not on strike and you are available for work as usual, therefore you should be paid.

Childcare

GMB understands that arranging childcare should your child's school be closed as a result of industrial action is challenging and potentially expensive. Therefore, if you are unable to arrange childcare in this situation, your employer should offer you dependents' leave.

Restructure To Be Paused For Talks At ACAS (Also Take Part In Our Urgent Survey)

+

Posted on: 3 April 2023

Earlier this week the joint unions called on REAch2 to halt its damaging plan to centralise school reserves and funding, and to cut up to 26% of front-line school office staff. We made this appeal following concerning confirmation from the trust that under their plan the 'head office' central services accumulated debt (over £7.4m in 2022) and deficit will be coming out of school reserves and budgets



under the pooling arrangement. This is causing enormous anxiety about the impact on individual schools and job security. We also made clear that a cut of up to 26% of front-line office staff would have a severely detrimental impact on pupils and schools and should be halted to allow for meaningful consultation at the National Joint Consultative Committee (NJCC).

In response, the trust, has not only refused our reasonable request for a halt for meaningful consultation but it has also stated that:

“..... decisions around funding and how this is allocated is strictly within REAch2’s remit and is not a matter for the NJCC (Trade Unions).....”

This is clearly wrong and wholly unacceptable. These are public funds and must, therefore, be subject to proper scrutiny and accountability so as to ensure maximum funding for schools. REAch2 and the recognised trade unions are also signatories to a recognition agreement which makes clear that issues around finances such as these are within the remit of the NJCC.

In response we have reluctantly been left with no alternative but to trigger the ‘failure to agree clause’ in the ‘recognition agreement’.

What triggering the ‘failure to agree’ clause means?

In line with the failure to agree clause, the trust must now pause its plan and maintain the ‘*status quo ante*’ to allow for meaningful discussions to take place at the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). This pause acts to remove the immediate threat of the clock ticking down to the closure of the consultation; allowing more time to find a resolution.

What next

The trade unions understand this is a time of great uncertainty for staff and that’s why we have committed to meetings with REAch2 facilitated by ACAS at ‘anytime’ and ‘anyplace’. Please be assured we will keep you fully updated, and we are committed to urgently completing these talks and to finding a successful resolution.

In the meantime we want to thank you all for the feedback you have been providing to us. **We have a quick survey which we would ask all staff to complete to gather more evidence for the ACAS talks. Please be assured all individual responses will be treated with complete anonymity.**

<https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90551816/REAch2-proposed-restructure-cuts-staff-survey>

REAch2 Restructure And Centralisation Of Finances – Update From Unions 28 March



Posted on: 28 March 2023

Following a meeting with REAch2 on Monday to discuss the restructure and centralisation of finances the unions have written to the trust calling on them to agree to halt the proposal and timeline. See letter below for full details. We have asked the trust to respond by Wednesday this week. As soon as we have a response, we will issue another update so to keep you fully informed.

Unions letter to REAch2

'Good morning

Firstly, thank you and other REAch2 staff for your time yesterday. I am writing on behalf of the JCNC unions following our meeting.

It is our joint position that the trust's proposal and timeline is not fit for purpose and not achievable in the timescales set, due to the huge changes proposed to the school finances and school-based job cuts. Our specific (though not exclusive) concerns are as follows:

Financial concerns

There is a lack of detail and transparency about how much money schools will get and how this will be determined once their reserves are pooled in September 2023 and their GAG funding is pooled in September 2024. The trust confirmed at our meeting yesterday that the 'central team' £7.5m accumulated debt will be off set against reserves and any in year deficit (currently c£1million) will come from pooled funding prior to allocation to schools. This raises serious questions and is causing enormous anxiety about the impact on individual school budgets and job security. The trust has not provided the projected costs for central teams/clusters under the proposed model.

Impact of staff cuts

Staff in schools are telling us that the trust's plan to impose cuts of up to 26% to front line office staff across all schools are unworkable and will have a serious detrimental impact on the running of schools, pupils and the workload of the wider workforce. Under the plans, up to 57 out of 216 office roles across the trust; such as school business managers, finance officers and other office staff could be cut. The roles at risk are all front-line jobs that do a wide variety of tasks in school (above and beyond their job descriptions in many cases) including contacting parents, supporting the head, admin for school trips, supporting workload of teachers etc. This means that many of these in school tasks will fall onto already overworked heads, teachers and support staff; or will be left undone potentially putting pupils at severe detriment.



For these reasons we are again calling on the trust to immediately halt the restructure; to allow for more time for a reasonable level of negotiation and consultation with the unions and local schools. We propose that we use this period constructively to carry out a comprehensive review of the proposals and their potential impact on pupils and the wider workforce. For the avoidance of doubt, during these discussions we would also be tabling proposals around job security, voluntary redundancy payments and pay protection for any affected staff so that together we can support staff in REAch2.

Given the urgency of the situation please confirm by midday of Wednesday 29th March the trust's response to our constructive and reasonable proposal.'

Latest Bulletins For Schools Staff



Posted on: 8 March 2023

REAch 2 Academy trust announces plan to impose cuts in schools & take control of school budgets – joint unions reaction

REAch 2 Academy trust head office has announced plans to impose cuts of up to 26% to front line office staff across all schools. Under the plans up to 57 out of 216 office roles across the trust, such as school business managers, finance and other office staff could be cut.

The trust also plans to remove individual school autonomy over their own budgets by taking control of the money each school receives from the government, along with centralising school reserves.

In addition to our concern for the hardworking dedicated staff who now facing losing their jobs the unions are worried that:

Fewer staff in school will lead to more work for other staff and less support for pupils and parents – The roles at risk are all front-line jobs that do a wide variety of tasks in school (above and beyond their job descriptions in many cases) including contacting parents, supporting the head, admin for school trips, supporting workload of teachers etc.

Schools are going to lose control over their finances to the trust – When schools joined REAch2 they weren't told that they would lose overall control of their budget and finances. This is a huge move and needs proper consideration, involving the school and parents, not imposition by the trust.

Schools & parents need to have a say – These cuts and changes to school finances are huge and could have widespread impact on the day to day running of every school. Therefore the trust should have involved all stakeholders in these plans from the beginning rather than drawing them up behind closed



doors with, what appears to be an intention to steamroller them through without even consulting parents.

For these reasons we are calling on the trust to halt the imposition of these cuts and to instead call an extended period of consultation in which all staff, governors and parents can have their say. We accept there are challenges facing all schools but imposing cuts on schools is not the answer. Singling out front line, hardworking low paid school staff in this way is also not acceptable. (UNISON, GMB & UNITE as the recognised unions for support staff will be contacting those staff at risk of job cuts separately)

What you can do

Please pass on the bulletin to all staff in the school and keep an eye out for further joint union updates in coming days.

We are determined to do everything we can to protect REAch2 schools, its staff and pupils.



GMB ADVICE TO MEMBERS REGARDING NEU TEACHERS STRIKES



Posted on: 8 March 2023

GMB respects the rights of other trade unions to take industrial action and supports the Teachers unions' in their strike action.

GMB members have not been balloted around Teachers Pay and by law cannot be called upon to take part in industrial action on Teachers strike days. **Members should work normally without undermining teachers who are on strike.**

What does "work normally" mean?

It means you should work in accordance with your contract of employment and only carry out your **usual duties/responsibilities for that day**. It means you should **not** take on any additional responsibilities that arise directly as a result of the teachers' industrial action.

This includes any staff employed as either HLTAs or Cover Supervisors.



Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) should only do 'Specified Work' with the support and/or supervision of a Qualified Teacher.

Cover Supervisors supervise students who are working to a lesson prepared by a Qualified Teacher, usually a classroom teacher.

If you are in either of these roles you should not be expected to take whole classes on the day of a strike if the teacher that normally supervises, supports or prepares your work is on strike.

What about picket lines?

The Code of Practice on Picketing says, "Everyone has the right to decide for themselves whether they will cross a picket line." If you decide not to cross a picket line because you feel at risk, you should contact your manager to explain that you are not on strike but you were too intimidated to cross the picket line.

What if the School is closed?

If your school is closed you should notify your employer that you are not on strike and you are available for work as usual, therefore you should be paid.

Childcare

GMB understands that arranging childcare should your child's school be closed as a result of industrial action is challenging and potentially expensive. Therefore, if you are unable to arrange childcare in this situation, your employer should offer you dependents' leave.

For further information contact your region: [contact your region](#)

GMB ADVICE TO MEMBERS REGARDING NEU TEACHERS STRIKES



Posted on: 19 January 2023

The NEU Teachers Union has voted to take strike action to secure an increase in Teachers pay. **GMB support staff members in schools voted last October to accept an average pay rise of 8.5%**

You should have received your increase and back pay last November or December.

GMB members have not been balloted around Teachers Pay and by law cannot be called upon to take part in industrial action on Teachers strike days. **Members should work normally without undermining**



teachers who are on strike.

What does “work normally” mean?

It means you should work in accordance with your contract of employment and your **usual duties/responsibilities for that day**.

It means you should not take on any additional responsibilities that arise directly as a result of the teachers’ industrial action. You should continue with your normal duties but should not take on any non-contractual additional responsibilities being given to you directly as a result of the industrial action. You should not be expected to be moved from your normal duties or provide cover for teachers taking industrial action or take on overtime or additional shifts to make up for the industrial action of other staff.

What about picket lines?

The Code of Practice on Picketing says, “Everyone has the right to decide for themselves whether

They will cross a picket line.” If you decide not to cross a picket line because you feel at risk, you should contact your manager to explain that you are not on strike but you were too intimidated to cross the picket line.

What if the School is closed?

If your school is closed you should notify your employer that you are not on strike and you are available for work as usual, therefore you should be paid.

If anyone is not a member – JOIN GMB online at [JOIN](#)

NJC PAY 2022/23 – GMB BALLOT RESULT



Posted on: 25 October 2022

GMB’s consultative ballot on the NJC Pay Offer for 2022/23 has now closed.

Thanks to all school support staff members who voted.

67% of GMB members voted in favour of the employers pay offer.



GMB will meet with the other school support staff recognised unions (Unison & Unite) on Tuesday 1st November 2022 and notify them and the employers of our result.

More details will follow for schools next week.

Not a GMB member? Join today www.gmb.org.uk/join

FAIR PAY FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF



Posted on: 30 August 2022

Before schools broke up, the Supreme Court ruled that term time only workers **must have their holiday pay calculated on the hours worked in a normal week.**

Not pro-rata on the number of weeks worked in the year.

This is good news – and could mean an increase in your pay & potentially back pay.

<If your local authority hasn't already changed their calculation – and your pay – accordingly, they will need to do this now.

We have written to all local authorities and academy trusts to see what their policy is.

Where it is calculated wrong – GMB will be seeking to rectify and if not you could have a claim.

GMB is encouraging all members employed on a term time only contract to complete a survey form enabling us to act on your behalf as we seek to resolve the issue.

GMB have recently received a final pay offer from the Employers, and we are currently balloting all GMB members on acceptance or rejection of the offer. You should have received your ballot paper.

If you haven't received your ballot paper, survey form or want GMB to come to your school to update and ballot you and your colleagues please **contact your region so they can make the necessary arrangements.**

Thanks again for all you do for our children's education.

PAY JUSTICE FOR TERM TIME SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF?



Posted on: 22 July 2022



You may have seen that The Supreme Court has made a ruling that is in favour of term time only employees. It means permanent staff on term-time-only contracts must have their **holiday pay** calculated on the hours worked in a normal week, rather than pro-rated on the number of weeks worked each year.

This could mean an increase in your pay and potentially you may be entitled to back pay. Our legal experts are analysing the implications of the Supreme Court decision and we will update you accordingly.

If you and your colleagues would like GMB to visit your school in September for an update on this and the pay offer, please contact your region **here** and they will arrange to come and meet you all.

A big thank you from GMB for all you do for our schools and children's education. You truly are education's hidden professionals, and we hope you have a lovely well deserved break for the summer.

