

Government must do more to keep schools open and safe



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Giving all staff priority testing, reducing the size of pupil 'bubbles' and making face coverings compulsory on school buses would help ensure schools can continue to stay open in the coming weeks, education unions say today



In a [joint letter to education secretary Gavin Williamson](#), several proposals are outlined by UNISON, GMB and Unite to reduce the risk of infection for children and staff, and reduce the likelihood of entire schools closing.

[Read the letter](#)



The letter stresses that all school employees should have priority access to testing – not just teachers – and full pay must be given to lower paid workers who need to isolate. It also calls for more information to be shared with staff about suspected Covid-19 cases at their schools.

The three unions – representing school support staff across the UK including teaching assistants, technicians, catering workers, cleaning staff, caretakers, and receptionists – say the government must introduce additional measures to halt rising infections.

Karen Leonard, GMB National Officer, said:

"GMB and other unions have worked hard throughout the summer to ensure schools stayed safe for pupils, staff and parents – despite vilification from the Conservative establishment.



"With Covid cases increasing throughout the whole of the UK, we have written to the government setting out constructive suggestions for our schools – including full contractual sick pay for all those working in our schools."

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