

# Government must row back from reckless ditching of covid rules in schools



Chaos will reign in schools and millions of hours of learning will be lost unless the government rows back from the reckless decision to scrap all remaining Covid safety rules in England, three education unions warn. GMB, Union and Unite are urging the Prime Minister to think again and keep in place free testing and the requirement to self-isolate, as an absolute minimum.



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The three unions say the Government's failure to provide clear, detailed guidance risks a super spreader free-for-all in schools and other workplaces.

Throughout the pandemic, the Government always said it would be led by the science. Ministers must now publish the evidence in full to prove to the public that a bonfire of all the remaining Covid regulations is safe, say the unions.

If the remaining safety rules are axed, schools will be left in an impossible situation, the unions add. Parents will be unsure about whether to send their children into school, transmission rates could soar, and new, more potent variants could emerge.



The health of vulnerable pupils and school staff must not be left to individual choice when so much is at stake, say the unions.

Schools could soon face the nightmare scenario where staff and pupils who have been exposed to Covid, or have it themselves, are free to come into school without the mandatory need for isolation.

The government should also hold off on any plans to scrap free tests, the three unions urge. With thousands of people showing no symptoms, the virus could quickly start to rage again in schools. Pupils



and staff unaware of their positive status will unknowingly spread Covid if ministers foolishly pull the plug on free kits, add the unions.

**Avril Chambers, GMB National Officer, said:**

“You have to question the motive behind this reckless decision. We suspect it’s yet another decision taken by this Prime Minister out of self-interest rather than for the good of the country.

“Support staff have kept our schools open throughout the pandemic. They deserve to stay safe, and our children deserve not to have their education interrupted any more than it already has been.

“The Prime Minister needs to act responsibly. He must leave free tests and isolation requirements in place until there is scientific evidence that they no longer serve a purpose.”



**Mike Short, UNISON head of education, said:**

“Protection and safety are what’s needed, but there’s only confusion on offer from the government. Parents and staff are desperate for a return to normality – but not at any cost.

“The Prime Minister appears to care more about keeping in with his backbenchers than he does about the health of the nation.

“Rather than throw caution to the wind and jeopardise the education of children who’ve lost so much, it’s time to show leadership, put aside self-interest and err on the side of caution.”

**Jim Kennedy, Unite national officer, said:**



“Once again the Prime Minister is disregarding working people's and the public's health – this time school staff, children and their families – through reckless measures meant only to please his back benchers.

“Unite calls on Boris Johnson to ensure that the safety of children, parents and staff are prioritised ahead of his own narrow political interests.”

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### **Press office**

079859 1525698

[press.office@gmb.org.uk](mailto:press.office@gmb.org.uk)

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[info@gmb.org.uk](mailto:info@gmb.org.uk)