Best Wishes,

Avril Chambers
GMB National Schools Officer

STATEMENT ON ARK ACADEMIES' "DISAPPOINTING AND CONCERNING" CHANGES TO COVID SICKNESS MONITORING



Posted on: 5 December 2022

GMB and sister unions in education have issued a condemnation of the changes to monitoring in Covid Sickness at ARK Academies.

The unions said:

“ Whilst welcoming the position for pre-April 2022 Covid related absences, the recognised trade unions retain the belief that it is unfair and unreasonable to apply sickness absence triggers (including loss of pay and possible dismissal) for covid absences given the level of occupational exposure suffered by school staff.



With staff who test positive for covid now expected to come in to work, or face absence triggered disciplinary procedures, the academy change runs the risk of indirectly discriminating. Staff who are vulnerable or more likely to show symptoms will potentially be adversely affected by the policy.

[Read the full joint union statement here](#)

NJC PAY UPDATE SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES



Posted on: 6 June 2022

The joint union NJC Pay Claim for 2022 has now been submitted to employers for their consideration.

Thank you to all GMB members who responded to recent surveys regarding your aspirations for pay this year. All of the results were collated and considered by your GMB teams of Officers and Reps and the GMBs National Local Government and Schools Committees.

GMBs National Committees agreed that our claim should include: an increase of no less than RPI; a Covid recognition payment, review of term time only contracts and consideration of retainers; a reduction in the working week (without loss of pay) to 35 hours (34 hours in London); a review of mileage rates.

The final pay claim, as agreed by all three unions, and which has now been submitted is:

A headline claim of an increase of £2,000 on each pay point, or the current RPI rate, whichever is the greater

A Covid-19 recognition payment

Review of term time only contracts and consideration of retainers

Reduction in the working week (without loss of pay) to 35 hours (34 in London)

One additional day of annual leave across the board

Introduction of a home working allowance for all staff who are working from home

A national minimum agreement on homeworking policies for all councils

A separate urgent review of all mileage rates currently applying



Employers will now consider the pay claim ahead of pay negotiations starting. This Pay Claim is for all Local Authority Maintained Schools and the vast majority of Academy Trust Schools.

For any Academy Trust that does not automatically apply NJC Pay settlements GMB will submit separate claims with the Employer. These Pay Claims will be exactly the same as detailed above to try and ensure consistency and continuity for all School and Academy support staff.

Not a GMB member? Join today www.gmb.org.uk/join

Want information about being a GMB Rep in your workplace? Email:- PublicServices@gmb.org.uk

If you & your colleagues would like GMB to come into your school and update you on this or other key school support staff issues **please contact your region and we will arrange to visit ASAP.**

Queens Jubilee Bank Holiday Advice For School-Based Staff



Posted on: 20 May 2022

GMB members who work in schools on term-time only contracts will most likely be on half term for the week commencing 30th May.

This week contains the normal bank holiday (usually the last Monday in May) and has a second day added for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. These two bank holidays are on Thursday 2nd and Friday 3rd June.

Most school-based workers will have been given a day off work on Friday 27th May, so they do not lose out on the extra day's bank holiday that all other workers will be receiving.

However, there may be some workers who will not receive this extra day off, either because their school is not closing for the day, or because they work part-time on set days that do not include Fridays.

In either of these cases, you may be losing out this extra day's leave, and you should be entitled to some extra pay in lieu of the day's leave you're missing out on.

GMB is advising you to check your pay for an uplift in your pay packet for June. If you have not received this, contact your local GMB representative without delay, as you may need to claim this extra payment.

A reminder of advice previously issued.





23rd November 2021

**The Queen's Platinum Jubilee 2022:
additional guidance for Term-Time Only employees**

The Government has announced that there will be an additional bank holiday to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The late May bank holiday will be moved to Thursday 2 June 2022 and an additional Jubilee bank holiday will be on Friday 3 June 2022.

All NJC employees will be entitled to a holiday with a normal day's pay for the additional bank holiday (pro-rata for part-time employees).

In addition, DfE has laid regulations to reduce the school year from 190 days to 189 days for the academic year 2021-22, as a result of the additional bank holiday. For many staff, this may result in a reduction in their working year.

Each school operates a different remuneration arrangements. All employers will need to ensure that part time staff are provided with a pro-rata entitlement for the additional bank holiday. If you unsure and need advice on this, please contact your local GMB rep/office or you can contact GMB via the link [GMB Regions | GMB](#)

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Term Time Only (TTO) employees

In relation to TTO employees "if the Government announces an additional public holiday(s), a TTO employee's pay should reflect the additional public holiday or an additional period of paid leave during term-time could be granted"

Where there is a reduction in the working year of the TTO employee



The vast majority of TTO staff are contracted to work either 190 or 195 days per year. The NJC advises that in cases where the reduction in the school year means that employers will now only require these staff to work either 189 days or 194 days respectively in 2021-22, one approach to providing the additional bank holiday entitlement would be to make no adjustment in the remuneration arrangements for these TTO employees. This will provide these TTO employees with paid leave for the bank holiday as they will receive the same pay but work one day less.

However, for some TTO employees, whether they will benefit from the bank holiday will depend on their working pattern. Where a part-time employee would have been at work on the day of the bank holiday (or the day in the school year which is no longer one of the 190 days of directed time), they should continue to receive pay for this time. This will give them paid leave for the additional bank holiday.

Where there is no reduction in the working year

However, where a part-time employee's working pattern means that they are still working for the full number of days / hours for which they are contracted to work annually, they will need to be given an additional pro-rata paid leave entitlement to reflect the additional bank holiday.

THREE WAYS TO MAKE WORK BETTER

Help build the union in your workplace.

1. [Update your details](#) – every GMB member will get their vote make sure your details are up to date.
2. [Become a workplace organiser](#) - step up to be your work colleagues voice in your workplace!
3. [Recruit a member](#) - Strength in numbers! The more people who join GMB, the stronger we can make your work better.

Ark Academies Update



Posted on: 10 May 2022

GMB have challenged Ark Academies' decision to revise their covid policies, including their intention to begin including Covid related absence in staff sickness monitoring.

The join unions are scheduled to meet with the chain's representatives on 12th May – we will update members afterwards.



In the meantime, download the [full workplace bulletin](#) to post in your workplace, and [read the joint unions' statement to ARK here](#).

Latest Joint Guidance On Covid Disruption In Schools & Medical Vulnerability Of Staff +

Posted on: 4 April 2022

The joint unions for education have updated their guidance on [practical steps to reduce covid disruption](#) and [staff medical vulnerability](#) for reps and members to use going forward in their workplace.

Latest Joint Union Guidance On Ventilation +

Posted on: 27 January 2022

The Joint Unions in Schools have produced updated guidance for assessing adequate ventilation in schools, available [here](#):



Joint union guide to improving ventilation in schools and colleges

Advice for safe opening
Revised January 2022

Coronavirus crisis
Workplace checklist

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References / Useful links:

TUC Blog: [Ventilation, Ventilation, Ventilation](#)

Grace Browne: ["Covid gives us a chance to fix indoor pollution forever"](#)

Harvard.edu: [Associations of Cognitive Function Scores with Carbon Dioxide, Ventilation, and Volatile Organic Compound Exposures in Office Workers: A Controlled Exposure Study of Green and Conventional Office Environments](#)

HSE: [Coronavirus – Ventilation and air conditioning \(video\)](#).

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HSE: [How to improve mechanical ventilation \(including AC\)](#)

DfE: [Guidance on CO2 Monitors](#)

HSE: [Identifying poorly ventilated areas by using CO2 monitors](#)

SAGE: [Role of CO2 Monitors in Controlling Covid Transmission](#)

CIBSE (Chartered Institute of British Building Services Engineers): [Guidance on Ventilation](#).

Full Plastic Scientist: [Air Purifier Comparison Report](#)

Past Statements & Bulletins

Noticeboard Bulletin - 01-12-2021



Posted on: 1 December 2021

In light of the new COVID-19 variant, GMB think the Department for Education updated guidance for schools does not go far enough and once again is inadequate for keeping pupils and staff safe in schools.

In updated guidance issued on Monday the changes made were in relation to face coverings and contact tracing in so much as:

In primary schools, face coverings should be worn by staff and adults (including visitors) when moving around in corridors and communal areas.

In secondary schools, face coverings should be worn by pupils, staff and adult visitors when moving around the premises outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas. Pupils should also continue to wear face coverings on public and school transport.

All individuals who have been identified as a close contact of a suspected or confirmed case of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, irrespective of vaccination status and age, will be contacted directly and required to self-isolate immediately and asked to book a PCR test. They will be informed by the local health protection team or NHS Test and Trace if they fall into this category and provided details about self-isolation.



GMB think schools should encourage all pupils and staff to wear face coverings in secondary school at all times including in classrooms – this is in line with rules in Scotland and Wales.

Your school has the freedom to do this locally.

GMB are concerned that it is only suspected or confirmed Omicron variant cases that will be required to isolate as we do not know how they can differentiate and have asked that all contacts are required to isolate until it is determined that the contact was definitely not Omicron.

If not done already ask your school to revisit, review and update their risk assessment to take the latest information into account and make them as robust as they were at the beginning of all pupil return in March 2021. Ensure they cover:

- Face covering requirements,
- Large gatherings such as staff meetings, parent evenings, assemblies etc. we recommend these do not take place for the time being.
- Social distancing in communal areas for staff and pupils
- Testing (taking of & result reporting/recording of)
- Ventilation is essential to tackling the spread of Covid so rooms need ventilating at all times or at regular intervals also air filtration devices should be used as needed.
- Regular hand washing and high level cleaning of communal areas.

GMB will be calling on the Government to urgently introduce additional mitigations in all schools to protect staff and pupils and keep them in school. More details will be issued soon.

GMB INDICATIVE INDUSTRIAL ACTION BALLOT IS OPEN



Posted on: 1 November 2021

FAO: School Staff across England, Wales, & Northern Ireland

GMB members working across schools and academies recently voted to reject the pay cuts being proposed by your employers. For every four GMB members who voted, three rejected the employers 1.75%



pay offer for 2021/22.

Over the last year GMB members working across schools and academies have shown how indispensable you are. You are true Covid heroes, keeping the nation's essential public services going during the toughest of times, often putting your own health and safety at risk. The employers' 1.75% offer is wholly inadequate and with energy bills skyrocketing, shopping bills going up, and inflation high and rising, it represents yet another pay cut for school staff who have seen a quarter of the value of their pay wiped out since 2010.

We are urging GMB members to VOTE YES in this indicative ballot for strike action/action short of strike and return the ballot paper by 12 noon on Monday 13th December 2021.

GMB continues to press your employers to get back round the table and improve the pay offer.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU VOTE – GMB IS CAMPAIGNING FOR A HUGE TURNOUT TO DEMONSTRATE TO YOUR EMPLOYERS WE WON'T ACCEPT FURTHER PAY CUTS.

GMB, alongside other unions formally wrote to the employers to lodge an official pay dispute for the 2021/22 pay round. This means all members will now get a vote to decide on whether to take strike action to stop these pay cuts. If the majority of GMB members vote YES, a formal ballot for industrial action will take place.

WHAT NEXT?

An indicative industrial action ballot has started. Your local GMB branch/office should have contacted you to discuss how you can vote in this ballot and how you can get active in your pay campaign to stop these pay cuts.

Please ensure your details are up to date as only GMB members will get a vote in our ballot.

Not had a vote? Contact publicservices@gmb.org.uk

THREE WAYS TO MAKE WORK BETTER

Help build the union in your workplace!

1. Update your details – every GMB member will get their vote make sure your details are up to date.



2. Become a workplace organiser – step up to be your work colleagues voice in your workplace!
3. Recruit a member – Strength in numbers! The more people who join GMB, the stronger we can make your work better.

The indicative ballot closes at 12 noon on Monday 13TH December 2021, and the result will be posted on the GMB website as soon as possible thereafter, along with notification to all members.

All updates are on your Schools Noticeboard.

Vote and vote YES for Strike Action/Action Short of a Strike.

