

Education unions' joint statement on the safe reopening of schools

The government's chaotic handling of the opening of schools has caused confusion for teachers, school staff and parents alike. Bringing all pupils back into classrooms while the rate of infection is so high is exposing education sector workers to serious risk of ill-health and could fuel the pandemic.

Unions have called for a pause in the reopening of schools for anyone other than vulnerable children and children of key workers, and a move to remote learning for all while Covid-secure working arrangements are reviewed. All school staff continuing to work in schools should be given priority access to Covid-19 vaccinations.

Instead of casually asserting that schools are safe, the Prime Minister should sit down with unions to discuss a joint approach to ensuring safe working arrangements in all schools and prioritising enabling all pupils have the equipment and access they need to receive a high standard of remote learning until the safety of them and the staff in their school can be guaranteed.

TUC General Secretary **Frances O'Grady** said: "The government's own advice from SAGE makes it clear that opening schools to all pupils now risks increasing the infection rate. That's in no-one's interests.

"Instead of creating chaos for parents and exposing workers to risks, the Prime Minister should be talking to trade unions about what steps are needed to make sure all schools are Covid-Secure."

Today's statement is signed by GMB, NAHT, NASUWT, NEU, UNISON and Unite.