

# Government has done 'precious little' to prepare schools for safe return



**GMB demands risk assessments, funding and vaccinations to open schools safely**

**Union demands risk assessments, funding and vaccinations to open schools safely and control infection rates**

GMB Union, which represents more than 100,000 school workers, has called for fully revised risk assessments to be published on a full return for schools.



Ahead of the Prime Minister's major announcement on lockdown easing later today, the union said the Government must fund additional safety measures.

The union says we need more safety, more space and less stress and listed a number of measures that need to be taken in order to ensure school safety:

- A phased return where social distancing is not possible
- Face masks (not just face coverings) to be provided in early years, primary and SEND settings where children will not be wearing face masks (should be to FFP2/N95 standard) as these are now higher risk settings
- Central government funding for mandatory face coverings to relieve the financial burden from schools and ensure all face coverings meet WHO standards
- Prioritisation of vaccinations for all workers in a school setting
- A functioning testing system in place
- Ensuring appropriate ventilation in all settings at all times
- All restructures to be paused so that we don't lose valuable staff as heads move towards balancing their budgets and saving money.



**Rehana Azam, GMB National Secretary, said:**

"We want all our kids in their classrooms and learning but we need a proper credible plan.

"Let's face it, the Government has done precious little to make schools safer between the start of lockdown and now despite having ample time.

"Once again, the media has been briefed before school workers and their unions. As a starting point we need to see risk and equality impact assessments to fully know what we are dealing with and how the Government plans to support safety in schools.

"School support staff have been in classrooms throughout the pandemic – schools have not been closed – many school workers are telling us that without additional protective measures, more space and proper support a full return won't work.



"We need full central Government funding for enhanced safety measures, extra PPE in primary, early years and SEND settings which are now higher risk – and for school workers to be vaccinated as soon as possible.

"This isn't just about keeping school workers and our children safe. It's about keeping the R number down for all of us."

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