If you would like GMB to visit your school to update you on the pay offer and ballot, please contact your Regional GMB office and we will arrange a date to come into your school.

[Contact your GMB Region](#)

GMB UNION LODGES OFFICIAL PAY DISPUTE WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYERS TO STOP PAY CUTS



Posted on: 15 October 2021

FAO: Local Government, Council and School workers across England, Wales, & Northern Ireland

GMB union met with the Local Government employers on Wednesday 13th October 2021. We communicated the clear strength of feeling among local government, council and school workers about how disappointed and angry people are and why members have rejected the plans for pay cuts.

Over the last year GMB members working in councils, local government and schools have shown how indispensable you are. You are true Covid heroes, keeping the nation's essential public services going during the toughest of times, often putting your own health and safety at risk. The employers' 1.75% offer is wholly inadequate and with energy bills skyrocketing, shopping bills going up, and inflation high and rising, it represents yet another pay cut for workers who have seen a quarter of the value of their pay wiped out since 2010.



GMB, alongside other unions, has formally written to the employers to lodge an official pay **dispute** for the 2021/22 pay round. This means all members will now get a vote to decide on whether to take strike action to stop these pay cuts. We will start our consultative ballot in November.

GMB urges Local Government employers to get back round the table and improve the pay offer – NOW.

WHAT NEXT?

A consultative industrial action ballot will start in November 2021. Your local GMB branch/office will be contacting you shortly to discuss how you can vote in this consultative ballot and how you can get active in your pay campaign to stop these pay cuts.

Please ensure your details are up to date as only GMB members will get a vote in our ballot.

THREE WAYS TO MAKE WORK BETTER

Help build the union in your workplace.

1. **Update your details** – every GMB member will get their vote make sure your details are up to date.
2. **Become a workplace organiser** – step up to be your work colleagues voice in your workplace!
3. **Recruit a member** – Strength in numbers! The more people who join GMB, the stronger we can make your work better.

Joint Unions New Guidance For Safer Reopening Of Schools: September



Posted on: 27 August 2021

It's a time of anxiety for school staff as schools reopen this September, and we have new guides to ensure that members have all the information they need to challenge bad practice and promote best practice in the coming months.

Schools Staff Safety Checklist

Ventilation in Schools: Guide for School Staff

Advice for Medically Vulnerable and At Risk Groups



SCHOOLS WORKFORCE BULLETIN

As we come to the end of the summer holidays GMB hopes everyone enjoyed your hard earned break from school and you are feeling refreshed and ready to go back.

Unfortunately the Government has chosen to remove most requirements for safety measures in schools, a decision which GMB think is risky and we are concerned this decision could lead to an increase in Covid-19 cases in schools especially as currently new cases of Covid are running at over 30,000 a day on a consistent basis and we know that in Scotland cases have been surging since their schools returned on the 17th August.

We acknowledge that the situation has changed because of the implementation of the vaccination programme. However, rates of Covid-19 infection in the wider community are higher than this time last year, and many pupils won't have been vaccinated so effective safety measure will still need to be in place to try and minimise transmission.

Once again your schools Risk Assessment will need to be reviewed and updated and GMB Members and reps should be consulted on the new risk assessment. As a minimum, ensure the risk assessment includes and addresses the following areas in relation to protecting you from Covid 19:

- Ventilation (Should be a priority control measure)
- Hygiene (Hand & Respiratory hygiene and PPE where applicable)
- Testing (taking of & result reporting/recording of for all staff/pupils)
- Cleaning Personal/Equipment (regular e.g. twice daily of areas/equipment)

GMB has sent updated joint guidance to every School Head in England and you can access this guidance on the GMB Website or use this link for direct access.

If you are able could you please print this off & take into your school for colleagues that are not in GMB and if any colleagues are not in GMB tell them they need to be and they can [join GMB](#).

Finally If you would like GMB to visit your school to update you on the pay offer and our upcoming Right Pay for the Right Job campaign please contact your Regional GMB office and we will arrange a date to come into your school.



Posted on: 16 July 2021

As we come to the end of the Academic Year, many of you will have worked for nearly 18 months without a meaningful break and GMB would like to take this opportunity to Thank You all for your hard work in helping to not only keep our children educated but assisting in ensuring all key workers could keep doing their essential jobs throughout this pandemic.

Unfortunately the Governments latest announcement on lifting COVID restrictions in England from 19th July is ambiguous and has created confusion and anxiety for many and yet again DfE guidance is wanting!

For schools, from 19th July bubbles will no longer be required, NHS Test and Trace will take over responsibility for finding close contacts of positive students and from August 16th children aged under 18 will no longer need to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact and can continue to attend school, they will be advised to take a PCR test but this won't be a requirement.

GMB think that Gavin Williamsons plan to end bubbles, self-isolation, social distancing and face coverings in communal areas from Monday 19th July is risky to say the least especially as many schools will be running summer schools and cases are rising exponentially in 12 to 19 year olds.

GMB will continue to monitor the situation closely over the next 5 weeks and we will ensure we update every school member in good time for your return to the workplace at the start of the new academic year. Once again the main question for you should be "Is my school safe?" and GMB will provide you and your reps with the tools you need to make sure that your Head Teacher is making your schools as safe as possible before your return. The main focus will be risk assessments.

Risk Assessments will need to be reviewed and updated to consider the changing landscape and once more it is imperative your reps and staff are consulted before they are adopted by your school GMB will publish and issue this advice and guidance to you week commencing 23rd August in good time for your return. In the interim we hope you enjoy your well-deserved break and will be in touch soon.


Posted on: 4 March 2021



ONE: RECRUIT A COLLEAGUE TO GMB!

There is strength in numbers, employers can ignore one voice but when we all speak together they have to take notice.

This bulletin is available [as a flyer to post in your workplace](#):



The flyer features a purple background with a repeating pattern of small icons representing various professions. At the top, the text 'PAY JUSTICE NOW.' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, tilted at an angle. Below this, the main title 'Fighting for better pay, terms, and conditions in local government and schools.' is centered in orange. The flyer is divided into several sections with white text on the purple background. On the left, it states that GMB Union negotiates pay for hundreds of thousands of workers and that discussions have started for 2021/22. It then lists three campaign goals: 'PAY JUSTICE' (a 10% pay increase), 'BETTER WORK/LIFE BALANCE' (reduced hours, leave, and workplace stress measures), and 'PAY & TRAINING IMPROVEMENTS' (review of job descriptions and career development). On the right, it lists membership rates for full-time and part-time workers. A QR code with the GMB Union logo is positioned next to the part-time rate. At the bottom, a white banner contains the website 'GMB.ORG.UK/PAY-JUSTICE-NOW' in purple.

PAY JUSTICE NOW.

Fighting for better pay, terms, and conditions in local government and schools.

GMB Union negotiates pay for hundreds of thousands of workers in local government and schools. Those discussions have now started for pay in 2021/22.

We're campaigning for:

PAY JUSTICE

A substantial pay increase with a minimum of 10% for all workers in local government and schools!

BETTER WORK/LIFE BALANCE

A reduction of hours to a 35-hour working week (on the same pay); 25 days annual leave plus Bank Holidays; better maternity/paternity/adoption leave; new working from home policies and new measures to tackle workplace stress and support mental health.

PAY & TRAINING IMPROVEMENTS

Local government workers should be paid for the work we do and trained for the work we do – we need a review of job descriptions, career development, and pay for schools support staff; too many are working over and above their pay grades without the acknowledgment or reward.

JOIN GMB TODAY!

Full time (20hr+/week)	£14.57 per month
Part time: (20hr-/week)	£8.40 per month

If you work term-time hours only, you might be eligible to pay the part-time membership rate, so ask your region.



GMB.ORG.UK/PAY-JUSTICE-NOW

TWO: ORGANISE A MEETING TO DISCUSS PAY AND TO BUILD SUPPORT FOR THE PAY RISE.

You can download all the Pay Justice Now campaign materials you need [at the Pay Justice Campaign Hub](#)!



THREE: LOBBY YOUR LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE!

GMB is campaigning for pay rises to be properly funded. Email your local councillors asking them to lobby Government for proper funding for Local Government and School. We've made this easy to do by filling in the form on the [Pay Justice Now](#) site!

FOUR: BECOME A GMB REP!

Are you the sort of person who can't sit and do nothing when you can see injustice or something wrong? Not got a GMB Workplace Organiser yet? Well, [why don't you become one?](#)

Is Your School Safe?



Posted on: 9 February 2021

As you know schools will be expecting a move to fully re-open in the next few weeks.

GMB members know full well that schools have been open throughout this pandemic and that this has only been possible because GMB school support staff have been physically attending every day.

The move towards full re-opening of schools will be worrying if it isn't done safely.

Speculation is widespread in the media about the timetable but as you know the Prime Minister will make an announcement on Monday and this will include more detail on Government plans for the opening of schools for all pupil attendance.

We don't know exactly when and how schools will start to open to all pupils, but we do know that whenever and however it is DfE Guidance is likely to be weak and open to interpretation, so we must use this to our advantage.

Whatever the Prime Minister says next week or whatever is in the DfE guidance, the main question for you will be 'Is my school safe?'

We'll provide you and your reps with the tools you need to make sure that your head teacher is making your school as safe as possible before more pupils return. The main focus will be risk assessments.

Risk assessments will need to be reviewed and updated to consider the changing landscape it is imperative there is sufficient consultation with union reps and staff before these are adopted by your school.



This takes time so whatever the timetable announced by Government next week is we need to make a start.

So, following the announcement on Monday we will provide you with the information and tools you need to push your headteacher to re-assure you that the wider re-opening of your school is safe.

Secondary Schools And Colleges



Posted on: 12 February 2021

The following is the latest update from the Dept of Education on Testing.

Secondary schools and colleges should continue to test their staff regularly, **which should be twice-weekly, 3-5 days apart, where possible**. Students should be tested twice upon their first return to school or college, as has been the case since the start of January.

DoE have **paused daily contact testing** in all but a small number of secondary schools and colleges, where it will continue alongside detailed evaluation. This is in response to NHS Test and Trace and Public Health England (PHE) publishing reviewed advice in light of the higher prevalence and rates of transmission of the new variant. A statement from PHE can be found [here](#).

In addition, as announced by PHE on 25 January, **confirmatory testing has also been temporarily removed for LFT tests taken at test sites** until prevalence lowers again. Positive LFT results at test sites will trigger the legal duty to self-isolate, self-isolation payments and contact tracing.

It is vital that secondary schools and colleges **record their test results on the Test & Trace Log Results Website**, as this data will be used to calculate funding. The DoE have provided a [Workforce Planning Tool](#) which illustrates workforce requirements and associated funding. This allows institutions to calculate an estimate of funding which they may receive. Actual allocations will be based on the number of bays calculated as needed to deliver the number of tests completed (measured by the number of test results recorded on the school or college's individual account on the Test & Trace Log Results Website).

Staff displaying symptoms must still self-isolate and take a PCR test. The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace current testing policy for those with symptoms.

Guidance on asymptomatic testing in specialist settings is available [here](#).



Primary Schools, School-Based Nurseries and Maintained Nursery Schools

On 18 Jan we published a [guidance page to support primary schools, school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools](#) to carry out rapid testing on staff.

Staff should take **two LFD tests a week, 3-4 days apart**, before coming into work which is in line with the community testing programme.

In line with clinical advice, confirmatory **PCR testing will remain in place for primary school staff and nursery staff in scope** for whom testing is done at home, in order to minimise the risk that incorrectly reported positive results are registered. This is in line with other self-reporting settings.

Primary school staff calling 119 to book a PCR test need to say that they work at a primary school.

Staff displaying symptoms **at any time** must still self-isolate and take a PCR test. The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace current testing policy for those with symptoms.

Deliveries in primary schools have now all been made – an updated delivery schedule is available on the Portal. The delivery schedule for Maintained Nursery Schools is also now on the Portal, with over 30% of deliveries having already been made and the rest due to take place week commencing 1 February.

New Schools Guidance: GMB Seeking Urgent Meeting With Department.



