

No PPE requirement in schools 'endangers lives'



Government must change course over personal protection equipment, cleaning equipment, and funding

GMB, the union for school support staff, has hit out after new Department for Education guidelines said Personal Protective Equipment was not required in schools in England – and that cleaning equipment may be rationed.

The new guidance, published today [07 April 2020], states that ‘some [cleaning equipment] items may be rationed in schools.

‘Educational staff do not require personal protective equipment,’ according to the [guidance](#).



The guidance fails to reflect the realities of working in schools, including in special schools where contact between staff and pupils can be common, the union said.

In addition, the Department for Education has said that schools will not be fully funded to meet the cost of Easter opening. Wage costs are excluded from the categories of expenditure that schools can reclaim.

Karen Leonard, GMB National Schools Officer, said:

“The suggestion that staff do not need Personal Protection Equipment fails to understand the reality of the vital roles our members play in schools.

“Staff need to be available to provide first aid, administer medication and on occasions restrain pupils.



“These crucial roles in support of pupils cannot be performed at a distance – and the lack of support endangers lives.

“We are not asking for the same level of equipment as hospitals – but to say none is needed puts staff and pupils at risk. A small supply, which has been decided through a risk assessment, protects everyone in schools.

“The combination of potential rationing of cleaning equipment, and the news that schools will not be fully refunded for coronavirus costs at a time when budgets are already at breaking point, is devastating for the sector.

“The Government must reverse course because lives are at risk.”

[Press office](#)

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079859 1525698

press.office@gmb.org.uk

Click to contact your local GMB Region

info@gmb.org.uk

