



15<sup>th</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup> 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

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