Posted on: 4 February 2021

GMB is seeking an urgent meeting with the Department for Education on the back of revised guidance on 'bubbles' in schools being unilaterally changed without any consultation, dialogue or evidence.

The guidance was first updated last Autumn, then January 2021 and more recently February 2021.

A revised paragraph on bubbles in schools is extremely concerning.

“

All teachers and other staff can operate across different groups. Where staff need to move between groups, they should try and keep their distance from pupils and other staff as much as they can, ideally 2

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metres from other adults. Again, we recognise this is not likely to be possible with younger children and teachers in primary schools can still work across groups if that is needed”.

Full details of the revised guidance from the Department for Education can be found. [HERE](#)

In the recent updated guidance issued it appears that government is now saying that it is fine for staff to work across bubbles.

GMB has longed pushed for a maximum number of 15 for a bubble or half the classroom but no more than 15 in a bubble at any given time.

GMB continues to make it clear that cross grouping/bubbles should not be explored and remain potentially an extremely dangerous step, as it could allow for asymptotically infectious staff to act as ‘super spreaders’ and will allow pupils in this position to infect a greater range of staff than just those in the ‘bubble’.

You can read the GMB Letter to the Dept of Education [here](#).

GMB POSITION

There is no explanation or evidence as to why now, in the middle of the current school cycle, groups should start mixing as the updated guidance states. We have urged the Department for Education to pull back from this position. There is a real danger of serious disruption to the ability of school support staff to safely work in the classroom and of increased spread to other school workers.

GMB are advising all GMB regions across England to continue to lodge formal concerns that our members’ workplace could be unsafe where bubbles start mixing and will be writing to all Head Teachers on your behalf.

Rehana Azam, National Secretary of GMB Union said:

“All guidance up to now has sought to prevent the mixing of bubbles in schools. If



you have schools support staff moving from one group of pupils to another, you're essentially turning them into super spreaders. This policy change is completely ill judged and has potential to be extremely dangerous, we want to see the science behind it – the Secretary of State needs to urgently meet with schools' unions and explain why this change has been made.

Despite headlines to the contrary, schools are not closed. Across the country thousands and thousands of children of key worker and vulnerable children are in school every day – far more than in the first lockdown last March. In many areas it's schools support staff who are the ones physically present, it's completely unacceptable to change any rules that would make those worker – and the children and families they're responsible for – less safe."

You can read the GMB Press Release [HERE](#).

WHAT YOU CAN DO

'It is a legal requirement that schools should revisit and update their risk assessments (building on the learning to date and the practices they have already developed). It is good practice to treat risk assessments as a "living document" which is kept under review, especially having regard to changing circumstances.'

GMB will continue to support you in challenging your employer to make your working environment safe. It is important to stress that any member working previously under a personal risk assessment (such as staff who are Clinically Vulnerable) should have risk assessments reviewed in response to the new strain of Covid.

GMB have a two-step letter process in place.



Request for a Revised Risk Assessment (Letter 1)

Working from Home letter if the workplace is unsafe (Letter 2)

This two-stage letter process will help to build added protection for you at work.

Letter 1 seeks a revised risk assessment and if this assessment is insufficient (or not undertaken) you are better protected to raise the H&S breaches and for GMB to be able to tell your employer why you feel unsafe and want to work from home.

We want you to know GMB has your back on this issue. Your GMB rep can advise you on both letters. If you are not sure who your GMB rep is, please [contact your region](#).

STAY CONNECTED

1. **Contact your local GMB rep if you are worried about your safety at work.**
2. **If you do not have a workplace rep on-site consider becoming one**
3. **Pass this briefing to a non-union member and ask them to join**
4. **Stay in touch with us join our [GMB Schools group on Facebook](#) and contact us by emailing us at schools@gmb.org.uk**

GMB Write To DfE With Concerns On Bubble Mixing



Posted on: 4 February 2021

GMB has written to the Department for Education over revisions made to the guidance for schools during the pandemic.

The changes were made without consultation or update to any risk assessment to take into account the impact on school support staff, and appears to contradict previous guidance on cross-contamination between bubbles. Given the tenuous situation on the ground in schools, and impending further opening the government have announced is planned for March, GMB are requesting an urgent meeting to address this issue with the department.





4th February 2021

Dear Adrian

**RESTRICTING ATTENDANCE DURING THE NATIONAL LOCKDOWN:
SCHOOLS (revised guidance)**

GMB understands that the Guidance for all Schools in England has been updated. I am writing to set out GMB's objection to the changes made to this guidance without any properly conducted risk assessment of the implications for school support staff and without any dialogue with GMB as the union that represents school support staff.

(Extract below taken from the guidance page 17 "How to group children")

"All teachers and other staff can operate across different groups. Where staff need to move between groups, they should try and keep their distance from pupils and other staff as much as they can, ideally 2 metres from other adults. Again, we recognise this is not likely to be possible with younger children and teachers in primary schools can still work across groups if that is needed".

Since the New Year Lockdown with schools opening to all key workers and vulnerable children it has been the school support staff who have predominately remained in the classrooms undertaking face-to-face contact with pupils.

GMB has had to advise members daily on the duty of head teachers to monitor risk and minimise any issues identified; that headteachers have duties and obligations to all staff equally.

In the recent updated guidance issued by the Dept. it appears that government is now saying that it is fine for staff to work across bubbles. This is a potentially extremely dangerous step, as it allows for asymptotically infectious staff to act as 'super spreaders', and will allow pupils in this position to infect a greater range of staff than just those in the 'bubble'.

This appears to directly contradict all previous advice issued on the creation of 'bubbles', and with infection rates remaining high in the community, and no sign of an effective testing programme in sight, we can only view this a recipe for further outbreaks in schools, especially where social distancing cannot be implemented. This will surely result in more school closures and more disruption to children's education.

GMB Acting General Secretary: Warren Kenny
Euston Office: Mary Turner House, 22 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD
020 7391 6700 info@gmb.org.uk www.gmb.org.uk

UNIONLINE
YOUR TRADE UNION LAW FIRM
0300 333 0303
www.unionline.co.uk

COVID-19 ABSENCE RATES HIGHER FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF THAN TEACHERS, GMB ANALYSIS SHOWS



Posted on: 20 January 2021



Throughout the pandemic your union has been raising concerns that our members are disproportionately being exposed to the Covid virus.

School support staff make up 2/3 of the total education workforce and have been on the frontline in every classroom and every school across the country throughout the pandemic.

Vaccine access must be 'urgent priority' as official figures show 33,000 support staff workers absent due to Covid in December

GMB, the union for school support staff, has called for urgent occupational priority for vaccination for school workers as new figures show that more support staff workers were more likely to be absent from work due to covid-19 than teachers.

The figures, which cover schools in England only, were published by the **Department for Education (DfE)** this week.

A total of **33,267 school support staff** were absent on 17 December 2020 for covid-19 related reasons, including confirmed and suspected infections and those who were required to isolate due to exposure inside or outside school.

GMB has long said that support staff workers were at the highest occupational exposure to Covid-19 in schools, as common tasks include administration of medicine, supporting children one to one, food, personal care together with close pupil contact whilst supporting learning.

SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF ARE THE BACK BONE OF EVERY SCHOOL AND IT'S TIME SCHOOLS ARE MADE SAFE FOR THEM.

1. An estimated **6.1 per cent of school support staff** were absent on December 2020 due to Covid-19.
2. This compared to **4.4 per cent of teachers** and school leaders.
3. Covid-19 absences have been higher for support staff than teachers on every day recorded by the DfE (since 12 October 2020).

The disparity was even greater in **Special Schools**, where **16.2 per cent** of support staff were absent in December 2020 for reasons linked to covid-19 (compared to 5.4 per cent of teachers and school leaders).

The DfE has said that it believes that teachers and support staff should receive occupational priority for



phase two of the vaccination programme. However, no official decision has been made, and Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advice on occupational prioritisation only mentions teachers.

GMB is campaigning for all school workers to have access to vaccination.

GMB RESPONSE

Rehana Azam, GMB National Secretary, said:

“ Schools cannot function without support staff, and these figures confirm that these critical workers are not getting the support they deserve.

It is not a coincidence that whilst many teachers are teaching remotely from home, lots of GMB members remain in schools, supervising classes, preparing food and maintaining school buildings.

Many of our members are performing tasks that involve a high risk of transmission, without adequate PPE, and often in poorly ventilated buildings.

Support staff are the highly skilled professionals of the education system but too often they are ignored in public debate.

The comments from Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jenny Harries to Parliament yesterday did not reflect at all the reality on the ground.

The DFE's own statistics prove this. Ministers across Government need to wake up and recognise the reality that hundreds of thousands of low-paid school workers are at high risk of infection, with devastating consequence for workers, pupils and the wider community.”

The reality is that without urgent priority access to vaccinations for school support staff, the cycle of community transmission in schools will not be broken.



You can [read the full GMB Press response here](#).

ANOTHER DAY AND ANOTHER U-TURN

WELL DONE TO GMB MEMBERS WHO STOOD FIRM ON THIS

Daily Contact testing within schools is paused!

In a [statement Dept of Education said](#):

“ In light of this changing situation, we now recommend that the rollout of daily contact testing within schools is paused, other than for schools involved in further evaluation. This will enable the further detailed evaluation of changing circumstances including, potentially, lower infection rates and modelling work required to understand the benefits of daily contact testing in this new phase of the pandemic.

ONLY WORK TO YOUR CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT



Posted on: 15 January 2021

GMB School Support Staff work under the pay terms and conditions of the Green Book, apart from a very small number of members in multi-academy trusts with whom GMB negotiates separately (that don't follow the Green Book).

GMB is a recognised trade union that has been negotiating pay agreements and Covid guidance that ensure you are paid your wages

GMB will continue to ensure no school support staff lose out on pay during Covid-19. Teachers' Unions have no jurisdiction on your pay terms and conditions of work and do not represent school support staff employed under Local Government Green Book Terms and Conditions.



We have members contacting us saying that they feel compelled to work beyond their contracted obligations. As many teachers work on-line it is school support staff are being left to lead the classroom.

GMB has already negotiated guidance that employers should be following please see an extract from the NJC Circular which remains the case

“ We would remind employers of the more general guidance from the NJC regarding redeployment and the need to ensure volunteers are sought first (volunteers should not be sought from employees who live with and / or have caring responsibilities for people in the vulnerable groups referenced above) and relevant training and risk assessments are undertaken (see [NJC 170320 CIRCULAR](#)).

Unless there are urgent, mitigating reasons, employers should not require staff who do not have experience of supervising large groups of children as part of their usual role, to be doing so now without adequate support being provided. Employees who agree to undertake a different role and / or working pattern should suffer no financial detriment and continue to be paid at their usual contracted rate. Where employees are temporarily undertaking roles that are paid at a higher rate than their usual contracted rate, they should receive the higher rate of pay for the duration of the assignment / redeployment.

GMB strongly advises against working outside your contracted obligations and have set out advice on how to challenge your employer. Please see a sample letter that you can ask your GMB rep to issue if you feel unable to:

“ Dear Headteacher,

Similar to the first lock-down schools remain open to all key workers and vulnerable children.

As we move into lock-down 3 some schools are intending to allow all teachers to work remotely and support staff are expected to attend work, (on a rota basis in some cases), to support the children who are in school.

My union GMB finds this approach unacceptable and are supported in this position by other unions.



Can you please confirm our school will run on a shared rota basis as in the previous lockdown?

I am aware you are extremely busy, but a prompt reply would be appreciated.

Kind Regards.

MAKE SCHOOL SAFE – RISK ASSESSMENT

'It is a legal requirement that schools should revisit and update their risk assessments (building on the learning to date and the practices they have already developed). It is good practice to treat risk assessments as a "living document" which is kept under review, especially having regard to changing circumstances.'

GMB will continue to support you in challenging your employer to make your working environment safe. It is important to stress that any member working previously under a personal risk assessment (such as staff who are Clinically Vulnerable) should have risk assessments reviewed in response to the new strain of Covid.

GMB have a two-step letter process in place.

Request for a Revised Risk Assessment (Letter 1)

Working from Home letter if the workplace is unsafe (Letter 2)

This two-stage letter process will help to build added protection for you at work.

Letter 1 seeks a revised risk assessment and if this assessment is insufficient (or not undertaken) you are better protected to raise the H&S breaches and for GMB to be able to tell your employer why you feel unsafe and want to work from home.

We want you to know GMB has your back on this issue, so please speak to a rep before sending the first letter. Your GMB rep can advise you on both letters. If you are not sure who your GMB rep is, please **contact your region**.

Making Schools Safe – A GMB online briefing



Join GMB's safety experts and our National President, Barbara Plant (herself a School Support Staff member of GMB) for a briefing on the steps we believe every school should take to ensure the safety of our members during the pandemic.

5.30pm – Thursday 21st January

REGISTER NOW!

gmb.org.uk/makeschoolsafe

And this will be your opportunity to step forward and sign up for a longer, more detailed programme of briefings aimed at existing GMB reps and members who want to find out more about what they can do to ensure their school is safe.

You can register early for the full programme and find out some more information here: **Microsoft Forms**

Joint union checklist for partial opening period to February

During the current desperate public health situation, it is imperative that the way schools operate during lockdown does not make matters worse.

This supplementary joint union checklist is provided to help schools review their risk assessments and implement measures which firstly reflect the known greater transmissibility of the new variant and secondly meet the specific requirements of partial opening.

The measures set out below are recommended for immediate implementation during this period of partial opening. Please also refer to the **full joint union checklist** for safe opening for guidance on measures that should continue to be in place.

Given the changing situation, this advice may be updated over the coming weeks so please check via our website link that you are using the current version.

Planning Guide for Secondary Schools – January 2021

VULNERABLE GROUPS

Risk Assessments remains key to ensuring you feel safe at work. GMB has also negotiated additional advice that fall into the category of vulnerable staff as follows:

The advice is titled Working from Home and your union negotiated this at the start of the pandemic. Please **read it in full**.



66 Local Authorities will have employees who are in the vulnerable groups where they could be looking at months of working at home.

This group includes those who are:

- pregnant women
- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (broadly anyone instructed to get a flu jab each year on medical grounds):
 - chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
 - chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
 - chronic kidney disease
 - chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
 - chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy



- diabetes
- problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- being seriously overweight (a BMI of 40 or above) There are some clinical conditions which put people at even higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

People falling into this group are those who may be at particular risk due to complex health problems such as:

- People who have received an organ transplant and remain on ongoing immunosuppression medication
- People with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radiotherapy
- People with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as Leukaemia who are at any stage of treatment.
- People with severe chest conditions such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma (requiring hospital admissions or courses of steroid tablets)
- People with severe diseases of body systems, such as severe kidney disease (dialysis)



Roles that do not readily lend themselves to working at home

This circular sets out considerations for employees who are otherwise well but cannot attend their normal place of work due to the Government's instruction for people to work at home and avoid all nonessential travel.

As previously advised, all options for using annual leave, special leave etc should be explored but given the length of time that this national emergency is set to last it is not reasonable, for example, to expect employees to use their entire annual leave entitlement to cover all or part of the lockdown period as consideration should be given to planned booked holidays later in the year, along with employees who may require leave throughout the year to support dependents.

The position relating to all support staff in schools presents particular challenges.

Current guidance is that schools are to remain open unless specific circumstances dictate otherwise. At such time as the expected closure of schools is announced, council employers will need to work quickly with Head Teachers and School Business Managers to ensure consistency of approaches to home working as applied to corporate council employees and school-based employees. Ultimately, in many cases employers will have no option other than to accept that some employees can neither work at home nor be redeployed / seconded etc and will therefore be staying at home on full pay for the duration of this emergency.

STAY CONNECTED

1. **Contact your local GMB rep if you are worried about your safety at work.**
2. **If you do not have a workplace rep on-site consider becoming one**
3. **Pass this briefing to a non-union member and ask them to join**
4. **Stay in touch with us join our [GMB Schools group on Facebook](#) and contact us by emailing us at schools@gmb.org.uk**
5. **Join a GMB virtual meeting – we arrange these on a weekly basis and will post details on our social media accounts – the next National Meeting is 5.30pm – Thursday 21st**



GMB Demands Government Make ALL Schools Safe In The Lockdown.



Posted on: 8 January 2021

Schools are still open for key workers' children, and children classified as vulnerable. The list of eligible children has been expanded and there are more pupils in school than during the first lockdown.

Some schools (including many special schools) are at or near full attendance. Many pupil bubbles have grown in size and cannot be safely sustained. We need a consistent approach between schools and early years' education, which has been left out the current lockdown arrangements and remain fully open.

We need Government to take their responsibility to children and their school support staff seriously.

More funding is required. Safe classroom spaces need to be created. Safe ventilation systems need to be installed. More equipment needs to be provided to enable proper remote learning. The Chancellor recently found £4.7 billion to support businesses, and billions more have been spent on a failed track and trace system – but where is the funding for schools? Without investment, schools will continue to be a key source of community transmission.

Almost two-thirds of school workers are in support staff roles and they need to be treated equally and fairly.

All week we have been meeting with our members and we have heard just how anxious and how worried our members are. We are here for you please get in touch with us <https://www.gmb.org.uk/gmb-regions>

GMB CONTINUES TO PUSH GOVERNMENT ON THE FOLLOWING:

To make schools safe we are urging the Government to do the following:

1. Set clear guidance on bubble size and review the classifications of pupils who are expected to attend school. Introduce sensible local flexibilities so more children who can be safely educated at home. Make funding available to hire more staff to enable rota systems to be put in place.



2. Make funding available to provide proper PPE, make essential adaptations in schools, and provide the right equipment so more children can be safely taught remotely.
3. Make support staff a priority occupational group for vaccination on an equal basis to teachers.
4. Engage with unions and employers to establish proper career and pay structures for support staff. This should be done through re-establishing the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) to recognise the essential contribution that key workers in schools have made since day one of the pandemic.
5. Press for a dramatic increase in Statutory Sick Pay and childcare support in your discussions with other Departments, in order to reduce the pressure on parents to unsafely attend work when they should be in isolation.

GMB has organised an [open letter](#) to the Secretary of State for Education – [please sign](#)

PAY, TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The National Joint Council for Local Government Services has confirmed that agreements set out at the start of the Pandemic in March 2020 in relation to those members working in Local Authority Schools will apply to the current lockdown period. You can find the relevant NJC circulars [here](#).

NJC Circulars

GMB negotiated these agreements with Local Government Employers on behalf of members at the start of the Pandemic and believe these are 'best in class' in terms of members safety and protection.

STAY CONNECTED



1. Contact your local GMB rep if you are worried about your safety at work <https://www.gmb.org.uk/gmb-regions>
2. If you do not have a workplace rep on-site consider becoming one <https://www.gmb.org.uk/become-workplace-representative>
3. Pass this briefing to a non-union member and ask them to join us at www.gmb.org.uk/join
4. Stay in touch with us join our [GMB Schools group on Facebook](#) and join our mailing list by emailing us at schools@gmb.org.uk
5. Join a GMB virtual meeting – we arrange these on a weekly basis and will post details on our social media accounts.

Restricting Attendance During The National Lockdown For Schools In England



Posted on: 7 January 2021

Following the enactment of a new national lockdown which was passed into law by Parliament yesterday (Wednesday 6th January) members have been contacting GMB with queries regarding how safety should be maintained in school during the restrictions on the attendance of pupils other than key workers and the vulnerable.

You may be now aware that the advice for school support staff not to attend school given by NEU and Unison (using as a basis the Section 44 Employment Rights Act) has been withdrawn by those unions.



Support staff may be required to be present in school to support children of key worker and the vulnerable unless the risk assessments individual and school wide indicate that the workplace is unsafe.

Please see details issued by [Dept of Education email on S44](#)

GMB has consistently campaigned for our members safety in school throughout the Pandemic accurately and transparently and we will continue to do so.

The DFE have published further guidance (Restricting Attendance during the National Lockdown for school in England) and we have set out below some of the key points below and GMB's position.

Risk Assessment

The Guidance says – 'It is a legal requirement that schools should revisit and update their risk assessments (building on the learning to date and the practices they have already developed). It is good practice to treat risk assessments as a "living document" which is kept under review, especially having regard to changing circumstances.'

GMB will continue to support you in challenging your employer to make your working environment safe. It is important to stress that any member working previously under a personal risk assessment (such as staff who are Clinically Vulnerable) should have risk assessments reviewed in response to the new strain of Covid.

GMB have a two-step letter process in place.

[Request for a Revised Risk Assessment \(Letter 1\)](#)

[Working from Home letter if the workplace is unsafe \(Letter 2\)](#)

This two-stage letter process will help to build added protection for you at work.

Letter 1 seeks a revised risk assessment and if this assessment is insufficient (or not undertaken) you are better protected to raise the H&S breaches and for GMB to be able to tell your employer why you feel unsafe and want to work from home.

We want you to know GMB has your back on this issue, so please speak to a rep before sending the first letter. Your GMB rep can advise you on both letters. If you are not sure who your GMB rep is, please [contact your region](#).



Bubbles

The Guidance says – ‘Maintaining distinct groups or ‘bubbles’ that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate and keep that number as small as possible.’

GMB will continue to push for bubbles in school to be as small as possible and to oppose cross-bubble working as this increases the risk of infection.

Covering for Teachers

The Guidance says – ‘Schools may need to alter the way in which they deploy their staff and use existing staff more flexibly. Managers should discuss and agree any changes to staff roles with individuals. It is important that planning builds in the need to avoid increases in unnecessary and unmanageable workload burdens.’

GMB does not support our members routinely picking up the duties of teachers and if members have concern in this area, they should contact their GMB rep. Please do not take on additional work above and beyond your contractual duties Further details will be issued on this.

Pay, Terms & Conditions

The National Joint Council for Local Government Services has confirmed that agreements set out at the start of the Pandemic in March 2020 in relation to those members working in Local Authority Schools will apply to the current lockdown period. You can find the relevant NJC circulars [here](#).

NJC Circulars

GMB negotiated these agreements with Local Government Employers on behalf of members at the start of the Pandemic and believe these are ‘best in class’ in terms of members safety and protection.

STAY CONNECTED



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5. Join a GMB virtual meeting – we arrange these on a weekly basis and will post details on our social media accounts.

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable And High Risk Groups In Schools



Posted on: 5 January 2021

Following the Announcement by the Prime Minister last night (Monday 4th January) that all schools cross England are to move to remote learning from today Tuesday 5th January (apart from children of Key Workers and those that are Vulnerable) we have fielded questions from members today on their obligation to be in school during the current Level 5 lockdown, so we have set out some advice below.

Local Authority Schools

The National Joint Council for Local Government Services has confirmed that agreements set out at the start of the Pandemic in March 2020 in relation to those members working in Local Authority Schools will apply to the current lockdown period. You can find the relevant NJC circulars [here](#).

NJC Circulars

GMB negotiated these agreements with Local Government Employers on behalf of members at the start of the Pandemic and believe these are 'best in class' in terms of members safety and protection.

Academy Schools

Where the GMB is recognised we encourage Academy Schools to follow the NJC agreements. There is still a requirement for Academy Schools to conduct risk assessments and you have the legal right to request a personal risk assessment particularly if you are a member of the Clinically Vulnerable Group.



We have previously set out advice in the Joint Union Guidance on Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Workers and Higher Risk Groups which you can find [here](#) (or in "Guides & Documentation" below).

Early Years

The Government Announcement last night omitted Early Years provision from closing to all children other than Key Workers and those that are Vulnerable. GMB will continue to lobby for nurseries to move to remote learning in the same way as Primary and Secondary Schools have (please note that Reception classes are considered part of Primary Education).

If you have any concerns about any working in school throughout the Pandemic you can [contact your Region](#).

Please remember that whilst Teaching colleagues will be working remotely from the school its GMB that has the expertise in advising and supporting members who are required to work in school supporting the children of Key Worker and those that are Vulnerable.

All current and past bulletins can be found by clicking "**Past Statements & Bulletins**" at the bottom of this page.

Stay connected

1. [Contact your local GMB rep if you are worried about your safety at work](#)
2. [If you do not have a workplace rep on-site consider becoming one](#)
3. [Pass this briefing to a non-union member and ask them to join](#)
4. Stay in touch with us join our [GMB Schools group on Facebook](#) and join our mailing list by emailing us at schools@gmb.org.uk
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Making Schools Safe



Posted on: 4 January 2021

From New Year's Day onwards GMB has called on Secretary of State for Education Gavin Williamson to extend home learning for all primary school children with the exception of vulnerable children and key workers' children.

GMB will never play fast and loose with the security of your jobs and whilst most of the country moves towards another lock-down we still need to ensure schools that remain open for key workers and vulnerable pupils are safe.

GMB have taken the decision that the best way we can protect you is by asking you to issue: **Letter 1 first (Request for a Revised Risk Assessment)** then **Letter 2 (Working from Home letter if you feel unsafe)**.

Request for a Revised Risk Assessment Working from Home letter if you feel unsafe

This two-stage letter process will help to build added protection for you against disciplinary and dismissal.

Letter 1 seeks a revised risk assessment and if this is insufficient you are better protected to raise the H&S breaches to tell your employer why you feel unsafe and want to work from home.

We have spent most of the day making requests for revised risk assessments. If you or your GMB rep has not done this as you read this (and your school remains open after the Prime Minister's announcement) please do this as a matter of urgency.

Whilst we want members to raise their concerns directly we want to assure you we can collectively support you throughout the process and this is why the GMB has focused on getting Government to take the decision to keep schools open out of the hands of Head Teachers.

For the record (as there has been some misinformation by some) GMB will always provide support and representation for our members regardless of the circumstances particularly where members don't feel safe at work.

GMB are collectively ensuring we challenge head teachers who have not updated the risk assessments to allow you to work from home.

GMB will always provide support for all members even if they decide not to attend their workplace because they believe that to do so places them at a serious and imminent danger.

You may have seen that other Unions have advised their members that Section 44 of the 1996 Employment Rights Act gives members the right to leave their workplace in the face of a serious and



imminent risk of danger. Whilst this legislation may give protection against any action being taken by employers, the reality is Section 44 means hasn't been tested in the context of Covid-19. In the event a member is dismissed for not attending work they could be waiting months to get their case heard in an Employment Tribunal without any pay.

That's why we feel a two-step process is a better way to keep you protected and allows you to remove yourself from the workplace until it's safe and further action can be considered.

The Prime Minister's Announcement

This is a fast-changing situation we are moving to a further lockdown. Westminster Government has been consistently behind the science and are now being brought to pressure and follow the science.

The newly announced school closure (except for key workers and vulnerable children and Early Years) gives the Government across the UK time to put proper protective measures in place that will actually reduce the risk to school staff and pupils. These include:

- Investing in ventilation systems and heating to ensure that schools do not have to choose between Covid or hypothermia;
- Providing additional temporary classroom provision, so that bubbles can return to adequate sizes; social distancing can be maintained and ventilation improves; rota provisions put in place to allow staff to alternate work between home and work to limit transmission where risk is high.
- Recruiting additional temporary support staff to ensure that all bubbles can be properly staffed with no crossing of bubbles;
- Ramping up the vaccination programme so that all schools' workers can be vaccinated before schools fully reopen;
- Implementing a considered approach to Covid testing in schools that addresses the concerns of pupils, parents and staff

The Westminster Government has already dedicated £78 Million to provide testing in schools, and with the many billions that have been spent on Track & Trace and PPE this critical investment should be made now whilst the opportunity is there to truly make schools 'Covid-secure'.

Pay, Terms and Conditions



GMB School Support Staff work under the pay terms and conditions of the Green Book, apart from a very small number of members in multi-academy trusts with whom we negotiate separately.

GMB is a recognised trade union that has been negotiating pay agreements and Covid guidance that ensure you are paid your wages.

GMB will continue to ensure no workers loses out on pay during Covid-19. Teachers' Unions have no jurisdiction on your pay terms and conditions of work and do not represent school support staff employed under Local Government Green Book Terms and Conditions.

Stay connected

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2. [If you do not have a workplace rep on-site consider becoming one](#)
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5. Join a GMB virtual meeting – we arrange these on a weekly basis and will post details on our social media accounts.

GMB Guidance: Re-Opening Of Primary Schools & Early Years (England)



Posted on: 3 January 2021

GMB has been clear from the start of the Covid pandemic that our school-based members' safety and pay terms and conditions are GMB's utmost priority.

Yesterday (Saturday 2 January) GMB [called on Secretary of State for Education Gavin Williamson to extend home learning for all primary school children](#) who are not the children of Key workers or who are vulnerable. We welcomed the decision of the Secretary of State to U-turn on primary schools and early years in London boroughs and believe the same instruction should apply across the rest of England where 78% of the population is currently under Tier 4 restrictions and 21% under Tier 3.



We have taken extensive legal and health & safety advice on the position of the Secretary of State in asking primary schools in England to open to all pupils from tomorrow. We have concluded that we are not able to advise school-based support staff members with legal certainty not to attend work if you are not members of existing Clinically Extremely Vulnerable groups.

This is because, unlike teachers, our support staff members typically are likely to be less able to work remotely from home, and all schools in England will have children of key workers and vulnerable children returning tomorrow – Monday 4 January.

GMB will not run the risk of our members being disciplined or dismissed from their employment for not attending work without an authorised reason such as sickness or holiday. You may have been advised that other Unions are suggesting that Section 44 of the 1996 Employment Rights Act Model letter gives members the right to leave their workplace in the face of a serious and imminent risk of danger but whilst this legislation may give protection against any action being taken by employers, the reality is what Section 44 means hasn't been tested in the context of Covid –19.

However, we will rigorously continue to press local authorities, multi-academy trusts, and schools on their legal duty to update risk assessments and put in place the necessary measures to protect our members from increasing rates of Covid infection including calling on schools to be closed where they deem unsafe.

We support those local authorities who have taken the decision to close schools to children (other than for key workers or vulnerable groups) against the Secretary of State's position – and we will continue to work with sister unions and relevant other bodies to ensure the safety of our members, their families and the wider public.

We are liaising with the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) unions to consider the legal action they are proposing to challenge the Government's decision not to delay the re-opening of schools for a short period of time whilst risk assessments/testing/policy on vaccination etc. is thoroughly considered and will keep members advised of progress.

No one wants to disadvantage any child's learning, but the safety of children, staff, and the school community must come first which is why we are also calling for the vaccination of support staff – vital key workers – to be brought forward immediately.

What members should do next

Our advice is that you should attend school tomorrow unless your school has already confirmed it will be closed or you are in a Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Group – or have an authorised reason not to be in school (e.g sickness or holiday). We appreciate sister Unions are suggesting the issuing of a Section 44



Model letter. Your Union does not expect you to have raise your safety concerns individually with your employer – we want to help reps and members to raise concerns collectively and to stand together.

1. If your school remains open our advice is that you should be present for work.
2. You have a right to **ask for revised Risk Assessments**. In almost every part of England, infection rates have increased, making Covid exposure more likely. Schools should be revising their risk assessments accordingly and taking appropriate action to mitigate the increased risk,
3. **Contact your local GMB rep** if you are worried about returning to work
4. If you do not have a workplace rep on-site **consider becoming one**
5. Pass this briefing to a non-union member and **ask them to join**
6. Stay in touch with us join our GMB Schools group on **Facebook** and join our mailing list at **schools@gmb.org.uk**

You have a legal right to a safe workplace, and it is the responsibility and duty of your employer to ensure that this is the case. You should insist that effective measures are in place for you to work safely and raise a complaint or grievance if you are concerned – GMB is ready to help you do this. Please contact your GMB representative or Region.

Please note that no Union is advising any of their members not to go to work where key workers/vulnerable children will be present. In the first lockdown it was



predominately school support staff who kept schools open whilst teachers delivered lessons online from home.

School support staff make up half the school workforce we make no apologies in saying it's not just about the teachers – the safety of school support staff is just as important

GMB School Support Staff work under the pay terms and conditions of the Green Book, apart from a very small number of members in multi-academy trusts with whom we negotiate separately. GMB is a recognised trade union that has been negotiating **pay agreements** and guidance that ensure you are paid your wages.

GMB will continue to ensure no workers loses out on pay during Covid-19.

Teachers' Unions have no jurisdiction on your pay terms and conditions of work and do not represent school support staff employed under Local Government Green Book Terms and Conditions. Whilst you may hear of teacher unions demands please note they do not have any oversight of your pay terms and conditions.

GMB will not hesitate to register a dispute with your school if your school is deemed unsafe and by registering a dispute this is a far better way to protect you at work. GMB Teams are on standby to support you.

GMB Calls On Government Postpone All School Reopening In England



Posted on: 2 January 2021

We know what a worrying time this may be for you and we want to assure that your union has been working throughout the Christmas break to get Government to rethink their decisions on Schools across England.

GMB Statement

On Tuesday 22nd December, GMB met with officials from the Department of Education and the Secretary of State Gavin Williamson about their plans for Covid mass testing in schools in England from 4th January 2021.

The Secretary of State Gavin Williamson detailed plans to include funding of £78 million to support schools with the Lateral Flow testing process and the use of military personnel in schools to assist with the setting up of testing all on a voluntary basis. Deputy Medical Officer Jenny Harris explained that the



proposed Lateral Flow Tests would be a self-administered only without the need for medical oversight. Details of the DfE announcement can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/school-contingency-plans-to-be-implemented-as-cases-rise>

However, since this announcement by the Secretary of State on Wednesday 30th December the government have now placed 78.4% of the UK's population under Tier 4 and U-Turned on their decision of keeping 10 of the 32 London Boroughs schools open to Primary school children from Monday 4th January.

GMB are alarmed at the escalating rate of Covid Infections across the country and particularly now with a new strain of Covid identified we believe that most schools risk assessments will not be fit to maintain the safety of children, staff, and the community from this new strain.

We have always maintained the position that schools should only remain open to the wider school community when vigorous risk assessments are in place to keep our members safe. GMB have been working with Local Authorities, Multi Academy Trusts, and Individual Schools to ensure this.

Therefore, we are calling on all schools to remain closed from Monday 4th January 2021 apart from children of Key Workers and Vulnerable Adults

You can read the full GMB statement at <https://www.gmb.org.uk/news/time-common-sense-government-must-postpone-schools-re-opening>

GMB Demands

GMB is clear: schools must be safe if they are to open and we will not hesitate to register a dispute or call for a school to close if safe systems of work are not in place.

If you have any concern for your safety at work please contact your local GMB rep details at <https://www.gmb.org.uk/gmb-regions>

GMB demands the following:

1. Safe Systems of work

2. Guaranteed wages



3. Action to save lives

Safe Systems of Work

We need the confidence that schools are safe for staff and pupils. Where we have clear evidence that this isn't the case we will call for the school to be closed down or a register a dispute to protect our members.

GMB has called for face coverings to be made available from the beginning of the pandemic. Where necessary, clinical face masks should be available for example where staff are supporting pupils or staff exhibiting symptoms.

Given the evidence around airborne transmission, adequate ventilation is more important than ever. A clean supply of fresh air is vital to control transmission, so if a classroom cannot open windows sufficiently and has no effective air extraction then it is not deemed safe.

Correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) identified by risk assessment should be always available.

GMB have consistently called for Clinical Vulnerable (CV) and Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) staff to work from home. Where their role cannot be completed at home, mutually agreed alternative work should be provided. In the small number of cases where this is not possible staff should be paid as normal.

Bubbles must be reduced to the optimum level to ensure safety, and cross bubble working should cease. Bubbles need to be of a workable size that minimises the risk of infection.

Where there is a local outbreak, bubbles, and in some cases whole schools, should be closed for a deep clean and to allow for isolation of staff and pupils to protect the local community.

GMB is also calling for priority in vaccinations for school support staff our often-forgotten Key Workers.

Guarantee Wages

GMB School Support Staff work under the pay terms and conditions of the Green Book, apart from a very small number of members in multi academy trusts with whom we negotiate separately. GMB is a recognised trade union that have been negotiating **pay agreements** and guidance that ensure you are paid your wages. We will continue to ensure no workers loses out on pay during Covid-19.

Teacher Unions have no jurisdiction on your pay terms and conditions of work and do not represent school support staff employed under Local Government Green Book Terms and Conditions. So whilst you



may hear of teacher unions demands please note they do not have any oversight of your pay terms and conditions.

Save Lives

The real test for government is to have a workable solution to have all staff tested, tracked and traced and priority on vaccination rollout so that any staff in contact with the virus can self-isolate and minimise risk and infection. If this measure can't be put in place then potentially lives could be put at risk and GMB will not accept this.

GMB makes no apology for putting the health and safety of our members first and if protections are not met, we will if required register disputes with employers who fail in their duty of care to put safe systems in place and will call for a school to be closed if it puts our members lives at risk.

What Members Can Do

1. If your school remains open you have a right to ask for revised **Risk Assessments**
2. Contact your local GMB rep if you are worried about returning to work details at <https://www.gmb.org.uk/gmb-regions>
3. If you do not have a workplace rep on site consider becoming one details at <https://www.gmb.org.uk/become-workplace-representative>
4. Pass this briefing to a non-union member and ask them to join at <https://www.gmb.org.uk/join-gmb>
5. Stay in touch with us and join our mailing list at schools@gmb.org.uk you can find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/GMBSchoolStaff/>



Update On Recent Announcements On Mass-Testing In Schools: GMB Advises Members Not To Volunteer To Carry Out The Testing On Staff And Pupils.



Posted on: 8 December 2020

On Friday 10th December, GMB met with officials about Covid mass testing in schools in England in the New Year. We welcomed the conversation as we all want to combat Covid 19 and protect not just pupils, but the whole schools' workforce as well. However, at this initial meeting we highlighted concerns including a lack of qualified and trained medical professionals to carry out the tests, the high percentage of false negatives, potential risks and associated costs. We urged caution about quick announcements and sought agreement that further meetings would be required to iron out potential pitfalls and ensure a roll-out of testing procedures that are safe, effective and reliable.

Sadly, ministers ignored this caution and made their announcement without any detail about how it would work.

The Westminster government is delivering testing kits to secondary schools in England from January without the staff, the training or the medical supervision to carry them out effectively. Testing in primary settings is expected to follow in February.

GMB is generally supportive of a testing regime to identify asymptomatic staff and pupils with Covid-19. But this must be delivered with a rigorous programme of training and education for pupils, parents and staff. We have serious concerns about the rushed nature of these plans.

Testing kits are being delivered to schools without the medical oversight, staff or adequate training to conduct the tests effectively, accurately and safely.

We are greatly concerned that staff who are not medically trained will feel pressured into performing these tests on other staff and students, with inadequate training on how to do so.

Research into the use of Innova Lateral Flow tests by Public Health England and Oxford University determined that a false negative result was determined 21% of the time when testing was performed by a scientist; this increased to 27% when performed by a medical professional, and more than doubled to 42.5% when those tested administered the test themselves. These findings have been confirmed by the mass testing programme in Liverpool where less than 50% of results were accurate.



We therefore have severe concerns that lessons have not been learned from the Liverpool programme; that inadequate time is available for a full training and practical supervised experience that will result in competent testers; and that what the Government perceives as a 'game changer' will result in huge numbers of false negative results that create false confidence, rather than the hoped for 'magic bullet'. We are also greatly concerned that a negative test will give people a false sense of security.

The fact is that it is highly unlikely that staff, pupils or parents will have confidence in barely trained non-professionals administering medical procedures.

GMB calls for the existing sensible control measures including isolation of bubbles to remain in place. The mass testing, particularly given the high number of false negatives, cannot be a substitute for other control measures like bubbles, isolation, masks and ventilation which must stay in place, so that the testing is an **additional** measure in schools, not a replacement.

GMB says it is critical that we don't throw away our hard-won gains at this late stage, when a well-considered and properly implemented programme delivered by fully-trained competent staff can deliver the assurance we all want.

GMB will be challenging the Secretary of State and employers to put safety first and continue isolation and other protocols whilst mass testing is introduced. A copy of our letter to Gavin Williamson can be found [here](#).

We are fast losing confidence in government advice which directly impacts school staff members. Some employers were threatened with legal action for taking a sensible precaution of closing schools a few days early at the end of term, just days before government announced that secondary schools would start late in the new term. We cannot understand the logic behind this.

GMB is advising members not to volunteer to carry out the testing on staff and pupils, until we get satisfactory reassurances on a number of issues. We have grave concerns about online training for what is a medical intervention, and also about protections from liability for our members. If your school tries to coerce you into training to conduct the tests, contact GMB immediately.

GMB reminds our members that testing is not compulsory, and whilst testing is to be welcomed, we have yet to be convinced that we can support this programme.

Until more information is forthcoming, if members have any concerns about taking the test they should contact their local GMB rep for advice.

GMB STATEMENT: SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND DURING THE 2ND LOCKDOWN



Posted on: 2 November 2020

Following the announcement over the weekend regarding a second lockdown in England due to Coronavirus, and the news that the Westminster government are intending to keep schools open GMB's position is as follows.

Without school support staff our emergency and key workers would not have been able to work throughout this pandemic. Our members have kept schools running and we will continue to ensure this is fully recognised.

The recent ONS figures say that outbreaks in schools are rising rapidly, which demonstrates that Government guidance is not fit for purpose. Indeed, the Government's own Scientific Advisory Group SAGE identified that the closure of schools would have the single biggest impact in reducing infection rates. The government is refusing to discuss widening the lockdown to include schools so urgent measures for safe systems of work are vital to protect our members should schools continue to remain open.

GMB DEMANDS

GMB is clear: schools have to be safe if they are to remain open and we will not hesitate to register a dispute or call for a school to close if safe systems of work are not in place.

GMB Key Demands are:

1. Safe Systems of work

2. Guaranteed wages

3. Saving Lives

SAFE SYSTEMS OF WORK



We need the confidence that schools are safe for staff and pupils. Where we have clear evidence that this isn't the case we will call for the school to be closed down or a register a dispute if necessary to protect our members.

GMB has called for face coverings to be made available from the beginning of the pandemic. Where necessary, clinical face masks should be available for example where staff are supporting pupils or staff exhibiting symptoms.

Given the evidence around airborne transmission, adequate ventilation is more important than ever. A clean supply of fresh air is vital to control transmission, so if a classroom cannot open windows sufficiently and has no effective air extraction then it is not deemed safe.

Correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) identified by risk assessment should be always available.

GMB have consistently called for Clinical Vulnerable (CV) and Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) staff to work from home. Where their role cannot be completed at home, mutually agreed alternative work should be provided. In the small number of cases where this is not possible staff should be paid as normal.

Bubbles must be reduced to the optimum level to ensure safety, and cross bubble working should cease. Bubbles need to be of a workable size that minimises the risk of infection.

Where there is a local outbreak, bubbles, and in some cases whole schools, should be closed for a deep clean and to allow for isolation of staff and pupils to protect the local community.

GUARANTEE WAGES

GMB School Support Staff work under the pay terms and conditions of the Green Book, apart from a very small number of members in multi academy trusts with whom we negotiate separately. GMB is a recognised trade union that have been negotiating pay agreements and guidance that ensure you are paid your wages. We will continue to ensure no workers loses out on pay during Covid-19.

Teacher Unions have no jurisdiction on your pay terms and conditions of work and do not represent school support staff employed under Local Government Green Book Terms and Conditions.

SAVE LIVES

The real test for government is to have a workable solution to have all staff tested, tracked and traced so that any staff in contact with the virus can self-isolate and minimise risk and infection. If this measure can't be put in place then potentially lives could be put at risk and GMB will not accept this.



GMB makes no apology for putting the health and safety of our members first and if protections are not met, we will if required register disputes with employers who fail in their duty of care to put safe systems in place and will call for a school to be closed if it puts our members lives at risk.

Noticeboard Bulletin - 22-12-2021



Posted on: 22 December 2021

As a result of the surge in cases of the coronavirus linked to the new Omicron variant, GMB are expecting a further announcement from this shambolic Government in the coming days, unfortunately though, as yet we have no idea what their decisions will be with regards to the return of Schools in January.

GMB want to reassure all our school members that we will be closely monitoring the situation over the Christmas period and GMB will continue to meet with the relevant Government Departments to make representation for further stronger measures to be implemented to protect staff when schools reopen in January..

GMB want to let all school members know that they will receive a bulletin on the 30th or 31st December giving updated relevant advice and guidance based on Government decisions and the current situation. This will inform members what schools need to do in order to ensure that staff can continue to work safely in their schools and more importantly what GMB members need to do if they are concerned with the situation in their school.

All updated bulletins, guidance and checklists will be available on the GMB Website, so check back here for updates.

GMB would like to thank all our school members for all their hard work and for keeping schools open throughout another worrying difficult year, and we wish you and your family an enjoyable and safe festive period.

Noticeboard Bulletin - 03-01-2022



Posted on: 3 January 2022

Yet again we face another critical moment in the pandemic, with the Omicron variant spreading rapidly. GMB's priority, as always, is to protect education, and this means keeping staff and students as safe as



possible from the impact of the virus.

In recent days, GMB met with other education unions and agreed a joint statement calling for urgent additional mitigation measures to be introduced in schools to help keep you and pupils safe and to ensure schools can stay open. The Government has responded to our calls for action by announcing some further measures, namely:

- Recommending that face coverings be worn by pupils and staff in Secondary classrooms and other teaching areas.
- 7,000 air cleaning units to be rolled out to classrooms across the country.
- Ofsted Inspection changes.

Whilst GMB welcomes these changes, they clearly fall short of what we were asking for and, once again, it is another knee jerk reaction by a shambolic Government. It is too little, too late.

Once again, Risk Assessments will be key to keeping you safe:

It is a critical and legal requirement that leaders review and update risk assessments, in consultation with union reps and staff. GMB urge you to check with your Head Teacher on your first day back to ensure that:

- Revised procedures have been clearly communicated to staff, students, parents/carers, and their implementation monitored.
- In special schools, revised risk assessments should fully reflect the additional challenges in protecting pupils and staff, particularly where pupils are unable to wear face coverings.
- In secondary schools, a staggered start for the new term may be necessary to ensure every pupil is tested on site.
- The position of the most vulnerable staff should be addressed through individual risk assessments. Until we know more about the effects of the Omicron variant, although it is not a government requirement, GMB urge all employers to permit staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable and pregnant women to work from home. Vulnerable staff should



also be offered the option of a non-front-facing role with FFP2/FFP3 masks provided by the school.

If this has not been done, you need to contact your GMB Rep or Officer immediately.

GMB expect staff shortages to be a problem in schools due to Covid related absences. If, as a result of this, you are asked to take on additional duties or responsibilities, they have to be discussed with you first.

GMB advice is to only agree if you have been trained appropriately and you should also be paid accordingly for the additional roles/responsibilities. **If you have any concerns regarding what you are being told or asked to do, contact your GMB Rep or Officer as a matter of urgency.**

Joint Union Statement



Posted on: 27 January 2022

On Wednesday, 19 January the Prime Minister announced that the Government was ending England's 'Plan B' measures. This included the lifting of the recommendation that face coverings be worn in secondary classrooms from **Thursday, 20 January**, and the rules requiring face coverings in communal areas in all schools from **Thursday, 27 January**. [The latest guidance for schools is available here.](#)

Given the high case numbers and absences in school age children and staff, we, and an increasing number of organisations, including NHS leaders, have voiced concerns that this political decision by the Prime Minister is both premature and extremely risky. We are also concerned at the lack of scientific evidence provided by the Government to justify this decision.

We all want to see face coverings removed as soon as possible but to do so at a time of very high cases rates in schools risks even more infections and even more disruption. Secondary school pupils are facing exams this year. The priority, therefore, should have been to do everything possible to protect in-person education.

We are pleased that some employers and schools have already decided to communicate that they will continue to encourage the use of face coverings by staff and secondary students (unless medically exempt) in classrooms and communal areas. This includes one of the largest national multi-academy trusts, Oasis Community Learning. **We would, therefore, strongly urge you to do the same, to help reduce the risk of transmission and disruption and to protect in-person learning.**



No-one wishes to see further pupil or staff absences and we are clear that the proportionate measures in our checklist will help to reduce transmission risk and keep classrooms and schools fully open.

- Joint Unions in Schools

Pandemic Guides & Documentation

Updated Joint Union Guidance: Summer 2021



Posted on: 25 June 2021





Joint union safety checklist for schools

Advice for safe opening
March 2021 updated for June 2021

Workplace checklist

Joint Union Guidance Updated For March/April 2021:



Posted on: 31 March 2021





Joint Union Safety Checklist for Schools

MARCH 2021





Joint Union Advice on Medically Vulnerable & Higher Risk Groups

MARCH 2021

Joint Union Guidance for early March 2021





Joint union safety checklist for schools

CHECKLIST FOR FULLER OPENING IN
MARCH 2021





Joint union safety checklist for schools and colleges

CHECKLIST FOR MEDICALLY VULNERABLE
PEOPLE AND HIGHER RISK GROUPS MARCH
2021

In addition to the whole school risk assessment GMB position is that every role within the school should have to be risk assessed, along with all tasks and movements around the school. Risk assessments of individual roles should look at interactions and movements and assess them for risk for example a TA may work one to one with pupils with behavioural issues or they may be required/expected to cover whole classes alone or across different bubbles. It is important that you are involved in this process so it is a “done with” not “done to” exercise.

Joint Union Guidance for January–February 2021 school opening during lockdown



GMB

UNION

Planning Guide for Secondary Schools

Joint Union Checklist

Partial Opening Period

January 2021

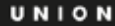


Joint Union Advice on Medically Vulnerable and Higher Risk Groups (England)

The joint union guidance for vulnerable employees was updated on **December 2nd**.

GMB

UNION

The GMB logo, consisting of the letters 'GMB' in white on an orange rectangular background.The UNION logo, consisting of the word 'UNION' in white on a black rectangular background.

Joint union Advice on Medically Vulnerable & Higher Risk Groups

Updated 2nd December 2020

Following the announcement by the government that it intends to keep schools fully open during the lockdown in England and the second wave, GMB, UNISON, UNITE and NEU have produced an updated safety checklist for schools.

The GMB logo, consisting of the letters 'GMB' in white on an orange rectangular background.The UNION logo, consisting of the word 'UNION' in white on a black rectangular background.

Checklist for Schools Remaining Open During the 2nd Wave

16th November 2020



Serious health and safety failings – escalation letter (England)

We have produced a model letter for branches to send to any school where there are concerns around serious COVID health and safety failings that are putting members at serious and imminent danger. This could include instances, for example, where a school is refusing to allow staff and pupils to wear face coverings, advising staff to ignore quarantine advice, etc.

Please speak to your branch or regional officer before sending.

TEMPLATE LETTER

NHS Test and Trace app (England)

A small number of schools have told staff to turn the NHS app off the whole time when they are in schools, or to ignore alerts on the app advising them to self-isolate. This is wrong. Department for Education guidance is clear that pausing contact tracing in schools is only recommended in three situations. For more information please see the guidance below.

NHS T&T APP GUIDANCE

Joint Union Guidance from the September 2020 Return

The Joint Unions in Secondary Education have released a Checklist for Reps in relation to the DfE Guidance for a wider school reopening in September.





JULY 2020

Letters to DfE

GMB Write To Secretary Of State For Education Ahead Of School Reopening In September



Posted on: 17 August 2021



GMB and the joint unions in education have written to Gavin Williamson MP at the Department for Education (DfE) in anticipation of the September opening of schools.

The guidance as it stands appears to indicate that when the schools reopen, test and trace provision will be scrapped for all but some children, and face coverings will no longer be advised, even for visitors or people not usually on school sites. School staff have been given no priority for vaccine and people in a vulnerable group remain at risk of serious illness – there are also concerns that long covid is not being treated seriously by employers as an acquired illness through industrial exposure.

The primary concern remains ventilation.

In our challenge to the Secretary, we stated:

“ It was only on August 11th that it was announced that thirty schools in Bradford would be taking part in a research project to trial the use of air purifiers. The benefits of ventilation in the control of airborne diseases are already well understood and accepted, and we already know that air purifiers work. This project should have been undertaken more than a year ago and is just delaying protections which could be put in place now.

GMB has consistently pressured the government to act consistently and preventatively to keep schools from becoming a petri dish for new variants and a vector for continued infection in the general population, but the department has been less than responsive and Williams personally has been subject to criticisms of incompetence, prevarication, and more focused on a spurious "culture war" and which schools teach latin than the basic welfare and wellbeing of staff and children in schools.

Should the unions receive a response, we will share that with members.

As always, if you think a decision or policy at your school is unsafe, **contact your nearest GMB rep** and get the issue raised collectively, as well as individually.

[Read the full letter here.](#)

Joint Unions In Education Write To Gavin Williams



Posted on: 5 December 2022





Dear

Following the Government's decision to extend national Covid-19 safety measures, we are writing to encourage you to take additional measures to help protect students and staff, particularly in response to the new Delta variant.

Public Health England (PHE) has confirmed that this variant is far more transmissible, can lead to more serious illness and that most cases are now among those of school age children. Absences related to Covid-19 are rising, with almost one third of students absent from secondary schools in Bolton at one stage.

The suggestion that children aged 12 and above may begin to be vaccinated in August, if approved for this age group, is welcome but does not help now when cases among school age children are high and rising, exposing many children to the risks posed by long Covid.

We therefore urge you to:

Reintroduce face coverings in classrooms and communal areas in secondary schools and colleges, as permitted by DfE guidance, and permit their use by staff and pupils in primary schools in classrooms and communal areas. It would be sensible to take this precautionary measure now, rather than when infections get out of control as is already happening in some areas.

Maximise ventilation. As well as keeping windows open and ensuring adequate ventilation in classrooms and corridors, encourage outdoor lessons wherever possible. Purchasing carbon dioxide monitors (only one or two are needed per institution) will allow you to monitor rooms' ventilation. We are asking Government to fund the purchase of air filtration devices as well to supplement air cleaning. Maintaining adequate ventilation will be increasingly challenging if precautions remain necessary in the colder months. The benefits of long-term investment in better ventilation will outlast the pandemic, given the known positive impacts of cleaner air.

Joint Letter To Gavin Williamson



Posted on: 1 April 2021

Please click [here](#) to read the joint letter from education unions to Education Secretary Gavin Williamson on face coverings in schools.



Posted on: 18 December 2020

GMB have written to Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education, to express the following concerns around the deployment of lateral flow rapid result testing in English schools:

1. Support staff numbers have been cut to the bone due to lack of funding and are further impacted by absences due to the pandemic. Currently staff numbers are risk assessed – taking staff away from their existing roles will have implications for pupil safety as well as educational achievement.
2. The pilots offer inadequate evidence of safety since external trained staff were brought in, which we understand will not be the case in this roll out.
3. You propose that volunteers such as parents and governors could be brought in to conduct the tests. This is a medical procedure you are expecting non-medically trained volunteers to carry out. In addition, GMB believe in this scenario volunteers working with pupils would need DBS checks all of which takes time. We will not endorse any implementation that permits non-DBS checked individuals to deliver the testing programme.
4. GMB believe that training and clinical oversight should be the responsibility of an external clinical team, and not with the headteacher who already has a challenging job in making schools Covid safe whilst delivering education.

You can read the full correspondence [here](#).

GMB Signs Letter In Support Of Deaf Children At School During The Coronavirus

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Posted on: 19 October 2020

The joint unions for schools, including GMB, are signatories in full support of the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) letter to Gavin Williamson and fully support their work to ensure the safety, education and mental wellbeing of this vulnerable group.



Deaf and hearing-impaired children are particularly impacted by covid if they lip-read to communicate, and the society is calling for accessibility of clear face masks or coverings where required for staff to properly communicate with them. Deaf children are statistically more vulnerable to mental health conditions, and particularly more vulnerable now.

The letter asks Williamson as Minister of State for Education to:

- take steps to ensure that clear face masks are widely and readily available in
- revise the department's guidance on face coverings in education to encourage the use of clear face masks that help to break down the communication barrier for deaf children and young people.

Williamson responded positively, and stated:

"[We] plan to update our guidance to say that, should staff and/or pupils need to wear face coverings in and around their educational setting, they should consider wearing clear face coverings if needed to meet the needs of their pupils and students."

Further revision of the department's guidance are expected following a meeting between the NDCS and DfE today.

Read the full NDCS letter [here](#).

Read Williamson's response [here](#).

Gavin Williamson In Government U-Turn On School Staff Face Coverings



Posted on: 6 August 2020

The government has capitulated in the face of mounting pressure from staff, parents, and the joint trade unions in education, in the latest of a series of U-Turns in education policy and guidance for the September reopening, and will no longer oppose the use of face-coverings in schools.

Karen Leonard, GMB National Officer, [said](#):

"GMB wrote to the Education Secretary back in mid-July challenging the Government's position on face coverings in school during the pandemic.



"Schools know social distancing will be extremely difficult and large 'bubbles' present a covid-19 risk. All we wanted was for staff who felt the need to wear a mask not to be actively discouraged from doing so.

"The Government appears to be ignoring the science in order to avoid a political hit. Now they've performed yet another u-turn.

"It's time Minister's learned to listen to the concerns of the school staff who will be instrumental in keeping our schools safe and, importantly, open."

GMB Make Representations To DfE On Inadequate Governmental Guidance On Facial Coverings For School Staff



Posted on: 15 July 2020

GMB has written to the Secretary of State for Education on behalf of our members in Schools, around discrepancies between plans for people to wear facemasks in shopping environments, but not in educational settings.

Read the full letter, [here](#):





15th July 2020

The Rt. Hon. Gavin Williamson MP
Secretary of State for Education
20 Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 3BT

Face Masks and Coverings - Schools in England

Dear Secretary of State

I am writing to you in relation to government announcement regarding the mandatory wearing of face masks and coverings in shops and supermarkets from 24th July 2020.

You will be aware of the media coverage that this announcement has garnered particularly in the light of the Chief Scientific advisors report regarding a potential second spike of 120,000 new coronavirus deaths in hospitals this coming winter.

GMB is fully supportive of the UK Government's objective of eradicating coronavirus from our communities which we know have impacted disproportionately on the most vulnerable in our society.

It is therefore of great concern that the government's announcement has produced a clear double standard between those entering shops and retail establishments in England from 24th July and our members who have been working in our schools throughout the lockdown period supporting the children of key workers and vulnerable children.

The prime minister has stated that members of the public should wear masks if they are 'going to be in a confined space and (you) want to protect other people and to receive protection in turn'. Our members working in schools, particularly with a full complement of pupils in September, are asking why they are expected to wear masks on public transport to get to work, in shops if they pop out at lunch time, but are actively discouraged from wearing them in schools.

We have stated throughout the pandemic that our members deserve a safe workplace, and therefore we are writing to you to request that you rethink your position, provide clarity and consistency for our valuable school staff, and ensure PPE including face masks are available and can be worn by staff in schools if they wish to do so.

I would welcome the opportunity of a meeting with you at the earliest to make further representation on this very important matter.

I look forward to hearing for you.

Yours Sincerely

Karen Leonard
Karen Leonard
National Officer

Euston Office: Mary Turner House, 22 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD
020 7391 6700 info@gmb.org.uk www.gmb.org.uk

UNIONLINE
YOUR TRADE UNION LAW FIRM
0300 333 0303
www.unionline.co.uk

